

ter] And I mean young, I don't mean short. [Laughter] All right?

So thank you very much, everybody. Have a great time. God bless you. God bless America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:05 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to H.J. Res. 124; and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Petro Poroshenko of Ukraine September 18, 2014

President Obama. Well, it is a great pleasure to welcome President Poroshenko to the Oval Office. He and I have been working together a lot over the last several months. And as I told him personally, and I want to repeat publicly, I think his leadership has been absolutely critical at a very, very important time in Ukraine's history.

Obviously, we have watched over the last several months as the people of Ukraine have declared their desire for a sovereign, independent economic and foreign policy that promises them freedom and prosperity and self-determination. And President Poroshenko's election, I think, represented those aspirations of the Ukrainian people.

Unfortunately, what we've also seen is Russian aggression—first in Crimea and most recently in portions of eastern Ukraine—that have not only violated the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country, but have also been designed to undermine these critical reform efforts that have been taking place in Ukraine.

I am very proud that the United States has led the international community and our European partners in making sure that there is a cost to Russia for its aggression in Ukraine. We have applied some of the toughest coordinated sanctions that we've ever seen between the transatlantic community, which are having a significant impact on the Russian economy. And we have consistently said that not only do we support Ukraine's sovereignty and independence in words, but we've also been supporting it in deeds.

And at the Wales Summit, you saw all 28 NATO countries recommit themselves to the NATO-Ukraine partnership and commit to assisting Ukraine in its security concerns. We

have provided significant financial assistance to help Ukraine bridge this period of transition from the old ways of doing things to a new and more modern economy, and that includes a billion-dollar loan guarantee from the United States, as well as hundreds of millions of dollars that we've provided in assistance.

I'm pleased that during this meeting, we reaffirmed that commitment to Ukraine, and we are providing additional assistance, both economic and security assistance, to Ukraine to make sure that not only are they able to weather this storm economically, but they're also going to be able to continue to build up an effective security force to defend themselves from aggression.

And we are going to continue to seek to mobilize the international community to say to Russia that Ukraine desires to have a good relationship with all its neighbors, both east and west, and that there should be a way in which Ukraine is able to negotiate and then trade and continue the people-to-people links between Ukraine and Russia, but that Russia cannot dictate to them their ability to work effectively with other partners in order to better the situation for the Ukrainian people.

I want to commend President Poroshenko for having helped to not only broker a ceasefire, but also to push through some very difficult legislation that can improve the perception in eastern Ukraine that they are fully represented and that they are able to determine many of their local affairs in a way that gives them confidence.

And that those were not easy laws that President Poroshenko passed, but I think they indicated his commitment to an inclusive Ukraine, his commitment to a Ukraine that has decentralization and empowers local communities.

But also, I think President Poroshenko has been very clear that Ukraine needs to stay intact and that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine is nonnegotiable.

And so let me just say that in addition to the concrete expressions of support through security assistance and economic assistance, we are going to continue to help to mobilize the international community towards a diplomatic solution.

I have great confidence that President Poroshenko is balancing a lot of different variables here in a very difficult situation. But he's the right man for the job. He's been working very hard. He's committed to upcoming elections that will further allow the people of Ukraine to set the direction for their country. And we are prepared to support Ukraine in negotiations with Russia in order to make sure that the Ukrainian people can enjoy the kind of freedom and prosperity that is their right.

And so, President Poroshenko, congratulations on the excellent work that you've done. You have a strong friend not only in me personally, but I think, as you saw in Congress today, you have strong bipartisan support here in the United States. And the people of America stand with the people of Ukraine. We wish you not only luck, but you know that you also have our strong commitment and friendship.

So thank you.

President Poroshenko. Thank you, Mr. President. I want to start with the words of thanks for the President Obama for my invitation. And this is very symbolic for all Ukrainian people to be here today and to receive such enormous support, which was demonstrated today under all the levels. I was impressed today by the level of support—the bipartisan support—which was demonstrated in the Congress.

And I want to thank you to the President for his leadership in the world, for protecting Ukraine's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence. This is a true leadership defending democracy and freedom.

And we started this coordination in Warsaw when we together had a meeting during the 25th anniversary of the *Solidarnist'*. And from the very, very first moment, I feel how person-

ally President Obama is deeply involved in the process of protecting freedom and democracy in Ukraine and the way how the situation has developed. And the question we discussed today is the whole sphere where we can have improved our cooperation.

Today we discussed the security and defense sphere, and we undertake the very responsible and necessary decisions. Today we discussed the economic and financial sphere, and we were—thanks that the United States of America do a very great job to support us in a very difficult time. We especially discussed the energy question, and I can announce then the next week we will have an American team in Kiev, where we can discuss all the energy questions prompting from the energy-saving steps to be undertaken and the—avoid significant problems during this winter.

We think that it is vitally important to renew the cooperation with Russia for the gas supply and to undertake a very important step for providing the energy security for all Europe. And I just want to confirm—declare that we are ready for all these discussions.

I think that the—it would be extremely important for us, the international coordination. We are expecting that today the U.N. Security Council meeting will also pay some attention to the Ukrainian question.

And I just want to deliver the main messages. So the top priority for me as a Ukrainian President, for the Ukrainian people, for the American President, and for the American people is the peace. And the only way how we can deescalate the situation on the east of my country is the peace process and the peace plan, which included the cease-fire; inclusive dialogue inside of Ukraine; withdrawing Russian troops from my territory; closing the border for troops, for weapons and ammunition; releasing—immediately releasing all the hostages. And that is what the whole world is waiting from us.

And progress which we're—most probably delivered in the near future. We're expecting the continuation of the Minsk dialogue in the very near days. And we really hope that the cease-fire, which already lasting for the 12

days, will bring—will transform to a real peace, which can help us to save Donetsk and Luhansk from the very difficult situation the people of which appear now.

I think that they're—I thank very much to the President for the very fruitful, very open, very straightforward dialogue, and I thank you for the decision we reached today. I think that

the—your position as the friend of Ukraine: friend in need is a friend indeed. You're a real friend, of course.

President Obama. Thank you very much. Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:21 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Remarks on Congressional Passage of Legislation To Train and Equip Syrian Opposition Forces *September 18, 2014*

Good evening. Today the United States continues to build a broad international coalition to degrade and ultimately destroy the terrorist group known as ISIL. As part of the air campaign, France will join in strikes against ISIL targets in Iraq. And as one of our oldest and closest allies, France is a strong partner in our efforts against terrorism, and we're pleased that French and American servicemembers will once again work together on behalf of our shared security and our shared values.

More broadly, more than 40 countries—including Arab nations—have now offered assistance as part of this coalition. This includes support for Iraqi forces, strengthening the Iraqi Government, providing humanitarian aid to Iraqi civilians, and doing their part in the fight against ISIL.

Here at home, I'm pleased that Congress—a majority of Democrats and a majority of Republicans, in both the House and the Senate—have now voted to support a key element of our strategy: our plan to train and equip the opposition in Syria so they can help push back these terrorists. As I said last week, I believe that we're strongest as a nation when the President and Congress work together. And I want to thank leaders in Congress for the speed and seriousness with which they approached this urgent issue, in keeping with the bipartisanship that is the hallmark of American foreign policy at its best.

These Syrian opposition forces are fighting both the brutality of ISIL terrorists and the tyranny of the Asad regime. We had already

ramped up our assistance, including military assistance, to the Syrian opposition. With this new effort, we'll provide training and equipment to help them grow stronger and take on ISIL terrorists inside Syria. This program will be hosted outside of Syria, in partnership with Arab countries, and it will be matched by our increasing support for Iraqi Government and Kurdish forces in Iraq.

This is in keeping with a key principle of our strategy: The American forces that have been deployed to Iraq do not and will not have a combat mission; their mission is to advise and assist our partners on the ground. As I told our troops yesterday, we can join with allies and partners to destroy ISIL without American troops fighting another ground war in the Middle East.

The strong bipartisan support in Congress for this new training effort shows the world that Americans are united in confronting the threat from ISIL, which has slaughtered so many innocent civilians. With their barbaric murder of two Americans, these terrorists thought they could frighten us, or intimidate us, or cause us to shrink from the world, but today they're learning the same hard lesson of petty tyrants and terrorists who have gone before.

As Americans, we do not give in to fear. And when you harm our citizens, when you threaten the United States, when you threaten our allies, it doesn't divide us, it unites us. We pull together, we stand together, to defend this country that we love and to make sure justice is done, as well as to join with those who seek a