

it and understanding that if we take action now we can do something about it.

This is not some impossible problem that we cannot solve. We can solve it if we've got some political will. And we can solve it in a way that creates jobs. We can solve it in a way that doesn't disrupt our economy, but enhances our economy. And it's a bipartisan issue.

On the way in, I was talking to some folks about the fact that Teddy Roosevelt—he's a Republican—started our National Park System. Richard Nixon started the EPA. George H.W. Bush was the first President, globally, to acknowledge the impacts of climate change and that we needed to do something about it. This is not something that historically should be a partisan issue.

Five years ago, local leaders down here, Republicans and Democrats, formed the bipartisan Southeast Florida Regional Climate Change Compact, an agreement to work together to fight climate change. And it's become a model not just for the country, but for the world.

It's the type of mission that Americans from all walks of life are taking on, from the CEOs of some of our biggest corporations and utilities to student organizations across the country. Because they know that simply refusing to say the words "climate change" doesn't mean that climate change isn't happening. [Laughter]

And we know that in our own lives. If you've got a coming storm, you don't stick your head in the sand; you prepare for the storm. You make sure our communities are prepared for climate change. And that's an economic imperative. Protecting the one planet we've got is

what we have to do for the next generation. I want Malia and Sasha not only to be able to enjoy this amazing view. I want my grandchildren—way, way long time from now—[laughter]—to enjoy this amazing view. And their children, and their children after that. That's what we do as Americans: take responsibility and leave behind for our children something special.

And we are blessed with the most beautiful God-given landscape in the world. It's an incredible bounty that's been given to us. But we've got to be good stewards for it. We have to take care of it. We only get to enjoy things like our amazing national parks because great Americans like Teddy Roosevelt and Marjory Stoneman Douglas and a whole bunch of ordinary folks whose name aren't in the history books, they fought to protect our national inheritance. And now it's our turn to ensure that this remains the birthright of all Americans for generations to come. So many people here are active in your communities, doing what's needed. The young people who are here, the next generation, they're way ahead of us in understanding how important this is. Let's make sure we don't disappoint them. Let's stand up and do what's right before it's too late.

Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:16 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Rep. Patrick E. Murphy; William S. Nye, television personality and executive director of the Planetary Society; and U.S. Surgeon General Vivek H. Murthy.

## Remarks on the Deaths of Warren Weinstein and Giovanni Lo Porto *April 23, 2015*

This morning I want to express our grief and condolences to the families of two hostages: one American, Dr. Warren Weinstein, and an Italian, Giovanni Lo Porto, who were tragically killed in a U.S. counterterrorism operation. Warren and Giovanni were aid workers in Pakistan devoted to improving the lives of the Pakistani people. After Warren was ab-

ducted by Al Qaida in 2011, I directed my national security team to do everything possible to find him and to bring him home safely to his family. And dedicated professionals across our Government worked tirelessly to do so. We also worked closely with our Italian allies on behalf of Giovanni, who was kidnapped in 2012.

Since 9/11, our counterterrorism efforts have prevented terrorist attacks and saved innocent lives both here in America and around the world. And that determination to protect innocent life only makes the loss of these two men especially painful for all of us. Based on information and intelligence we have obtained, we believe that a U.S. counterterrorism operation targeting an Al Qaida compound in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region accidentally killed Warren and Giovanni this past January.

Yesterday I spoke with Warren's wife Elaine and Prime Minister Renzi of Italy. As a husband and as a father, I cannot begin to imagine the anguish that the Weinstein and Lo Porto families are enduring today. I realize that there are no words that can ever equal their loss. I know that there is nothing that I could ever say or do to ease their heartache. And today I simply want to say this: As President and as Commander in Chief, I take full responsibility for all our counterterrorism operations, including the one that inadvertently took the lives of Warren and Giovanni. I profoundly regret what happened. On behalf of the United States Government, I offer our deepest apologies to the families.

As soon as we determined the cause of their deaths, I directed that the existence of this operation be declassified and disclosed publicly. I did so because the Weinstein and Lo Porto families deserve to know the truth. And I did so because even as certain aspects of our national security efforts have to remain secret in order to succeed, the United States is a democracy committed to openness in good times and in bad.

Our initial assessment indicates that this operation was fully consistent with the guidelines under which we conduct counterterrorism efforts in the region, which has been our focus for years because it is the home of Al Qaida's leadership. And based on the intelligence that we had obtained at the time, including hundreds of hours of surveillance, we believed that this was an Al Qaida compound, that no civilians were present, and that capturing these terrorists was not possible. And we do believe that the operation did take out dangerous members

of Al Qaida. What we did not know, tragically, is that Al Qaida was hiding the presence of Warren and Giovanni in this same compound.

It is a cruel and bitter truth that in the fog of war generally and our fight against terrorists specifically, mistakes—sometimes deadly mistakes—can occur. But one of the things that sets America apart from many other nations, one of the things that makes us exceptional, is our willingness to confront squarely our imperfections and to learn from our mistakes.

Already, I have directed a full review of what happened. We will identify the lessons that can be learned from this tragedy and any changes that should be made. We will do our utmost to ensure it is not repeated. And we will continue to do everything we can to prevent the loss of innocent lives—not just innocent Americans, but all innocent lives—in our counterterrorism operations.

Today we join their families and friends in honoring Warren and Giovanni, two humanitarians who came from different countries, but who were united by a spirit of service. For decades, Warren lived the ideals of our country, serving with the Peace Corps and later with the United States Agency for International Development. He devoted his life to people across Africa and South Asia. He was a loving husband, father, and grandfather who willingly left the comforts of home to help the people of Pakistan. At the time of his abduction, he was a USAID contractor focusing on helping Pakistani families escape poverty and give a better life to their children.

Giovanni's humanitarianism also took him around the world to the Central African Republic, to Haiti, and ultimately, Pakistan. Like Warren, he fell in love with Pakistan and its people and believed passionately that he could make a difference in their lives. Giovanni's service reflected the commitment of the Italian people, our great allies and friends, to the security and dignity of people around the world. And today is a reminder of the bonds of friendship between our countries and the shared values that bind Americans and Italians together.

There could be no starker contrast between these two selfless men and their Al Qa-

ida captors. Warren's work benefited people across faiths. Meanwhile, Al Qaida boasted to the world that it held Warren, citing his Jewish faith. Al Qaida held both men for years, even as Warren's health deteriorated. They deprived these men of precious, irreplaceable years with family who missed them terribly.

Amid grief that is unimaginable, I pray that these two families will find some small measure of solace in knowing that Warren and Giovanni's legacy will endure. Their service will be remembered by the Pakistani men, women, and children whose lives they touched and made better. Their spirit will live on in the love of their families, who are in our thoughts and prayers today, especially Warren's wife

Elaine, their daughters Alisa and Jennifer, and their families.

And the shining example of these two men will stand as a light to people the world over who see suffering and answer with compassion, who see hatred and offer their love, who see war and work for peace.

May God bless these two brave men, and may He watch over and comfort their families for all the years to come.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:05 a.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Elaine Weinstein, wife, and Alisa Weinstein and Jennifer Coakley, daughters, of Mr. Weinstein, who was killed in a U.S. counterterrorism operation in Pakistan on January 15.

## Remarks Honoring the 2015 Super Bowl Champion New England Patriots April 23, 2015

*The President.* Hello, everybody. Welcome to the White House. Please have a seat. And well, maybe before you have a seat, give it up for the Super Bowl Champion New England Patriots! All right, now you can have a seat.

A couple of points I'd make at the outset. First of all, it's usually warmer on the South Lawn this time of year, but given the kind of winter that Boston and New England had, I guess this feels pretty balmy to you. [Laughter] Second of all, for some reason that I don't fully understand, there is a disproportionate number of Patriots fans in the White House. [Laughter] I obviously did not screen properly when I was hiring—[laughter]—but there are a lot of Patriot fans in the White House, and there are also a lot of Patriot fans in Congress. I just also want to point out that, despite the fact that he travels probably more than any human on Earth, somehow, my Secretary of State, John Kerry, found a front row seat to be here today. [Laughter] So give it up for John Kerry.

I want to offer my congratulations, first of all, to Patriots owner Robert Kraft, and I also want to acknowledge Coach Bill Belichick. I said to the team, and I think even those of us

who have other teams we root for, the Patriots organization is as good as an organization as there has ever been in professional sports. And to be able to maintain that kind of consistent excellence is a rare thing in any field, including on the football field. And that's a testament to outstanding ownership. It's a testament to a Hall of Fame coach. And I'm particularly grateful that Coach decided to dress up today. [Laughter] We had some scissors if he wanted to cut the sleeves off. [Laughter] Formal hoodies are allowed. [Laughter]

I usually tell a bunch of jokes at these events, but with the Patriots in town, I was worried that 11 out of 12 of them would fall flat. [Laughter] All right, all right, all right. That whole story got blown a little out of proportion. [Laughter] All right. Where were we?

*New England Patriots Owner Robert K. Kraft.* The Jets gave it to you.

*The President.* Right, right, right. Here's what makes the Patriots the Patriots. Even in the midst of huge distraction during the biggest media circus of the sports year, they stayed focused. As Coach Belichick would say, it was simply "on to Seattle."