

And I do think that, as the investigation moves forward, it's going to be important for all of us—including our legislatures—to see what we can do to make sure that when individuals decide that they want to do somebody harm, we're making it a little harder for them to do it. Because right now it's just too easy. And we're going to have to, I think, search ourselves as a society to make sure that we can take basic steps that would make it harder—not impossible, but harder—for individuals to get access to weapons.

So there will be, I think, a press conference later today led by the Attorney General. Director Comey will continue to brief not only the press, but also Members of Congress about the course of the investigation. Our expectation is, is that this may take some time before we're able to sort it all through. There may be mixed motives involved in this, which makes the investigation more complicated. But rest assured that we will get to the bottom of this.

And in the meantime, once again, I want to offer our deepest condolences to those who've been affected by this terrible tragedy. And for

those who've been injured, we hope that they get well quickly and that they're able to be back together with their families.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:58 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Tashfeen Malik and Syed Rizwan Farook, suspected perpetrators of the shooting and attempted bombing at the Inland Regional Center in San Bernardino, CA, on December 2. Participating in the meeting were Vice President Joe Biden; Attorney General Loretta E. Lynch; Federal Bureau of Investigation Director James B. Comey, Jr.; Director of National Intelligence James R. Clapper, Jr.; National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice; Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Lisa O. Monaco; Deputy Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro N. Mayorkas; Deputy Director of the National Counterterrorism Center John J. Mulligan; and Deputy National Security Adviser Avril D. Haines. The related proclamation is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Statement on the Department of Defense Decision To Open All Military Occupational Specialties to Women *December 3, 2015*

One of the qualities that makes America's Armed Forces the best in the world is that we draw on the talents and skills of our people. When we desegregated our military, it became stronger. In recent years, we ended “don't ask, don't tell” and allowed gay and lesbian Americans to serve openly, and it's made our military stronger. Over recent decades, we've opened about 90 percent of military positions to women who time and again have proven that they too are qualified, ready, and up to the task. In the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, our courageous women in uniform have served with honor on the front lines, and some have given their very lives.

Today the Defense Department is taking another historic step forward by opening up the remaining 10 percent of military positions,

including combat roles, to women. As Commander in Chief, I know that this change, like others before it, will again make our military even stronger. Our Armed Forces will draw on an even wider pool of talent. Women who can meet the high standards required will have new opportunities to serve. I know that, under the leadership of Secretary Carter and Chairman Dunford, our men and women in uniform will implement this transition—as they have others—in a responsible manner that maintains military readiness and the unparalleled professionalism and strength of our Armed Forces. Together, we're going to make sure our military remains the finest fighting force in the history of the world, worthy of all our patriots who serve: men and women.

NOTE: The statement referred to Secretary of Defense Ashton B. Carter; and Chairman of

the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Joseph F. Dunford, Jr., USMC.

Remarks on Lighting the National Christmas Tree December 3, 2015

The President. Hello, everybody. Well, happy holidays!

Audience members. You too! Happy holidays!

The President. You know my crew: Malia, Sasha, Michelle, Grandma. Happy holidays to Reese and to everyone here tonight and everyone watching at home. Now, let's begin the process of lighting the tree. We've got a countdown going on. We're going to start at five. Here we go: five, four, three, two, one. Merry Christmas, everybody!

[At this point, the President exited the stage as the event continued. He later returned and made additional remarks as follows.]

The President. Merry Christmas, everybody! Thank you, Betty, for that introduction, for your extraordinary service as one of our park rangers, and for all of your—and your great-grandmother's—contributions to this country. Please give Betty a big round of applause. I want tips from Betty on how I can look that good at 94.

I also want to thank Betty's boss, Jonathan Jarvis, and for everybody from the National Park Service and the National Park Foundation for everything that they do to protect and care for America's great outdoors and for helping us "find our park" this year and every year. And thank you, Reese Witherspoon, and each of tonight's outstanding performers.

This is, of course, the most wonderful time of the year. But we would be remiss not to take a moment to remember our fellow Americans whose hearts are heavy tonight, who grieve for loved ones, especially in San Bernardino, California. Their loss is our loss too, for we're all one American family. We look out for each other in good times and in bad. And they should know that all of us care about them this holiday season. They're in our thoughts,

they're in our prayers, and we send them our love.

Now, this is the 93d time Americans have gathered by the White House to light the National Christmas Tree. And as always, this tree is not alone. All across America, in living rooms, and offices, churches, and town squares, families and neighbors are gathering to decorate trees of their own and get into the holiday spirit. It's a chance to come together and to focus on what really matters: the simple gifts of family and friends; the wonder and hope in a child's eye; and of course, the spirit of giving and compassion that can help all of us find new meaning in the world around us.

That's the message of the child whose birth families like mine celebrate on Christmas, a prince born in a stable who taught us that we should love our neighbors as ourselves; and that we are our brothers' keeper and our sisters' keepers; that we should feed the hungry, visit the sick, welcome the stranger. These are the lessons of Jesus Christ. But they're also the bedrock values of all faiths, values to be cherished and embraced not only during the holidays, but to be practiced in our daily lives.

So, during this holiday season, let's come together as brothers and sisters around the humanity that we share. Let's reach out to those who can use a hand. Let's summon the spirit of togetherness that's always helped to kindle America's shining example to the world. And let's keep in our prayers those Americans who protect that ideal, especially those stationed far from home during the holidays. Our men and women in uniform and their families sacrifice so much for us. And it's because of them that we can celebrate freely, that we can worship as we please, that we can come together on a night like this strong and united and free.

So, on behalf of Michelle and Malia and Sasha and Grandma and Bo and Sunny, happy holidays to all of you. May God bless you all,