

## Statement on the Death of Akhtar Mohammad Mansur

*May 23, 2016*

Today marks an important milestone in our longstanding effort to bring peace and prosperity to Afghanistan. With the death of Taliban leader Akhtar Mohammad Mansur, we have removed the leader of an organization that has continued to plot against and unleash attacks on American and coalition forces, to wage war against the Afghan people, and align itself with extremist groups like Al Qaeda.

Mansur rejected efforts by the Afghan Government to seriously engage in peace talks and end the violence that has taken the lives of countless innocent Afghan men, women, and children. The Taliban should seize the opportunity to pursue the only real path for ending this long conflict: joining the Afghan Government in a reconciliation process that leads to lasting peace and stability.

As an enduring partner of the Afghan people, the United States will continue to help strengthen Afghan security forces and support

President Ghani and the National Unity Government in their efforts to forge the peace and progress that Afghans deserve. We will continue taking action against extremist networks that target the United States. We will work on shared objectives with Pakistan, where terrorists that threaten all our nations must be denied safe haven. After so many years of conflict, today gives the people of Afghanistan and the region a chance at a different, better future.

I thank our dedicated military and intelligence personnel who have once again sent a clear message to all those who target our people and our partners: You will have no safe haven. Today is a day for us to give thanks to all of the Americans who have served in Afghanistan for so many years with a selfless commitment to the security of our Nation and a better future for the Afghan people.

## Remarks Following a Meeting With Civil Society Leaders in Hanoi, Vietnam

*May 24, 2016*

I just had a wonderful conversation with some preeminent civil society activists here in Vietnam. And I just want to thank them for taking the time to meet with me and discussing with me some of the important work that they're doing, and the progress that's being made in—here in Vietnam.

We have a wide range of activists here. We have pastors whose congregations are doing important work helping individuals fight addiction and encouraging the faithful around the values of their faith. We have advocates on behalf of the disabled who are doing important work to make sure that they have full access to jobs and opportunity here in Vietnam. We have LGBT activists who are making sure that the marginalized in society have a voice. We have advocates on behalf of freedom of speech and press and the Internet, who are doing important training throughout the country. We

have a very popular artist here who is speaking out on behalf of freedom of speech and expression and artists throughout Vietnam.

And so what I've heard consistently from all of them is a recognition that Vietnam has made remarkable strides in many ways—the economy is growing quickly, the Internet is booming, and there's a growing confidence here—but that, as I indicated yesterday, there are still areas of significant concern in terms of freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, accountability with respect to government.

I emphasized in my meetings yesterday with the President, the Prime Minister, the General Secretary, the Chairwoman of the National Assembly that we respect the sovereignty and independence of Vietnam. Ultimately, it's up to the Vietnamese people to determine how their society functions and the nature of their government.