

Statement on the 25th Anniversary of Ukrainian Independence

August 24, 2016

Twenty-five years ago today, Ukraine declared its independence from the Soviet Union. On behalf of the American people, I'm proud to join the Ukrainian people in marking this historic anniversary. As we have been reminded in recent years, Ukraine's path has not always been easy. From the hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians who linked arms in a great human chain in 1990 to the fallen heroes of the Maidan, realizing the dream of independence has called on the solidarity and sacrifice of the Ukrainian people. The people of the United States, including proud Ukrainian Americans,

have been honored to partner with Ukraine on this journey. Today we reaffirm that the United States will continue to stand with the Ukrainian people as they protect their sovereignty and territorial integrity, embrace the vision of a strong and united Europe, and deepen their commitment to democracy, anticorruption, and respect for human rights. I offer my best wishes to all the people of Ukraine. On this occasion, we are reminded that even in the most difficult moments, the glory and freedom of Ukraine—and the indomitable spirit of the Ukrainian people—lives on.

Statement on the Colombian Peace Agreement

August 25, 2016

This is a historic day for the people of Colombia. With the finalizing of a peace agreement between Colombia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, the longest running war in the Western Hemisphere is coming to an end. We have witnessed, once again, that a sustained commitment to diplomacy and reconciliation can overcome even the most entrenched conflicts.

This accord is a tribute to the hard work and cooperation of countless Colombian leaders and citizens across parties and administrations who painstakingly laid the groundwork for this milestone. I especially want to commend President Juan Manuel Santos for his courageous leadership during 4 years of difficult negotiations. I, likewise, thank the Government of Cuba for hosting these talks, its coguarantor Norway, and the United States Special Envoy Bernie Aronson for his contributions to the peace process.

Even as we mark the end of an era of war, we recognize that the work of achieving a just

and lasting peace is only beginning. Yet, just as the United States has been Colombia's partner in a time of war, we will be Colombia's partner in waging peace. It is in this spirit that I stood alongside President Santos earlier this year and announced a new chapter in our relationship, Peace Colombia, which will provide a framework to reinforce security gains, reintegrate former combatants into society, and extend opportunity and the rule of law.

For generations, too many Colombians have known only a country ravaged by war. Many around the world have viewed Colombia only as a place of conflict. But as I saw when I visited Colombia 4 years ago, a remarkable transformation has occurred. Thanks to the strength and spirit of the Colombian people, today's Colombia is moving toward a future of optimism and hope. The United States is proud to stand with the Colombian people as they continue on the path to lasting peace and prosperity.

The President's Weekly Address August 27, 2016

Earlier this year, I got a letter from a South Carolina woman named Ashley, who was expecting her third child. She was, in her words, “extremely concerned” about the Zika virus, and what it might mean for other pregnant women like her.

I understand that concern. As a father, Ashley's letter has stuck with me, and it's why we've been so focused on the threat of the Zika virus. So today I just want to take a few minutes to let you know what we've been doing in response and to talk about what more we can all do.

Since late last year, when the most recent outbreak of Zika started popping up in other countries, Federal agencies like the Center for Disease Control and Prevention have been preparing for it to arrive in the U.S. In February, more than 6 months ago, I asked Congress for the emergency resources that public health experts say we need to combat Zika. That includes things like mosquito control, tracking the spread of the virus, accelerating new diagnostic tests and vaccines, and monitoring women and babies with the virus.

Republicans in Congress did not share Ashley's “extreme concern,” nor that of other Americans expecting children. They said no. Instead, we were forced to use resources we need to keep fighting Ebola, cancer, and other diseases. We took that step because we have a responsibility to protect the American people. But that's not a sustainable solution. And Congress has been on a 7-week recess without doing anything to protect Americans from the Zika virus.

So my administration has done what we can on our own. Our primary focus has been protecting pregnant women and families planning to have children. For months now, the CDC has been working closely with officials in Florida and other States. NIH and other agencies have moved aggressively to develop a vaccine. And we're working with the private sector to develop more options to test for and prevent infection. For weeks, a CDC emergency re-

sponse team has been on the ground in South Florida, working alongside the excellent public health officials there, folks who have a strong track record of responding aggressively to the mosquitoes that carry viruses like Zika. They know what they're doing.

Still, there's a lot more everybody can and should do. And that begins with some basic facts. Zika spreads mainly through the bite of a certain mosquito. Most infected people don't show any symptoms. But the disease can cause brain defects and other serious problems when pregnant women become infected. Even if you're not pregnant, you can play a role in protecting future generations. Because Zika can be spread through unprotected sex, it's not just women who need to be careful; men do too. That includes using condoms properly.

If you live in or travel to an area where Zika has been found, protect yourself against the mosquitoes that carry this disease. Use insect repellent, and keep using it for a few weeks, even after you come home. Wear long sleeves and long pants to make bites less likely. Stay in places with air conditioning and window screens. If you can, get rid of standing water where mosquitoes breed. And to learn more about how to keep your family safe, just visit CDC.gov.

But every day that Republican leaders in Congress wait to do their job, every day our experts have to wait to get the resources they need, and that has real-life consequences. It means weaker mosquito control efforts, longer wait times to get accurate diagnostic results, delayed vaccines. It puts more Americans at risk.

One Republican Senator said that “there's no such thing as a Republican position on Zika or Democratic position on Zika, because these mosquitoes bite everyone.” I agree. And we need more Republicans to act that way, because this is more important than politics. It's about young moms like Ashley. Today, her new baby Savannah is healthy and happy. And that's got to be priority number one.