

Administration of Barack Obama, 2014

The President's News Conference With Prime Minister Mark Rutte of the Netherlands in The Hague, Netherlands

March 25, 2014

Prime Minister Rutte. Good afternoon. Making the world safer by preventing nuclear terrorism—that was President Obama's goal when he made nuclear security an international priority in Prague in 2009. We have taken a big step in that direction here in The Hague. I'm proud to present our The Hague Nuclear Summit Communiqué to you today. Building on the progress we made earlier in Washington and Seoul, this communiqué sets the bar even higher. We have taken major steps towards meeting all three main objectives of the NSS process. I'll say a few words about each of them.

The first objective is to reduce the amount of dangerous nuclear material in the world. The less dangerous nuclear material there is and the better the nuclear security, the smaller the chance that terrorists will be able to get hold of it. It's that simple. That's why I am pleased that the 53 countries and 4 international organizations here have confirmed their commitment to continue reducing stocks of dangerous nuclear material: highly enriched uranium and plutonium.

A number of countries have announced their intention to hand over their highly enriched uranium to the U.S., where it will be downgraded. As chair of this summit, I naturally welcome this announcement.

We are also making progress on the second objective: improving the security of nuclear and other radioactive material. We have affirmed our ambition to improve the security of materials that can be used to make nuclear weapons and the security of radiological sources that terrorists could use to make dirty bombs.

The commitment of the NSS became more concrete in this matter. The scale of panic and fear a dirty bomb would cause doesn't bear thinking about, not to mention the possible disruption to society. So I am especially pleased that we are widening the scope of the NSS process to include this area.

Furthermore, the NSS countries have encouraged implementation of the IAEA nuclear security guidelines. A significant number of us have decided to take this commitment even further. As chair of this summit, I'm delighted to announce that two-thirds of the NSS countries, on the initiative of the United States, Korea, and the Netherlands, have pledged to incorporate these important IAEA recommendations into their national legislation. This sends a very good message and represents tangible progress. I can't stress enough how important this is. And fortunately, the group of countries supporting this initiative is growing. Our ultimate goal is, of course, for all NSS countries to follow this lead and set an example for other countries.

I'm also pleased with the growing awareness among NSS countries of the importance of nuclear forensics, because if nuclear material is misused or smuggled, it's important to be able to determine the origin of the material and trace the smugglers. The Netherlands Forensic Institute is playing a prominent role, and I expect it will produce a lot of good work in this field in the coming years.

The third main objective of the summit is to enhance international cooperation. A substantial part of the communiqué addresses this, and we are making good progress. The closing statement lays the basis for an efficient and sustainable international security architecture. For the first time, there will be a complete and coherent overview of the international nuclear security architecture with the IAEA taking the lead. There is still a lot of work to be done in this area too. I expect that we will be able to finish up the details at the summit in 2016 in the U.S.

The final point I'd like to address is the importance of improving the working relationship between government and the nuclear industry. This is an issue that is very important to the Netherlands. We need industry with us if we are to develop effective security measures that don't cause needless harm to the economy. That's why I applaud the worldwide nuclear sector for meeting the last few days in Amsterdam to discuss this subject. Cooperation is now very much on track.

I don't want to close this summit without expressing my admiration for the thousands of people who made it possible: your organizers, the security staff who made sure the summit proceeded safely and went off without a hitch, the people who managed the traffic—there are simply too many to mention. I know how hard everyone worked, and I want to thank them all for their dedication and effort. And I want to thank the people of the Netherlands for their patience and understanding. We have seen the Netherlands at its best. I am proud of that.

I conclude: Two days ago, I used a football metaphor when I said that the ball was on the penalty spot. As chair of this edition of the NSS, I'm delighted that the NSS countries and organizations have scored a goal and that we have taken another step towards making the world safer. But we are not there yet. The NSS process will continue, and in 2 years, we'll meet again to raise the bar even higher in all our interests.

The summit in 2016 will be chaired by the man who initiated the NSS process, President Obama. So now, Barack, I'm pleased to give the floor to you.

President Obama. Thank you so much. Prime Minister Rutte, we could not be more grateful for your leadership in this entire process, and so thank you so much.

With your indulgence, before I speak a little bit about this summit, I'd like to say a few words about a tragedy that recently took place back in the United States. Over the weekend, a massive landslide swept through a tiny town called Oso in Washington State. And while I won't get ahead of the ongoing response and rescue operations, we know that part of this tightly knit community has been lost.

First responders have acted bravely, despite still-dangerous conditions. The American Red Cross has opened multiple shelters. And the people of Washington State have been quick to help and comfort their fellow citizens.

I just spoke to Governor Inslee, who swiftly declared a state of the emergency. I signed that emergency declaration to make sure he's got all the resources that he needs. My administration is in contact with them on an ongoing basis. FEMA and the Army Corps of Engineers have also been onsite to offer their assistance and expertise.

So I would just ask all Americans to send their thoughts and prayers to Washington State and the community of Oso and the families and friends of those who continue to be missing. We hope for the best, but we recognize this is a tough situation.

Now, as for our work here in the The Hague, I want to just repeat the extraordinary work that Mark has done in helping to organize this. King Willem-Alexander and the people of the Netherlands, your hospitality has been remarkable, your organization has been flawless. To all the people who were involved in putting this together, including those who were putting up with the traffic that I caused, I want to say thank you.

I'm told there's a Dutch word that captures this spirit, which doesn't translate exactly into English. But let me say that my first visit to the Netherlands has been truly *gezellig*. [Laughter]

I convened the first Nuclear Security Summit in Washington 4 years ago because I believed that we need a serious and sustained global effort to deal with one of the greatest threats to international security, and that's the specter of nuclear terrorism. We made further progress at our second summit in Seoul. And under your Prime Minister's stewardship, we've built on that progress here.

In keeping with the spirit of these summits, this was not about vague commitments, it was about taking tangible and concrete steps to secure more of the world's nuclear material so it never falls in the hands of terrorists. And that's what we've done.

In particular, I want to commend Belgium and Italy for completing the removal of their excess supplies of highly enriched uranium and plutonium so that those supplies can be eliminated. In a major commitment, Japan announced that it will work with the United States to eliminate hundreds of kilograms of weapons-usable nuclear material from one of their experimental reactors. That's enough for a dozen—for dozens of nuclear weapons.

Dozens of other nations have agreed to take specific steps towards improving nuclear security in their own countries and to support our global efforts. Some have pledged to convert their research reactors to low-enriched uranium, which cannot be used to make a bomb. We've set new goals for implementing our nuclear security measures, including sharing more information to show that we're all living up to our commitments.

I've made it clear that the United States will continue to do our part as well. Our nuclear regulator will develop new guidelines to strengthen cybersecurity at our nuclear power plants. And we've pledged to pursue the production of a key medical isotope used to treat illnesses like cancer without relying on weapons-usable material. We're also going to work with our partners around the world to install more radiation detection equipment at ports and transit sites in order to combat nuclear smuggling.

And all of this builds on our previous efforts. Twelve countries and two dozen nuclear facilities around the world have now rid themselves entirely of highly enriched uranium and plutonium. Dozens of nations have boosted security at their nuclear storage sites or built their own countersmuggling teams or created new centers to improve nuclear security and training. The International Atomic Energy Agency, or the IAEA, is now stronger and more countries have ratified the treaties and international partnerships at the heart of our efforts. So we've seen a fundamental shift in our approach to nuclear security.

But as Mark indicated, we still have a lot more work to do to fulfill the ambitious goals we set 4 years ago to fully secure all nuclear and radiological material, civilian and military, so that it can no longer pose a risk to any of our citizens. I believe this is essential to the security of the entire world, and given the catastrophic consequences of even a single attack, we cannot be complacent.

I'll close by reminding everyone that one of the achievements of our first summit in 2010 was Ukraine's decision to remove all its highly enriched uranium from its nuclear fuel sites. Had that not happened, those dangerous nuclear materials would still be there now, and the difficult situation we're dealing with in Ukraine today would involve yet another level of concern. So it's a vivid reminder that the more of this material we can secure, the safer all of our countries will be. We've made progress. We've got more to do. We're going to continue our work, and I look forward to hosting the fourth Nuclear Security Summit in the United States in 2 years.

So thank you again, Mark, and all your team as well as the people of the Netherlands for this outstanding summit.

Moderator. Thank you, Mr. President. We will go straight to the questions now, and the first question will be Julie Pace, Associated Press.

President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia/Ukraine/International Sanctions Against Russia/ National Security Agency's Electronic Surveillance Program

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. You've been criticized during this dispute with Russia as not understanding President Putin's motivations. As recently as last month, you and others in your administration said you thought Putin was reflecting or pausing his incursion into Crimea. Did you misread Putin's intentions? And what do you think his motivations are now?

And if I could just quickly ask on NSA, when you spoke about the NSA review in January, you said you weren't sold on the option of having phone companies hold metadata and you thought it raised additional privacy concerns. What has changed for you on that matter since that time, and do you think Congress will pass the legislation you're seeking?

And, Mr. Prime Minister, there are leaders in Europe who have concerns about the sector sanctions the President has proposed on Russia's economy. Do you think any of those leaders have been—have had their concerns alleviated during their talks with the President over the past few days? Thank you.

President Obama. All right, let me see if I can remember all these. [*Laughter*]

Prime Minister Rutte. I have only one question. [*Laughter*]

President Obama. With respect to President Putin's motivation, I think there's been a lot of speculation. I'm less interested in motivation and more interested in the facts and the principles that not only the United States, but the entire international community, are looking to uphold. I don't think that any of us have been under any illusion that Russia has been very interested in controlling what happens to Ukraine. That's not new, that's been the case for years now. That's been the case dating back to the Orange Revolution.

But what we have said consistently throughout this process is that it is up to the Ukrainian people to make their own decisions about how they organize themselves and who they interact with. And it's always been our belief that Ukraine is going to have a relationship to Russia—there is a strong historic bond between the two countries—but that that does not justify Russia encroaching on Ukraine's territorial integrity or sovereignty.

That's exactly what's happened. And I said very early on that should Russia do so, there would be consequences. And working with our European partners and our international partners, we have put in place sanctions that have already had some impact on the Russian economy.

Now, moving forward, we have said—and I want to be very clear about this—we're not recognizing what has happened in Crimea. The notion that a referendum sloppily organized over the course of 2 weeks would somehow justify the breaking off of Crimea and the annexation by Russia, that somehow that would be a valid process, I think the overwhelming majority of the world rejects. But we are also concerned about further encroachment by Russia into Ukraine.

So what I announced and what the European Council announced was that we were consulting and putting in place the framework, the architecture, for additional sanctions, additional costs should Russia take this next step.

What we also said—and we'll continue to say—is that there is another path available to Russia. The Ukrainian Government has said it is prepared to negotiate with Russia, that it is prepared to recognize its international obligations. And the international community has been supportive of a diplomatic process that would allow a deescalation of tensions, a moving back of Russian troops from Ukraine's borders, and rapidly organized elections that allow the Ukrainian people to choose their leadership. And my expectation is, is that if the Ukrainian people are allowed to make their own decisions, their decision will be that they want to have a relationship with Europe and they want to have a relationship with Russia, and that this is not a zero-sum game.

And I think that Prime Minister Yatseniuk and the current Government have shown remarkable restraint and are prepared to go down that diplomatic path. It is now up to Russia to act responsibly and show itself to be once again willing to abide by international rules and international norms. And if it chooses to do so, I think that there can be a better outcome. If it fails to do so, there will be additional costs. And those will have some disruptive effect to the global economy, but they'll have the greatest impact on Russia. So I think that will be a bad choice for President Putin to make, but ultimately, he is the President of Russia, and he's the one who's going to be making that decision. He just has to understand that there's a choice to be made here.

With respect—even though this was directed at Mark, I just want to address this issue of sectoral sanctions. So far what we've done is we've put in place sanctions that impact individuals, restricts visas being issued to them, freezes their assets. We have identified one bank in particular in Russia that was well known to be the bank of choice for many of the persons who support and facilitate Russian officials from carrying out some of these activities. But what we've held off on are more broad-based sanctions that would impact entire sectors of the Russian economy.

It has not just been my suggestion, but it has also been the European Council's suggestion, that should Russia go further, such sectoral sanctions would be appropriate. And that would include areas potentially like energy or finance or arm sales or trade that exists between Europe and the United States and Russia.

And what we're doing now is, at a very technical level, examining the impacts of each of these sanctions. Some particular sanctions would hurt some countries more than others. But all of us recognize that we have to stand up for a core principle that lies at the heart of the international order and that facilitated European union and the incredible prosperity and peace that Europe has enjoyed now for decades.

And so although it could cause some disruptions to each of our economies or certain industries, what I've been encouraged by is the firmness and the willingness on the part of all

countries to look at ways in which they can participate in this process. Our preference throughout will be to resolve this diplomatically, but I think we're prepared—as we've already shown—to take the next step if the situation gets worse.

Finally, on Ukraine, I think it's very important that we spend as much effort on bolstering the economy inside of Ukraine and making sure that the elections proceed in an orderly fashion. And so my hope is that the IMF is able to complete a package for Ukraine rapidly to stabilize their finances and their economy. The OSCE, other international organizations, are sending in observers and monitors, and we're providing technical assistance to make sure that the elections are free and fair. The sooner those elections take place, the sooner the economy is stabilized, the better positioned the Ukrainian people will be in terms of managing what is a very challenging situation.

With respect to the NSA—and I'll be just brief on this—I said several months ago that I was assigning our various agencies in the IC—the intelligence community—to bring me new options with respect to the telephone database program. They have presented me now with an option that I think is workable. And it addresses the two core concerns that people had.

Number one, the idea of Government storing bulk data generally. This ensures that the Government is not in possession of that bulk data. I want to emphasize once again that some of the dangers that people hypothesized when it came to bulk data, there were clear safeguards against. But I recognize that people were concerned about what might happen in the future with that bulk data. This proposal that's been presented to me would eliminate that concern.

The second thing the people were concerned about is making sure that not only is a judge overseeing the overall program, but also that a judge is looking at each individual inquiry that's made into a database. And this new plan that's been presented to me does that.

So overall, I'm confident that it allows us to do what is necessary in order to deal with the dangers of a terrorist attack, but does so in a way that addresses some of the concerns that people had raised. And I'm looking forward to working with Congress to make sure that we go ahead and pass the enabling legislation quickly so that we can get on with the business of effective law enforcement.

Prime Minister Rutte. On Ukraine, let me make it absolutely clear that the European Union and U.S.— and yesterday we saw alignment within the G-7—we are working very closely together, and I can fully support all the answers which you just gave—have just given on the question you asked.

Maybe I can add one thing, which is the highly—the fact that the Russian economy is very much gas and oil dependent, and that means that economic sanctions, if they will be necessary—and we are not there yet—if economic sanctions will be necessary because this conflict would escalate to a next stage, and if this were to happen, these sanctions would hit Russia very badly. And obviously, you can never guarantee that the people in Europe, in Canada, in the U.S. would not be hurt. But obviously, we will make sure that we will design these sanctions in such a way that they will have maximum impact on the Russian economy and not on the European, the Canadian, the Japanese, or the American economy. That is our way. But we worked very closely together, and we seek total alignment on this issue.

Moderator. Okay, thank you. Next question, Eelco Bosch van Rosenthal [Nederlandse Omroep Stichting].

Ukraine/Russian Military Buildup on Ukraine-Russia Border/North Atlantic Treaty Organization

Q. Question for President Obama, on Ukraine, reportedly there are about 30,000 Russian troops on the border with Ukraine. What guarantees can you give to the people of Eastern Ukraine, to the people in the Baltic States, Moldova, other countries that they will not be next when it comes to the Russian politics of annexation? And with regard to that also, is this a done deal? Is there any doubt in your mind that Putin will return Crimea to where it belongs, according to the West? Or is this diplomatic show of force basically just to prevent another land grab somewhere else?

President Obama. On the second question first, on the issue of Crimea, it's not a done deal in the sense that the international community by and large is not recognizing the annexation of Crimea. Obviously, the facts on the ground are that the Russian military controls Crimea. There are a number of individuals inside of Crimea that are supportive of that process. There's no expectation that they will be dislodged by force. And so what we can bring to bear are the legal arguments, the diplomatic arguments, the political pressure, the economic sanctions that are already in place to try to make sure that there's a cost to that process.

But I think it would be dishonest to suggest that there's a simple solution to resolving what has already taken place in Crimea. Although, history has a funny way of moving in twists and turns and not just in a straight line, so how the situation in Crimea evolves in part depends on making sure that the international community stays unified in indicating that this was an illegal action on the part of Russia.

With respect to the Russian troops that are along the border of Ukraine at the moment, right now they are on Russian soil. And if they stay on Russian soil, we oppose what appears to be an effort in intimidation, but Russia has a right legally to have its troops on its own soil. I don't think it's a done deal, and I think that Russia is still making a series of calculations. And again, those calculations will be impacted in part by how unified the United States and Europe are and the international community is in saying to Russia that this is not how, in the 21st century, we resolve disputes.

I think it's particularly important for all of us to dismiss this notion that somehow Russian speakers or Russian nationals inside of Ukraine are threatened and that somehow that would justify Russian action. There has been no evidence that Russian speakers have been in any way threatened. If anything, what we've seen are provocateurs who have created scuffles inside of Ukraine. But when I hear analogies, for example, to Kosovo, where you had thousands of people who were being slaughtered by their Government, the—it's a comparison that makes absolutely no sense. And I think it's important for everybody to be clear and strip away some of the possible excuses for a potential Russian action.

With respect to the broader issue of States that are bordering Russia and what assurances do they have about future land grabs, as you put it, obviously, some of those countries are NATO countries. And as NATO allies, we believe that the cornerstone of our security is making sure that all of us, including the United States, are abiding by Article 5 and the notion of collective defense. And what we are now doing is organizing even more intensively to make sure that we have contingency plans and that every one of our NATO allies has assurances that we will act in their defense against any threats.

That's what NATO is all about, and that's been the cornerstone of peace in the transatlantic region now for several generations. So we will uphold that. And there will be a

series of NATO consultations. A NATO ministerial is going to be coming up in which we further develop and deepen those plans. But I have not seen any NATO members who have not expressed a firm determination with respect to NATO members.

Now, those who are—those countries, border countries, that are outside of NATO, what we can do is what we're doing with Ukraine, which is trying to make sure that there is sufficient international pressure and a spotlight shined on the situation in some of these countries and that we're also doing everything we can to bolster their economies, make sure that through various diplomatic and economic initiatives that they feel supported and that they know that we stand by them. But when it comes to a potential military response, that is defined by NATO membership; that's what NATO is about.

Moderator. Jon Karl from ABC News.

U.S. Foreign Policy/Syria/Ukraine/Russia/2012 Republican Presidential Nominee W. Mitt Romney

Q. Mr. President, thank you. In China, in Syria, in Egypt, and now in Russia, we've seen you make strong statements, issue warnings that have been ignored. Are you concerned that America's influence in the world, your influence in the world, is on the decline? And in the light of recent developments, do you think Mitt Romney had a point when he said that Russia is America's biggest geopolitical foe? If not Russia, who?

And, Mr. Prime Minister, do you think these sanctions will change Vladimir Putin's calculation or cause him to back down? And do you see there's a—where do you see a Russian red line, where if they go any further, if they go into Eastern Ukraine, into Moldova, where options beyond sanctions have to be considered? Thank you.

President Obama. Well, Jonathan, I think if the premise of the question is that whenever the United States objects to an action and other countries don't immediately do exactly what we want, that that's been the norm, that would pretty much erase most of 20th century history. I think that there's a distinction between us being very clear about what we think is an appropriate action, what we stand for, what principles we believe in versus what is, I guess, implied in the question that we should engage in some sort of military action to prevent something.

The truth of the matter is, is that the world has always been messy. And what the United States has consistently been able to do—and we continue to be able to do—is to mobilize the international community around a set of principles and norms. And where our own self-defense may not be involved, we may not act militarily, that does not mean that we don't steadily push against those forces that would violate those principles and ideals that we care about.

So yes, you're right, Syria—the Syrian civil war is not solved. And yet Syria has never been more isolated. With respect to the situation in Ukraine, we have not gone to war with Russia. I think there's a significant precedent to that in the past. That does not mean that Russia is not isolated. In fact, Russia is far more isolated in this instance than it was 5 years ago with respect to Georgia and more isolated than it was certainly during most of the 20th century, when it was part of the Soviet Union.

The point is that there are always going to be bad things that happen around the world. And the United States, as the most powerful nation in the world, understandably, is looked to for solutions to those problems. And what we have to make sure we're doing are—that we are

putting all elements of our power behind finding solutions, working with our international partners, standing up for those principles and ideals in a clear way.

There are going to be moments where military action is appropriate. There are going to be some times where that's not in the interests—national security interests, of the United States or some of our partners, but that doesn't mean that we're not going to continue to make the effort or speak clearly about what we think is right and wrong. And that's what we've done.

With respect to Mr. Romney's assertion that Russia is our number-one geopolitical foe, the truth of the matter is that America has got a whole lot of challenges. Russia is a regional power that is threatening some of its immediate neighbors not out of strength, but out of weakness. Ukraine has been a country in which Russia had enormous influence for decades, since the breakup of the Soviet Union. And we have considerable influence on our neighbors. We generally don't need to invade them in order to have a strong, cooperative relationship with them. The fact that Russia felt compelled to go in militarily and lay bare these violations of international law indicates less influence, not more.

And so my response to them continues to be what I believe today, which is, Russia's actions are a problem. They don't pose the number-one national security threat to the United States. I continue to be much more concerned, when it comes to our security, with the prospect of a nuclear weapon going off in Manhattan, which is part of the reason why the United States—showing its continued international leadership—has organized a forum over the last several years that's been able to help eliminate that threat in a consistent way.

Prime Minister Rutte. There is no geopolitical conflict which can be solved without the United States. And therefore, I applaud the fact that President Obama's administration is active in every arena: Ukraine, Iran, Syria, the Middle East peace process, and so many other parts of the world. Take the initiatives Secretary of State Kerry is taking now in the Middle East peace process. I was, in December, in the region, and I spoke with senior leaders both in Israel and the Palestinian Territories. And they are extremely grateful for the fact that America is providing that leadership.

This is difficult issue; it can't be solved overnight. There is no magic wand which can handle this. But progress is being made. Take Iran. I spoke with President Rouhani in Davos at the World Economic Forum in January. We have now interim accord. The fact that I was able—the first Dutch leader in over 30, 40 years who spoke with an Iranian leader, President Rouhani—was possible because of the interim accord, and it seems that it is holding. America provides leadership there.

So I really applaud President Obama's role in all these major issues. And it is necessary because United States is leader of the free world and needs to provide that leadership, and he is doing that.

Then, on your question about President Putin, I cannot—it would be difficult to exactly judge what is happening in the senior leadership in Moscow, in Russia, at this moment. But as I said earlier, a highly undiversified economy like the Russian economy—which is so much oil and gas dependent, which has not invested in infrastructure, invested in other areas of its economy—it will be worried if there is a risk in the financial sector or in weapons or in trade or indeed in energy. There could be potential sanctions that will hurt them. And as I said earlier, we have to design them in such a way that they will particularly hit Russia and not Europe, the U.S., Canada, or Japan. That is what we are working on, and we hope we won't need them.

And then, on the red lines, I cannot envisage this conflict ending up in a military conflict. I don't think that is likely. I don't think anybody wants it. And at the same time, I totally agree with President Obama's answer on Article 5, when this conflict will be taken to the borders of one of the NATO countries. But luckily, that is at this moment not the case.

Moderator. Okay, final questions for—[inaudible].

Europe-U.S. Relations/National Security Agency's Electronic Surveillance Program

Q. Mr. President, you met a lot of leaders here; many were angry about the NSA story. Have you fixed the relationships with these leaders? And the second question is, many are shocked by the extent of which the NSA collects private data. Today we heard in the New York Times that you plan to end the systematic collection of data of Americans. But can you address the concerns of the Dutch and the rest of the world about their privacy?

President Obama. Well, first of all, we have had a consistent, unbreakable bond between the leaders of Europe over the last several decades, and it's across many dimensions: economic, military, counterterrorism, cultural. And so any one issue can be an irritant in the relationship between the countries, but it doesn't define those relationships. And that continues to be the case, and that has been the case throughout the last couple of years.

As I said in a speech that I gave earlier this year, the United States is very proud of its record of working with countries around the world to prevent terrorism or nuclear proliferation or human trafficking or a whole host of issues that all of us I think would be concerned about. Intelligence plays a critical role in that process.

What we've seen is that as technology has evolved, the guidelines and structures that constrain how our intelligence agencies operated have not kept pace with these advances in technology. And although, having examined over the last year, year and a half what's been done, I'm confident that everybody in our intelligence agencies operates in the best of intentions and is not snooping into the privacy of ordinary Dutch, German, French, or American citizens. What is true is, is that there is a danger because of these new technologies that at some point, it could be abused. And that's why I initiated a broad-based review of what we could do.

There are a couple of things that we did that are unprecedented. In my speech, I announced that, for the first time, under my direction, that we are going to treat the privacy concerns of non-U.S. persons as seriously as we are the constraints that already exist by law on U.S. persons. We're doing that not because we're bound by international law, but because ultimately, it's the right thing to do.

With respect to some of the aspects of data collection, what I've been very clear about is, is that there has to be a narrow purpose to it, not a broad-based purpose; but it's rather based on a specific concern around terrorism or counterproliferation or human trafficking or something that I think all of us would say has to be pursued.

And so what I've tried to do then is to make sure that my intelligence teams are consulting very closely at each stage with their counterparts in other nations so that there's greater transparency in terms of what exactly we're doing, what we're not doing. Some of the reporting here in Europe, as well as the United States, frankly, has been pretty sensationalized. I think the fears about our privacy in this age of the Internet and big data are justified. I think the actual facts—people would have an assurance if—that if you are just the ordinary citizen in any of these countries, that your privacy, in fact, is not being invaded on.

But I recognize that because of these revelations, that there's a process that's taking place where we have to win back the trust not just of governments, but more importantly, of ordinary citizens. And that's not going to happen overnight, because I think that there's a tendency to be skeptical of government and to be skeptical in particular of U.S. intelligence services. And so it's going to be necessary for us—the step we took that was announced today, I think, is an example of us slowly, systematically putting in more checks, balances, legal processes.

The good news is that I'm very confident that it can be achieved, and I'm also confident that the core values that America has always believed in, in terms of privacy, rule of law, individual rights, that that has guided the United States for many years and it will continue to guide us into the future. Okay?

Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you again.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 4 p.m. at the Gemeentemuseum Den Haag. In his remarks, the President referred to Allison M. MacFarlane, Chairwoman, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission. He also referred to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

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