

*Administration of Barack Obama, 2014*

**Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Anthony J. Abbott of Australia and an Exchange With Reporters in Beijing, China**

*November 10, 2014*

*President Obama.* I just want to express my appreciation to Prime Minister Abbott and his team and the people of Australia not only for the upcoming G–20 and the arrangements that they've made for what I'm sure is going to be a very important discussion about global growth, but for the incredibly strong bilateral alliance and relationship between our peoples. Time and again, Australia has stood shoulder to shoulder with the United States on issues of critical international security. Today is no different.

We have seen Australian participation as part of a coalition dealing with ISIL in Iraq. They continue to be an outstanding member of the coalition in our efforts to stabilize Afghanistan. Tony personally has expressed his extraordinary commitment to battling foreign fighters that threaten both of our homelands. And obviously, the men and women of the Australian Armed Forces have terrific capabilities and on many occasions have made extraordinary sacrifice. So first and foremost, I want to thank him for the security partnership that we have.

We also have a strong economic partnership. And I'm certain that the G–20 will be productive because Tony has emphasized the need for us to emphasize growth and jobs. That's true in Australia, that's true in the United States. It's true around the world at a time when global demand continues to be weak and we see certain regions of the world lagging behind the kind of growth rates that we'd like to see. And so I'm looking forward to a very productive conversation there.

We also discussed the opportunities. TPP is an obvious one, and Australia has been an outstanding partner on that front. We have additional opportunities in APEC and the East Asia Summit to discuss how this incredibly dynamic region can cooperate more effectively together around issues like infrastructure, disaster relief, streamlining regulations to facilitate greater trade. Throughout all this, we find that Australia consistently shares values, ideals, a sense of global responsibility that is unparalleled. And we very much appreciate our friendship and our cooperation and are confident that over the next several days, we'll be making progress on all these fronts.

*Prime Minister Abbott.* Barack, thank you so much. It's great to be here in Beijing with you and with obviously many other leaders.

I see the next couple of days in Beijing here at APEC as being very much the right lead-in to the G–20 in Brisbane, because essentially, both APEC and the G–20 are about growth and jobs. That's what the world needs. It needs more growth. And more growth means more jobs.

So I'm very pleased to be here. I guess I should observe that one of the innovations of the G–20 this year has been not only to agree that we need more growth, but for all of the G–20 countries to put forward its plan for growth and to submit individual country plans to a form of peer review. And the fact that we've all been able to say not just that we want growth, but that we intend to get extra growth in a particular way, and then to let everyone know what that way is means that there's a good chance that it's actually going to get delivered because we'll be able to see in the months and years ahead how much of these growth strategies are actually being delivered.

But again, if I may say, it is always good to be with the President of the United States. Australia and the United States are a great partnership. And I want to thank President Obama for the leadership that he's shown in so many areas. But obviously, as we deal with the ISIL death cult in the Middle East, your leadership has been deft. And Australia is very—I mean, we don't like being—the necessity of being part of the coalition, but it is a necessity. And that's why we'll be a staunch member.

*President Obama.* Okay. All right, we've got time for a couple questions each. We'll start with Julie Pace at AP.

*Release of Kenneth Bae and Matthew T. Miller From Captivity in North Korea/North Korea's Nuclear Weapons Program*

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Can you give us a sense of what signals or outreach you received from the North Koreans that led to your decision to send James Clapper to secure the release of the Americans? And do you see this breakthrough as a possible precursor to broader talks with North Korea on nuclear issues or other matters?

*President Obama.* We had an indication that there was the possibility of the release of these two hostages or prisoners, and we pursued it. It did not touch on some of the broader issues that have been the source of primary concern when it comes to North Korea, its—in particular, its development of nuclear capacity.

There were not high-level policy discussions between Jim Clapper and the North Koreans. But we have been consistent in saying that when and if North Korea becomes serious about denuclearization on the peninsula and is prepared to have a conversation around that topic, then the United States is going to be very open to trying to arrive at a solution that over the long term, could lead to greater prosperity and security for North Korea.

Until that time, there's going to be a core problem between us. And obviously, I'm incredibly thankful to Jim Clapper for the efforts that he made. And I couldn't be happier for the families, as we enter into the holidays, to know that their loved ones are back. It's a good-news story.

We continue, though, to have a broader fundamental conflict with the North Koreans. And it's going to take, I think, in addition to small gestures like the ones that we saw—the release of these individuals—a broader understanding on the part of the North Koreans that all the countries in the region, including China, including the Republic of Korea, including Japan consider this to be their number-one security priority: making sure that we do not have a nuclearizing Korean Peninsula. And up until this point at least, we had not seen serious engagement on the part of Pyongyang to deal with that problem.

Q. Did you get any better indication about Kim Jong Un and his strategy for dealing with the U.S. through these negotiations?

*President Obama.* No.

*Prime Minister Abbott.* I think we have an Australian question? Phil?

*Proposed Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank/China*

Q. Phil Currie, from the Australian Financial Review. Mr. President, your Government had conversations with our Government about China's proposal for the Infrastructure Investment Bank in the region. Could I ask you, sir, what your concerns were about that bank, what you relayed to our Government? Were they more strategic, or were they financial?

And, Mr. Abbott, would you like to comment as well?

*President Obama.* It's interesting.—We were talking before you came in about my belief that it's in all of our interest for China to be successful, prosperous, and to be an outstanding international partner.

You want the most populous country in the world to be stable and successful. And as China has undertaken this extraordinary journey over the last several decades and we've seen unprecedented numbers of people move out of dire poverty into a more stable economic situation, it's all for the good if China then now becomes a contributor to broader international efforts to help less developed countries and to alleviate poverty elsewhere.

So not only are we not opposed to those efforts, we want to actively encourage efforts for China to make contributions to the international order. But what we've consistently said is that it's important for China to uphold international rules and norms as it expands its influence both regionally and around the world.

So on something like a infrastructure bank in this region, making sure that there's transparency and accountability, and that if it's in fact a multilateral institution, that there are rules that all countries are abiding by in the operations of the institution. Those are the same rules by which the World Bank or IMF or Asia Development Bank or any other international institutions needs to abide by.

When the United States helped to craft those institutions after World War II, the United States deliberately restrained itself in some ways, bound itself to certain norms and certain rules because we were confident that when everybody is following a set of rules of the road, all of us are better off, large countries, small countries alike.

And so I think our message, whether it's on the Asia development bank or on some of the maritime issues that have caused tension and consternation in the region, our message is that we want to see China successful. Inevitably, they are going to have influence and exert a certain gravitational pull just by dint of size and what's happened with their economy and the extraordinary capabilities of their people. But as they grow, we want them to be a partner in underwriting the international order, not undermining it.

*Prime Minister Abbott.* Phil, as you know, the Chinese have been promoting this for at least 12 months now. And ever since the idea was first floated, many countries have been talking to China about it and amongst themselves about it. So there have been lots and lots of conversations with a whole range of people in countries about the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank.

In principle, a new multilateral body to help promote infrastructure will be good for growth and good for jobs. But it does, as far as we're concerned, have to be a genuinely multilateral body, and as a genuinely multilateral body, we'd be very happy to be part of it, and I think most countries would. And I guess that's what we're looking to see. We're looking to see some evolution in the time ahead to a situation where this has the sorts of governance and transparency that other multilateral institutions have so that it's a body that no one country can unilaterally control. And if and when we get that, I think it will be a good contributor to growth in our region and in the wider world.

*President Obama.* Phil Mattingly [Bloomberg Television].

*Hong Kong/China/Human Rights/Burma*

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Chinese President Xi Jinping said yesterday that he backed how the current Chief Executive is handling protestors in Hong Kong. I wondered if you agreed with that assessment. And what, if any, concerns do you plan on raising about the issue while you're here in Beijing?

*President Obama.* Our message has been consistent with President Xi and with his predecessors. There are certain things that the United States believes. We believe in freedom of speech. We believe in freedom of association. We believe in openness in government as befitting our traditions and our way of life. We don't expect China to follow an American model in every instance, but we're going to continue to have concerns about human rights. Obviously, the situation between China and Hong Kong is historically complicated and is in a process of transition. And I think our primary message has been to make sure that violence is avoided as the people of Hong Kong try to sort through what this next phase of their relationship is to the mainland.

But we're not going to stop speaking out on behalf of the things that we care about, recognizing that we also have significant interest in business to do with China and recognizing that China is not at the same place in terms of their development, both politically and economically, as we are today. But I think it would be unrealistic to expect that we set those concerns aside because, as I've said in international forums as well as bilateral meetings, respect for human rights, respect for the dignity of individuals, I don't believe is unique to America, it's not unique to the West. I think people have aspirations for a certain amount of freedom and dignity and the ability to shape their own lives all around the globe. And I'm proud that despite the fact that in too many places those rights aren't always observed, that we're consistently a voice encouraging more space for those voices.

When we travel to Burma later on this trip, you're seeing an evolution that's taking place there that's powerful. It's incomplete, it takes place in fits and starts, but it's something that ultimately, I believe, will result in greater prosperity and security for the people there. And to the extent that we can be constructive partners and observers to that process, we will do so.

*Prime Minister Abbott.* I think there's another Australian question.

#### *U.S. Strategy To Combat the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) Terrorist Organization/Iraq*

Q. Thank you, Prime Minister.

*Prime Minister Abbott.* Mark Kenny.

Q. A question for both gentlemen. I'm sorry, Mark Kenny from Fairfax Media in Australia. A question for both of you, if I may.

Mr. President, you've recently increased your country's commitment to the Iraq campaign against ISIL. I'm wondering, was this specifically raised as a topic in the meeting you've just had? Did you put a request to Australia that it also increase its troop commitment or its military commitment to that effort?

*President Obama.* It was a topic, because, as I said, Australia has been a stalwart contributor to this effort. And Tony has been crystal clear about why it's so important for us to defeat ISIL, not only for the good of the region and the people of Iraq, but ultimately, for the people of the United States and Australia and people around the world.

But what I explained to Tony was the same thing that I said in an interview yesterday in the United States. We're moving to a slightly different phase now. The—initially, our goal was to stop the momentum of ISIL as it was sweeping through Iraq, and you were seeing too many Iraqi security force units scatter. And although, particularly in Anbar Province in the west, you're still seeing ISIL take over isolated towns, you haven't seen the same momentum.

The situation with respect to Iraqi security forces has stabilized, although the number of effective units is significantly smaller than it needs to be. So the next phase is for us to train and assist Iraqi security forces so that they can begin to build up and go on offense. We can provide close air support, we can provide logistics and intelligence, but ultimately, they're the ones who are going to have to fight to push ISIL out of some of these areas that they've taken over. And in order for us to do that, we're going to have to have more trainers on the ground, and that is the reason why I authorized this additional number of U.S. troops.

What hasn't changed is that it's not our folks who are going to be doing the fighting. Iraqis ultimately have to fight ISIL, and they have to determine their own security. But we are recognizing the need for us to ramp up Iraqi capabilities, not only the Iraqi security forces, but also some of the tribes in western Iraq that have shown a willingness to go against ISIL, but are outgunned and too often outmaneuvered at this stage.

Now, I recognize that the United States, as one member of the coalition, has some unique capabilities in setting up the template, setting up the structure for that training to take place in a way that protects our people, ensures that we have the kinds of enablers that make it safe for our folks to be there, not without risk, but at least protects them against extraordinary risks.

As we are setting that up, I am having conversations with Australia and other coalition partners that are already committed to putting trainers in to see how they can supplement and work with us in this overall effort. But the key point that I emphasized to Tony and I'm emphasizing to all our coalition members is, our task here is to help Iraqis help themselves. This is not the same situation as we saw either in the Iraq war in 2003, 2004, 2005, or what we've been doing in Afghanistan, where our men and women have been much more in the front lines. It doesn't mean that there are not risks involved, and I'm very mindful of making sure that as we look at these train-and-assist plans, that we're setting up the best possible circumstance for what is an inherently dangerous job, but it does mean that the principle that we're not engaged in direct combat, that continues.

*Prime Minister Abbott.* The President is absolutely right. The ISIL death cult is a menace to the whole world. They've declared war on the world. And it's good that the President, working with the Iraq Government, has assembled a strong coalition to assist the Iraqi Government to respond effectively and ultimately to regain control over its own territory.

I think it's very important that we never lose sight of the fact that this death cult is, to quote Malaysia's Prime Minister Najib, it's against God, it's against Islam, and it's against our common humanity, as we've seen repeatedly in recent months.

So it is important to respond strongly, which is what the U.S.-led coalition is doing. There are various different missions here. There's the advise-and-assist mission. There's a developing train-and-assist mission. Our priority at the moment is getting our special forces into Baghdad and then into the field on the advise-and-assist mission that we've set them. That's happening, and I'm confident that our people will do good work.

But the point that the President makes is absolutely right. In the end, no one is going to fight harder for Iraq than Iraqis will fight for themselves. And that's what we're doing. We are

helping them to reclaim their country from something which is evil, from something which is a menace to them, and if it's allowed to remain, will be a menace to all of us.

*President Obama.* Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:20 p.m. at the U.S. Embassy. In his remarks, he referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization. A reporter referred to Supreme Commander Kim Jong Un of North Korea.

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