

*Administration of Barack Obama, 2016*

**The President's News Conference With Prime Minister Matteo Renzi of Italy**  
*October 18, 2016*

*President Obama.* Please, everybody, have a seat. *Salve.* Once again, I want to welcome Prime Minister Renzi and his delegation back to the White House. As we all saw this morning, Matteo's English is much better than my Italian. Michelle and I are looking forward to hosting Matteo and Agnese at tonight's state dinner. But as I believe our Italian friends say, *prima il dovere, poi il piacere*—[laughter]—which means "first duty, then pleasure." Tonight's dinner will be a pleasure. Today we're focused on our duties: our work to advance the security and the prosperity of our peoples.

I want to begin by once again expressing our deep gratitude, as Americans, for the extraordinary alliance with Italy. The United States is lucky to have many strong allies around the world. Few are as strong and as reliable and as capable as Italy. In good times and in bad, we can count on each other. And I want to thank the Government and the people of Italy for the hospitality and the generosity they show to the many American military personnel and families who are stationed in Italy, far away from home.

Matteo, please also know that our thoughts continue to be with the people of Amatrice. And I know that you're still working closely with local governments there to recover and rebuild from the devastating earthquake that took place this summer.

In our work together over the past 2 years, I've come to count on Prime Minister Renzi as one of my closest partners and friends on the world stage. By virtue of his progressive vision, his energy, the reforms that he's pursuing—which are sweeping—the bold vision that he has for Italy and the world, I think Matteo embodies a new generation of leadership, not just for Italy, but also for Europe. And this is critically important because, as I've said repeatedly over the last several years, a strong and united and confident and prosperous Europe, anchored in liberal traditions and democracy and rights, that's a necessity for the United States, and it's a necessity for the world. It's a strategic interest of ours that we have a successful, united Europe. And today we focused on a number of key challenges facing Europe, our trans-Atlantic alliance, and the globe.

On the economic front, we agree that our focus has to remain on growth, creating jobs and prosperity for our people. Matteo has been pursuing some very bold economic reforms, structural reforms in Italy that are not easy, that are often resisted by existing institutions and inertia. But the Italian economy has shown signs of growth. It still has a long way to go to put Italy on a path to long-term and sustainable growth. And the upcoming referendum to modernize Italy's political institutions are something the United States strongly supports because we believe that it will help accelerate Italy's path towards a more vibrant, dynamic economy, as well as a more responsive political system.

Matteo shared his thoughts on how, in the wake of Brexit, the European Union can move forward and focus on delivering security and prosperity that Europeans deserve. And we both agreed that without an emphasis on demand and growth, and investment in infrastructure and projects that can put people back to work—particularly young people—that much of the economic fragility in Europe will continue. And by the way, that has an impact around the world, including on the American economy as well.

We both reaffirmed our strong support for negotiations around the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, which can support jobs and exports and innovation and growth on both sides of the Atlantic.

We talked about, as NATO allies, our unified determination to defend every ally and to continue to strengthen NATO's defense and deterrence posture. Italy will be a key contributor to NATO's Joint Task Force, which is now operational and can deploy anywhere in Europe on short notice. We discussed our shared concerns around the situation in Ukraine and the importance of keeping sanctions, including EU sanctions, in place until Russia and Ukraine are both implementing commitments under the Minsk agreement. And we are determined to work diplomatically with the Normandy Group in order to achieve that goal.

I thanked Italy very strongly for its leading role in the coalition against ISIL. After the United States, Italy is the second largest contributor of forces in Iraq. Italian forces are helping to stabilize cities through its training of police after they are liberated from ISIL. The start of Iraqi operations to liberate Mosul is another major step forward. Mosul, as many of you know, is Iraq's second largest city, and ISIL has been entrenched there for more than 2 years. Perhaps a million civilians are still living there. And so, in addition to rooting out ISIL, our focus jointly is on the safety and the humanitarian aid for civilians who are escaping the fight. That's going to be a top priority for both our governments.

My—Mosul will be a difficult fight, and there will be advances and there will be setbacks. But I am confident that just as ISIL has been defeated in communities across Iraq, ISIL will be defeated in Mosul as well, and that will be another step towards their ultimate destruction. Meanwhile, Italy continues to be one of our strongest counterterrorism partners as we work together to prevent terrorist attacks in our countries.

More broadly, we agreed to continue our strong support of the Libyan Government of National Accord, which, as we've seen in recent days, continues to face challenges to its authority. Italy provided critical diplomatic support to Libya's efforts to forge the Government. Together, we intend to continue to support the Government of National Accord as it works to eject ISIL from Libya, provide stability and services throughout the country. And as ISIL tries to expand its presence in Afghanistan, Italy continues to play a vital role as we train and assist Afghan forces and support Afghan development.

We discussed the continued need for strong, coordinated responses to the largest migrant and refugee crisis in Europe since World War II. As the leader of EU's naval operation in the Mediterranean, Italy and its partners have helped to save hundreds of thousands of lives. As NATO agreed in Warsaw, the alliance is moving ahead with plans to increase its support of these EU operations. And, Matteo, I want to commend you and the Italian people. For the leadership in Europe that you have shown as an eloquent voice for a collective, orderly, and humane response to this crisis is in keeping with our values and our shared commitment to human dignity.

And finally, the past two weeks have been a powerful reminder that when our countries work together we can leave the world a little bit better than we found it. Because the United States and Italy joined with other nations across the globe, we've brought the Paris Agreement on climate change into force. We reached an agreement to limit aviation emissions. And through the Montreal Protocol, nearly 200 nations just this past week agreed to phase down production and consumption of dangerous hydrofluorocarbons, which are a enormous contributor to greenhouse gases and a major step towards achieving the goals that we set in

Paris. Meanwhile, Italy continues to be a strong partner for development, especially to combat hunger and malnutrition around the world.

So, once again, Matteo, thank you for your friendship. Thank you for your partnership. I could not ask for a better partner. And the American people could not ask for a better friend and ally than Italy. So *grazie*.

*Prime Minister Renzi*. I'm not sure your Italian is worse than my English because——

*President Obama*. It's slower anyway.

*Prime Minister Renzi*. ——you improve very quickly, your Italian.

Mr. President, *grazie mille*.

[*At this point, Prime Minister Renzi spoke in Italian, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

*Prime Minister Renzi*. Thank you. Thank you kindly for the reception. What we said about the great honor which is here today for Italy is something I'd like to confirm, is something that I'd like to underline with great strength. But as President Obama said, our meeting was also an occasion to talk about our duties, and after that, to talk about pleasure.

In those topics that have to do with our political times, I want to thank the United States of America for the extraordinary support for the battle that Italy is having in our country, within Europe to affirm a paradigm of growth and not only of austerity at all levels. The United States are a model in this sense, 2008–2016. Constantly, your country has indicated, shown us the way of how to get out of the biggest crisis after the war. I believe that Europe can and should do more. Italy considers the American example as the reference point in this battle.

Of course, we also know that we have to do our homework at home, the structural reforms. And therefore, what the President just reminded us of is the priorities, starting with the labor market reform.

I had to ask for his forgiveness because I used the expression, "Jobs Act," which is obviously something that I copied. But this is something that is open source, and I think that we can copy each other's expressions from the great initiatives that were set forth by the Obama Presidency. This has created 588,000 new jobs in Italy, which for Italy are still insufficient, but at least they are a first step to leave our difficult situation.

Thank you, President Obama, for the work you've done as a leader in the energy field. Today, Italy is one of the main nations that sustains and upholds the vision of COP 21 in Paris. We will be working in Marrakesh in November. The next few years, we will be working in this direction in order to have clean energy, sustainable environment for our children.

And thank you for the work that we've done together in the field of culture—in the cultural field. I believe that we find ourselves in a season of our political lives. Maybe some people choose hatred, the culture of intolerance. We have to bet on liberty. We have to bet on our identity, the values that make this country extraordinary. And Europe—Europe has a desperate need to find its own soul. And this is due to its children. This is due to its grandchildren. So this is the first topic of conversation that we had with President Obama.

In terms of Italy, we want to make sure that the G–7, in Taormina, in Italy, in the beautiful Sicily is an important, a relevant appointment, and we commit ourselves, because the work that we began together, dear President, under your Presidency may continue. The legacy

of President Obama not—will not only remain in the United States. This has to be absolutely clear and absolutely loud. It will involve the Europe, and we feel totally committed in this direction.

And finally, before I talk about international policies, I want to tell you that we thank you for remembering Amatrice. Amatrice is a small village in the center of Italy which has been affected by a dramatic earthquake. It's also the town where *pasta all'Amatriciana* was born. This is one of the typical products of Italy. And so this small community at Amatrice that had so many dead has not left its courage.

Dear President, when you come to visit Italy in the next few months, I believe that we will want you to taste, thanks to the cooks in Amatrice, one of the best pastas that you have ever tried in your life, particularly *pasta all'Amatriciana*. I think that this is a way of saying to this community—where a community that has been folded by this terrible tragedy—that food can be an element of identity in the future.

In terms of our international policies, the Italian agenda is in agreement with the American agenda. We are thoroughly convinced of the need to affirm values of being able to live together, of being civil throughout the world. That's why we commit ourselves to work with the international coalition in all theaters, starting in Iraq, in Mosul, where Italian troops are supporting an operation to save the dam in Mosul. And we believe that it's fundamental, it's crucial not to succumb to the culture of fear. In the future, we cannot know what will happen, but if there's a great inheritance left by the American Dream, this is the best way to proceed.

Recently, a lot has been said about innovation and technology, and this has made people think that the future is a threat. I am completely convinced that in Italy and the United States we can help the new generations to think of the future not only of—think of this as a great opportunity. And for this reason, the agenda that the United States has presented today is an agenda that we agreed upon and we will be working together on it.

Thank you so much, Mr. President.

*President Obama.* Okay, we're going to take a few questions. And I will start with Kevin Freking of AP.

*Russia-U.S. Relations/Republican Presidential Nominee Donald J. Trump/Federal Bureau of Investigation/Department of State*

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Donald Trump says Hillary Clinton talks too tough about Vladimir Putin and that both of you insult the Russian leader. He also said that, if elected, he might meet with the Russian leader before his Inauguration. What do you think of Trump's approach to Putin? And how would it affect America's interest on the international stage?

Secondly—

*President Obama.* I can still hear.

Q. Secondly, does it distress you that folks at the FBI and State Department talked about the proper level of classification of e-mails that were on Secretary Clinton's server? Would you acknowledge the appearance of impropriety? And should State Department officials look into this further?

And for Prime Minister Renzi, with the critical governing referendum happening soon in your country, what would passage mean for your ability to lead that country? And what would failure mean to your political future, as well as to Italy's role in the European Union?

*President Obama.* Well, I'm going to be a little more subdued in my discussions of the Republican nominee in this context than I might be on the campaign trail. But let me just speak broadly about Russia.

When I came into office, Russia, under the previous administration, had invaded parts of Georgia, had created a frozen conflict there. There was a new President, and we tried to initiate a more constructive path with respect to U.S.-Russia relations. And I think we showed Russia plenty of respect, acknowledging enormous differences and different values, but also trying to find ways in which we could cooperate together.

We initiated the New START Treaty. We assisted Russia with respect to its ascension to the WTO. We worked on some common international challenges together. And when the previous President was replaced with Mr. Putin, I met with him and we discussed again ways in which we could constructively work together.

The challenge that we've had with Russia is very much centered on Russian aggression in some very particular areas around the world. In Ukraine, where they have engaged in similar conduct to what they did in Georgia, and even there, we've tried to broker, and work with the Europeans to broker, a Minsk agreement that would peacefully resolve those issues.

In Syria, one of my earliest meetings with Putin was to suggest to him that if Asad stayed in power, given the brutality with which he had treated his own people, you would see a civil war that would not be good for the Syrians, certainly, but would not be good for the world anywhere. Rather than to work with us to try to solve the problem, he doubled down on his support for Asad, and we know the situation that exists there.

So any characterization that somehow we have improperly challenged Russian aggression or have somehow tried to encroach on their legitimate interests is just wrong. And Mr. Trump's continued flattery of Mr. Putin and the degree to which he appears to model many of his policies and approaches to politics on Mr. Putin is unprecedented in American politics, and is out of step with not just what Democrats think, but out of step with what, up until the last few months, almost every Republican thought, including some of the ones who are now endorsing Mr. Trump.

So you'll have to explain to me how it is that some of the same leaders of the Republican Party who were constantly haranguing us for even talking to the Russians and who consistently took the most hawkish approaches to Russia—including Mr. Trump's selection for Vice President—now reconcile their endorsement of Mr. Trump with their previous views.

The bottom line is, is that we think that Russia is a large, important country with a military that is second only to ours, and has to be a part of the solution on the world stage rather than part of the problem. But their behavior has undermined international norms and international rules in ways that we have to call them out on. And anybody who occupies this office should feel the same way, because these are values that we fought for and we protected.

We can't go around talking about human rights or freedom of the press or democracy or freedom of religion or nondiscrimination or basic laws of war or the sovereignty and territorial integrity of countries no matter how small and then extoll the virtues of somebody who violates those principles.

And Mr. Trump rarely surprises me these days. I'm much more surprised and troubled by the fact that you have Republican officials who, historically, have been adamantly anti-Russian and, in fact, have attacked me for even engaging them diplomatically, now supporting and, in

some cases, echoing, his positions. It's quite a reversal. You'll have to ask them how to explain it.

With respect to the State Department and the FBI reports, I think you've heard directly from both the FBI and the State Department that the notion or the accounts that have been put out there are just not true. And you can question them again, but based on what we have seen, heard, learned, some of the more sensational implications or appearances, as you stated them, aren't based on actual events and based on what actually happened and, I think, derive from sort of overly broad characterizations of interactions between the State Department and the FBI that happen a lot and happen between agencies.

I think that covers me.

*Prime Minister Renzi.* What the forum—I know 2016 is not a very good year to organize a referendum. But I think the Italian referendum is very simply a message because it's about the fight against bureaucracy. And we need a great investment against bureaucracy in Italy for a lot of reasons. We changed 63 governments in 70 years. A few times, we joke about it with the President, because it's unbelievable in a country to have a government change 1 year—every year. But it's normal. The discussion, the political discussion is very strong.

My opinion is very easy. If in December we will win this referendum for Italy, it will be easy—more easy to continue the battle to change Europe, because structural reforms are important for Italy, but are important also for institutions in Brussels—in Europe.

So the only consequence, constitutional reform apart, in the political debate in my view is, if we win, Italy will be stronger in the debate in EU. And so I work strongly and hardly to achieve the victory.

Ah, sorry. Platero, Sole 24 Ore.

*Q. Grazie.*

*Prime Minister Renzi.* You're American, not Italian.

*Q.* I'm American; I'm Italian.

*Prime Minister Renzi.* American citizens.

*Q.* I will ask the question in English—or in Italian.

*Prime Minister Renzi.* Okay.

[*A reporter spoke in Italian, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

### *U.S. Economy/European Union*

So let's talk about the referendum, because you hope to win, of course. But we've found many investors at Wall Street who are worried about the fact that you might lose the referendum. These are investors that have faith in Italy and that threaten, if there is a negative result in terms of the reforms, to just leave. So what can you tell these investors in order to reassure them to—if there is a negative outcome, will you stay on? Will you continue with the reforms?

And one last thing. This evening, will you bring some wine to the dinner with the President? This is an Italian custom.

[*The reporter spoke in English as follows.*]

Q. I agree with the Prime Minister, your accent is beautiful, truly beautiful.

*The President. Grazie.*

Q. So your Italian accent, of course.

*The President. I've got my hands to—grazie. [Laughter]*

Q. Yes. On growth, you seem to be in agreement that there is a need to sort of go ahead with the policy that you have pursued on being more flexible on the fiscal side. The problem is that Brussels is very rigid about it. And it's very rigid with the Italian efforts, therefore jeopardizing these efforts. What can you say to Brussels, especially after Brexit—they don't seem to be moving on that front—how important it is to move forward in that direction? And do you think that in case the referendum will not go well for the Prime Minister, he should stay on and continue in his reforms? Thank you.

*[Prime Minister Renzi spoke in Italian, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.]*

*Prime Minister Renzi.* I have a feeling— and I think that rightly so—our American friends are a little bit more interested in November 8 than in the Italian vote on constitutional reform. And so are we, might I add.

But in terms of what you were asking, very, very briefly, this is a time in which many investors throughout the world are coming back to invest in Italy. We're extremely happy about this. We're happy about the investments on innovation in terms of technology. Apple is investing in Naples. Amazon is going to open an artificial intelligence center in Turin. So for the entire economic and financial world, well, they're starting to see Italy as an area in which to create opportunities and business, therefore, open doors.

I don't believe that there will be any major disasters if the "no" wins at the referendum. But in order to have no doubts, I'd rather win the referendum. I'll do everything I can do; this atavistic doubt will not be able to come about. But what is fundamental, what is true is that the message goes through. This referendum does not have to do with the great world events, the great world issues. Very simply: Do you want to simplify the institutional system in Italy, giving greater stability and certain times in which to have greater stability? This is something to simply things in our country.

And based on the question that was asked to the President on Europe, we do respect the European rules, and we're totally inside the European rules, although sometimes we do this halfheartedly. We'd like to do things differently. But so long as rules don't change, we will respect them, because Italy has made of its reputation one of the key words in its mandate. We work to change them, but if they're there, we are going to respect them.

Now, what will happen within the next few months will be seen, as a great singer—Italian singer says—we will discover this by living. So I'm almost certain that the "yes" will win so you will have no grounds to ask this question.

*President Obama.* During the course of my Presidency, I have had repeated conversations with Brussels, with Angela, with François, and others around how we could most effectively recover from the crisis of 2007, 2008. It is fair to say that we have made more progress more quickly. And what I've tried to point out was, the reason we were able to make progress was, we focused very early on in providing a large infusion of demand through our fiscal policies: rebuilding roads, bridges; investing in schools, teachers, clean energy; putting people back to

work; tax cuts, put money into pockets of consumers; saving the auto industry. But then, also, what was very important was quickly trying to fix the banks and infusing capital and making sure they were more stable, more transparent, and would attract confidence so that the financial system was working again.

And look, I'm proud of our economic track record. We have grown faster and created more jobs and, this past year, seen incomes rise and poverty fall more quickly than a lot of our counterparts in Europe.

Now, I recognize that Europe is a more complicated collection of states and it's more difficult to move and some are in the euro zone and some are not. And so I don't expect that everything we've done can immediately translate to Europe. And there's some parts of what Europe does that we could learn from in terms of the social safety net, for example.

But what I do know is that given the very slow growth that's taken place in Europe, or contraction, over what is almost a decade now, you have a generation of European youth who are not attaching themselves to the labor market fast enough. And if you don't reverse some of those trends, then it becomes a generational loss of income, of wealth, of economic dynamism.

And now that countries like Italy and others have made real progress on their finances and their deficits and there's more market confidence in their position, now would be a good time, I believe, to refocus attention on growth and making investments. Because one of the reasons that we've been able to cut our deficits by two-thirds is not simply because we cut spending by two-thirds. We disciplined spending, but we also grew fast enough that more revenue came in. And that's one of the best ways for you to arrive at a sound fiscal position.

And monetary policy alone is not sufficient. I think Mario Draghi and the European Central Bank have done good work trying to maintain a positive trajectory in Europe. But ultimately, there's only so much monetary policy can do if it's not combined with fiscal policy. And my hope would be that—Matteo is right, Italy has been true to its word in Europe and met its obligations—but my hope would be, the debate broadens as Europe moves forward around how to grow more quickly, put more people back to work, see incomes rise, create a greater sense of momentum and optimism. Because I do believe that there is a connection between stagnation and some of the less constructive populist impulses that have been rising up.

And those trend lines about Europe do concern me, because if you look at the European experiment over the last 40 years—I said this in Hannover—there's probably been no group of people who have enjoyed more prosperity and more peace over the last several decades than a united Europe. If it begins now splintering because their sense is, the global capitals and elites are not attentive to the ordinary concerns of people, that would be a tragedy. And my hope is that that discussion, led by Matteo and others, will continue.

And by the way, yes, I think if—I won't weigh in on the referendum, but the reforms Matteo is initiating, certainly on the economic side, are the right ones. And in a global, Internet-driven world, governments have to be able to move fast and quickly and transparently. And so I am rooting for success, but I think you should hang around for a while no matter what.

Ayesha Rascoe [Reuters].



*2016 Presidential Election/U.S. Electoral System/Republican Presidential Nominee Donald J. Trump/Iraq/Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) Terrorist Organization*

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. I'd like to ask you about the election. Donald Trump is telling his supporters that the election is rigged and asking them to monitor certain areas on election day. How concerned are you about the potential for violence? And what about after election day, are you worried the results of the election may be distrusted?

And for Prime Minister Renzi, the offensive in Mosul has begun. Are you concerned about what happens after liberation? And, Mr. President, if you want to weigh in on that as well, I'd appreciate it.

*President Obama.* I do.

Q. Thanks.

*President Obama.* Okay. One of the great things about America's democracy is, we have a vigorous, sometimes bitter, political contest. And when it's done, historically, regardless of party, the person who loses the election congratulates the winner, reaffirms our democracy, and we move forward. That's how democracy survives, because we recognize that there is something more important than any individual campaign, and that is making sure that the integrity and trust in our institutions sustains itself. Because democracy, by definition, works by consent, not by force.

I have never seen in my lifetime or in modern political history any Presidential candidate trying to discredit the elections and the election process before votes have even taken place. It's unprecedented. It happens to be based on no facts. Every expert, regardless of political party, regardless of ideology—conservative or liberal—who has ever examined these issues in a serious way will tell you that instances of significant voter fraud are not to be found; that, keep in mind, elections are run by State and local officials, which means that there are places like Florida, for example, where you've got a Republican Governor whose Republican appointees are going to be running and monitoring a whole bunch of these election sites. The notion that somehow if Mr. Trump loses Florida, it's because of those people that you have to watch out for, that is both irresponsible, and by the way, it doesn't really show the kind of leadership and toughness that you'd want out of a President.

If you start whining before the game is even over, if whenever things are going badly for you and you lose, you start blaming somebody else, then you don't have what it takes to be in this job. Because there are a lot of times when things don't go our way or my way. That's okay. You fight through it, you work through it. You try to accomplish your goals.

But the larger point that I want to emphasize here is that there is no serious person out there who would suggest somehow that you could even rig America's elections, in part because they're so decentralized and the numbers of votes involved. There's no evidence that that has happened in the past or that there are instances in which that will happen this time.

And so I'd advise Mr. Trump to stop whining and go try to make his case to get votes. And if he got the most votes, then it would be my expectation of Hillary Clinton to offer a gracious concession speech and pledge to work with him in order to make sure that the American people benefit from an effective Government. And it would be my job to welcome Mr. Trump, regardless of what he's said about me or my differences with him on my opinions, and escort him over to the Capitol, in which there would be a peaceful transfer of power.

That's what Americans do. That's why America is already great. One way of weakening America and making it less great is if you start betraying those basic American traditions that have been bipartisan and have helped to hold together this democracy now for well over two centuries.

With respect to Mosul, we are seeing the Iraqi forces, with the support of the coalition that includes the United States and Italy and other nations, moving forward and encircling Mosul. The intention is to drive ISIL out of what was its first major urban stronghold and what continues to be one of the key organizational and logistical and leadership hubs for ISIL.

I'm confident that we can succeed, although it's going to be a tough fight and a difficult fight. It is Iraqis who are doing the fighting. And they are performing effectively and bravely and taking on significant casualties. There will be ups and downs in this process, but my expectation is, is that ultimately it will be successful. And this will be, I think, a key milestone in what I committed to doing when ISIL first emerged, which was, we were going to roll them back and we are going to ultimately drive them out of population centers and we will destroy them and defeat them so that they are not in a position to carry out terrorist attacks against our peoples or our friends and allies or against innocent people inside of Iraq and Syria. And we've seen just steady progress on this front.

Now, you ask a very important question, which is, if in fact we are successful, how do we deal with what could be a humanitarian crisis? Because ISIL, when it occupies these territories, it bleeds them dry. It feeds off them. It oppresses the local populations. It's not very good at governance. And so just basic functions like electricity or water start running down. People are fleeing from their homes. There will be significant displacement.

This has all been part of the coalition planning process in conjunction with the United Nations, in conjunction with major aid organizations. And so we have put together plans and infrastructure for dealing with a potential humanitarian crisis that are as extensive as the military plans. That doesn't mean that we don't have to pay attention to it. And executing will be difficult; it's going to still be a tough environment to operate under. And no doubt, there will be instances where we see some heartbreaking situations if in fact large numbers of people flee. It's hard when you leave your home. It's hard when you leave your home and you already didn't have a lot because you were living under an oppressive barbarous regime. It's hard to leave your home in a war zone.

So it's not something that I expect will be easy, but I think it perhaps hasn't been publicized enough, at least in the American press, the degree of planning and assets and resources that we're devoting to this very important problem. Because if we aren't successful in helping ordinary people as they're fleeing from ISIL, then that makes us vulnerable to seeing ISIL return and feeding on the resentments in the aftermath of Mosul being liberated. And so there's a strategic, as well as humanitarian, interest in us getting that right. Okay?

*Prime Minister Renzi.* I think about Mosul, the considerations of President are very clear. For Italian side, we are particularly committed about dam. There is a dam—a dangerous dam—and we support an Italian company who will work to restore the dam, because it could be a great problem for the population.

And for the rest, we are totally engaged with the rest of coalition to ensure to the Iraqi people the possibility to have a future. And let me be very great [grateful]<sup>°</sup> to the Italian Army,

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<sup>°</sup> White House correction.

particularly Italian Carabinieri, who provide in this country to learning the local police. So we are not worried for the future if we will bring Mosul because we think sooner or later that we will destroy Daesh. And the reconstruction and the rebuilding will be a priority for every member of international community. Italy is engaged in the work with the United States and the other alliance.

Last. *Prego, l'ultima*. Last—[inaudible].

Q. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. President. *In italiano e anzi in inglese*.

[*The reporter asked a question in English as follows.*]

#### *European Migration Crisis/Libya/Central American Migration to the U.S./European Union*

Q. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. President. The Mediterranean represents a geopolitical priority for Italy, mainly because of the constant flow of migrants. And is there common strategies on this and common strategies on Libya? And can Italy act as a bridge between Europe and Africa? And how American administration can help the efforts of the Italian Government, because Europe sometimes leave alone Italy to face the challenge? Thank you.

[*Prime Minister Renzi spoke in Italian, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

*Prime Minister Renzi*. I'm going to answer in Italian for the first channel, TG1. Obviously, our position is always the same one. Europe has to be more convinced and look toward Africa with more conviction. And from this stance, we can't go every time to ask for help to the United States without doing our part. The United States are busy in all the international theaters. And the ones that are closer to us, we obviously need the support of our best friend, because the United States are this: our best friend.

But we also have to start an Italian and European strategy. We can't always just sit and wait for this type of support. Therefore, the issue of the Mediterranean and Africa has been left aside during the last 10 years in the European Union. We have to give it priority again. We have to work as the Commission had foreseen it would do. But it's not doing it with the necessary speed, and we will do whatever we can with the agreements with certain states, with the five states that are our priority. We have to work for Africa to be a priority, including a priority from the point of view of resources, local development.

We will talk about this during the G-7 in Sicily next year. And in terms of investments, the political investment—which perhaps in the last few years has been sorely lacking—before asking for help for—from the United States, which is something we gladly do, Italy and Europe have to do their part. Italy will increase its efforts for international cooperation in the ranking of G-7 for international cooperation. We were the last in the classification, seven—the seventh in the position, the list of seven. It's not a good position. But we will reach the fourth place in the ranking in terms of GDP, which each of us proposes.

So we have an increase in terms of the money in international cooperation, in funds. And in terms of Libya, you know that we are working. We want to stabilize the Government. We want to make sure that there is a block of all these brothers and sisters that leave their country. Every time they go to sea, they risk dying. We're happy and we're very proud to help save lives. But the ocean is one of the worst places to do that. But we don't want the Mediterranean to become a cemetery, so we have to have a long-term strategy. We spoke about this. And we have to have short-term strategies as well.

We're very proud of what we're doing, but we know that this method cannot go on forever. We cannot think of being in charge by ourselves of all the problems of Libya and Africa. And from this stance, in the—on Thursday and Friday, at the European Council, we will talk about this.

*President Obama.* [*Inaudible*]*—*extensive topic of conversation. Let me just make a few points. Number one, it is a strategic interest of the United States to make sure that the migration crisis that's been taking place in Europe is solved. It's a strategic interest because of the terrible loss of life that we see as people attempt to reach Europe, but also because of the distorting effects that it can have on European politics if the sense is that the influx of migration is disorderly, chaotic, and overwhelms European countries. And so we are deeply committed in Europe's success in resolving this issue effectively.

Now, obviously, there are a lot of contributors to it. So we are very focused on strengthening the Government of National Accord, as I indicated. And Secretary John Kerry and others are working with his counterparts on a multilateral basis to strengthen the Government of National Accord, resolve tensions that exist between the different portions of Libya, and then to be able to invest and build in their capacity to control their borders and their waterways. Because if we don't have a partner on the other side of the ocean, it's going to continue to be a problem. That's point number one.

Point number two: We are deeply appreciative of the generosity and humanitarian impulses of the Italian people in rescuing so many people through Operation Sophia. What we did in Warsaw during the NATO meeting was to indicate that although that is primarily a EU mission, NATO and the United States and our naval assets are prepared to assist in a robust way where appropriate. And it's just a matter of coordinating with Europe to find out—and Italy and other countries—what it is that you need, we will help. The same way that we do with respect to helping to enforce the agreement between Turkey and the European Union on that portion, that body of water.

The third point, as Matteo pointed out, is more long term, and that is, trying to help these countries that are having difficulties, where people feel either unstable, insecure, or just hungry and in search of opportunity. How do we help them develop in such a way where people feel that they can succeed and raise their families without fleeing to more developed countries? That is a longer term proposition, but we have to begin to make the investments now.

I mentioned to Matteo, we have obviously different issues with respect to migration. And net migration into this country has actually been flat—in some cases, even decreased—or we've seen reverse flows, particularly with respect to Mexico. But one area where we have seen a big spike over the last several years is actually from the smaller countries in Central America where the economy is doing poorly; agriculture has done poorly, in part because of changing weather patterns; violence brought on by narcotraffickers.

So Vice President Biden, I gave him the charge of working with those countries to come up with a development plan. Congress, on a bipartisan basis, supported us putting more money into these countries for development, more effective policing, dealing with fighting the narcotraffickers in a more effective way, investing in young people. But that's not going to happen overnight. That will be a decade-long process, potentially.

In the meantime, we insist that those countries cooperate with us to send a message to the populations that it is a dangerous trip to reach the United States, and if you get here, you're

likely to be turned back, to try to discourage a dangerous—this dangerous passage but also to try to undermine the human traffickers who are preying on the desperation of these people to make money.

So all those strategies have to be employed. And the one thing I would encourage is—and I've said this whenever I've visited Europe—you can't have a situation where Italy, Greece, Germany are bearing the entire burden. If in fact you have a European Union, then you're unified not just for the benefits, but also for the costs. And I do think it is important for Europe collectively to be invested in solving this problem and not just leave it to one country, in the same way that here in the United States, obviously, it's—we're an actual nation-state as opposed to a union of separate states. But we would not abandon one State and just say, here, you deal with an entire problem and good luck with that. Right? If we have solidarity and benefit from that solidarity on a whole range of issues, then that means you also have joint responsibilities. Okay?

Q. Sir, on Central American, numbers have actually increased——

*President Obama.* That's what I just said. I said Central America, they've increased, David [David Nakamura, Washington Post]. Why——

Q. I was wondering if you could comment about whether—what that says about policy—*[inaudible]*.

*President Obama.* No, actually, David, they went—they spiked heavily in 2014, went down significantly in 2015, have gone back up this year, in part because there's still desperation in Central America, but are still not at the levels they were in 2014.

But I appreciate you shouting out a question, since I'm sure there are a lot of other colleagues of yours who would want to do the same. *[Laughter]*

Thank you very much, everybody. Appreciate it.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 11:44 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to Agnese Landini, wife of Prime Minister Renzi; Prime Minister Dmitriy Anatolyevich Medvedev, in his former capacity as President, and President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia; President Bashar al-Asad of Syria; Republican Vice Presidential nominee Gov. Michael R. Pence of Indiana; Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany; President François Hollande of France; Mario Draghi, President, European Central Bank; Gov. Richard L. Scott of Florida; and Democratic Presidential nominee former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton. Prime Minister Renzi referred to Daesh, another name for the ISIL terrorist organization.

*Categories:* Interviews With the News Media : Joint news conferences :: Italy, Prime Minister Renzi.

*Locations:* Washington, DC.

*Names:* Asad, Bashar al-; Biden, Joseph R., Jr.; Clinton, Hillary Rodham; Draghi, Mario; Hollande, François; Kerry, John F.; Landini, Agnese; Medvedev, Dmitriy Anatolyevich; Merkel, Angela; Obama, Michelle; Pence, Michael R.; Putin, Vladimir Vladimirovich; Renzi, Matteo; Scott, Richard L.; Trump, Donald J.

*Subjects:* Armed Forces, U.S. : Servicemembers :: Service and dedication; Arms and munitions : Nuclear weapons and material :: Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) with Russia;

Central America : Migrants to U.S., influx; Communications : News media, Presidential interviews; Developing countries : Economic growth and development; Economy, national : Improvement; Elections : 2016 Presidential and congressional elections; Environment : Carbon emissions; Environment : Climate change; Environment : Paris Agreement; Europe : Economic growth and development; Europe : European Union :: European Central Bank; Europe : European Union :: United Kingdom, membership status; Europe : Financial markets :: Unrest; Europe : Refugees, humanitarian situation; Europe : Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership; Florida : Governor; Foreign policy, U.S. : Poverty, efforts to combat; Foreign policy, U.S. : Trafficking in persons, efforts to combat; France : President; Germany : Chancellor; Indiana : Governor; Iraq : Security cooperation with U.S.; Italy : Afghanistan, role; Italy : Counterterrorism efforts, cooperation with U.S.; Italy : Defense relationship with U.S.; Italy : Earthquake, damage and recovery efforts; Italy : Economic reforms; Italy : Iraq, role; Italy : Prime Minister; Italy : Relations with U.S.; Justice, Department of : Bureau of Investigation, Federal; Libya : Political unrest and violence; Libya : Reconciliation efforts; North Atlantic Treaty Organization; Refugees and global migrants : Humanitarian situation; Refugees and global migrants : International assistance; Russia : President; Russia : Prime Minister; Russia : Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) with U.S., expansion; Russia : World Trade Organization, accession; State, Department of : Secretary; Syria : Civil war and sectarian conflict; Syria : President; Terrorism : Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization; Ukraine : International diplomatic efforts; Ukraine : Political unrest and violence; Ukraine : Russia, role; United Kingdom : European Union, membership status; White House Office : Vice President.

*DCPD Number:* DCPD201600707.