

## Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in Chicago

May 20, 2012

*President Obama.* Well, I just want to not only welcome Secretary General Rasmussen to my hometown of Chicago—my understanding is he’s already enjoyed some of the sights, and we were hearing about him jogging along the lake, appreciating the outstanding views and the skyline—but more importantly, I want to thank him for his extraordinary leadership.

Secretary General Rasmussen arrived in this post during one of most challenging times that NATO has faced. He has guided us through some very rocky times, and I think the results of this NATO summit are reflective of his extraordinary leadership.

At this summit, we anticipate not only ratifying the plan for moving forward in Afghanistan—a transition process that will bring the war to an end at the end of 2014 and put Afghans in the lead for their own security—but we’re also going to be talking about the progress that we’ve made in expanding NATO’s defense capabilities, ensuring that every NATO member has a stake and is involved and integrated in our mutual defense efforts.

And we’re going to have an opportunity to talk about the partnerships that NATO has been able to set up with like-minded countries around the world and find ways that we can deepen and engage those partners to help to promote security and peace around the world.

All this has happened because of Secretary General Rasmussen’s leadership. I’m very proud of the work that he’s done. I think it’s going to be reflected in the success of this summit. And on behalf of the American people, we want to say thank you.

*Secretary General Rasmussen.* Thank you very much. Mr. President, I would like to thank you very much for your strong leadership, for your dedication to our alliance. America has always been a source of strength and inspiration in NATO, and I’m very pleased that we can hold our 25th summit in your home city, Chicago.

Chicago has always been a place where Europeans and North Americans have come together. And now, we have come together to reaffirm the unbreakable bond between us.

I look very much forward to a successful summit, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have worked so hard to make this summit a success. And I would like to thank the people of Chicago for their great hospitality.

*President Obama.* All right. Thank you so much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:52 p.m. at McCormick Place convention center.

## Remarks at the North Atlantic Council Meeting in Chicago

May 20, 2012

Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary General Anders. I want to take this opportunity on behalf of all of us to thank you for your outstanding leadership over these past 3 years. And I want to begin by welcoming each and every one of you to my hometown. I hope everybody has enjoyed themselves. I understand some took a architectural boat tour, some have run along the lakefront. Chicago is a great place, and we look forward to having you back again.

As Anders mentioned, so many people here in Chicago trace their roots back to NATO countries. So it’s especially fitting that Chicago is the first American city outside of Washington, DC, ever to host a NATO summit. Given the moment of silence we just observed, I also want to take the opportunity to salute Admiral Stavridis, General Abrial, General Allen, and all of our men and women who are serving in uniform on our behalf, and es-

pecially those who are serving today in Afghanistan.

For over 65 years, our alliance has been the bedrock of our common security, our freedom, and our prosperity. And though the times may have changed, the fundamental reason for our alliance has not. Our nations are stronger and more prosperous when we stand together. In good times and in bad, our alliance has endured; in fact, it has thrived, because we share an unbreakable commitment to the freedom and security of our citizens.

We've seen this from the cold war to the Balkans, from Afghanistan to Libya. And that's the spirit that we need to sustain here in Chicago, and with an alliance that is focused squarely on the future.

When we last met in Lisbon, we agreed to a bold plan of action to revitalize the alliance and ensure that we have the tools that are required to confront a changing and uncertain strategic landscape. Here, at this session, we can reaffirm our article 5 commitment to our collective defense and to investing in the defense capabilities and new technologies that meet our collective security needs.

In these difficult economic times, we can work together and pull our resources. NATO is a force multiplier, and the initiatives we will endorse today will allow each of our nations to accomplish what none of us could achieve alone. We can all be proud that in Lisbon we committed, and now in Chicago we are delivering.

Over the next 2 days, we'll meet—first as allies and then with President Karzai and our international partners—to chart the next phase of the transition in Afghanistan. Just as we've sacrificed together for our common security, we will stand together, united, in our determination to complete this mission.

And finally, I look forward to our meeting with NATO's neighbors and our partners around the world who have been so critical to NATO operations, as in Afghanistan and Libya. It will be another reminder that NATO is truly a hub of a network of global security partners. There is nothing else like it on Earth.

So again, thank you, Mr. Secretary General, for your outstanding leadership. Thank you to all my fellow leaders and friends who are here. Welcome to Chicago. I'm confident that the next 2 days are going to help to sustain and strengthen the strongest and most successful alliance that the world has ever known.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:15 p.m. at McCormick Place convention center. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization; Adm. James G. Stavridis, USN, Supreme Allied Commander, Europe; Gen. Stephane Abrial, French Air Force, NATO Supreme Allied Commander Transformation; Gen. John R. Allen, USMC, commander, NATO International Security Assistance Force, Afghanistan; and President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan.

## Remarks at the International Security Assistance Force Meeting on Afghanistan in Chicago

*May 21, 2012*

Well, good morning, everyone. And for those who are joining us for the first time, welcome to Chicago. I was just hearing from a few folks who are not NATO members that they had fun on the town last night. Hopefully, no stories in the press. *[Laughter]*

We come together as 50 nations—NATO allies and partners—that make up the International Security Assistance Force in Afghani-

stan. I want to welcome the presence of President Karzai, as well as officials from central Asia and Russia, nations that have an important perspective and that continue to provide critical transit for ISAF supplies.

The presence of so many leaders and nations illustrates once again that this is a truly international mission, and that's because the region and the world have a profound interest