

Remarks by President Obama and President Hollande of France After Bilateral Meeting

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5:10 P.M. EDT

PRESIDENT OBAMA: Well, I want to welcome my dear friend and partner in so many issues, President Hollande of France, and his delegation.

This is obviously an occasion in which we are deeply concerned about nuclear security, making sure that nuclear materials don't fall into the hands of terrorists, but in the wake of the Brussels attack, with our memories of the tragedy in Paris, we have not only great urgency around the nuclear issue but eliminating generally the scourge of terrorism.

And we are continuing to deepen the partnership with France around counterterrorism efforts. We've made some significant strides around information-sharing. President Hollande has been a leader in helping to galvanize the European community around the necessity to be more effective in transatlantic exchanges of information and rooting out foreign fighters, identifying potential attacks, cutting off financing. And so this has been a very useful exchange in terms of examining the progress that had been made by our teams and where we still have to push a little bit harder.

We're both absolutely committed to the destruction of ISIL, and France has been a key coalition partner in our efforts in Iraq and Syria. So we had an overview of the progress that's been made on the campaign and some of the strategic decisions that have to be made in the coming months to make sure that we build on the progress that we've seen in reducing ISIL's territory and putting them back on their heels.

And we also had an opportunity to discuss the possibilities of a new government being formed in Libya and how we can try to solidify a structure there that would prevent ISIL from using that territory as a future stronghold, as well as deal with the broader issues of refugees -- both because of the enormous humanitarian concerns that these refugees present as they try to make their way to Europe, but also the consequences of how the

refugee problem is putting enormous strains on European unity and the strategic concerns that we have there. Those are concerns not just for Europe, but also for the United States.

As always, France has been a great partner with us on a whole range of other global issues. And I want to, in particular, commend once again President Hollande's critical leadership in forging the Paris agreement. We agreed that we need to work as diligently as possible to make sure that we bring the agreement into force, and that we implement it effectively. We have no time to lose.

So, Mr. President, it is wonderful to see you again. And I thank the outstanding efforts of your entire team in making progress on all these critical fronts.

PRESIDENT HOLLANDE: (As interpreted.) Well, first of all, please allow me to thank President Barack Obama for organizing this summit on nuclear security. This was his willingness, as early as 2010, to get all countries to understand that there are some risks. And among these risks, there is terrorism. So the first purpose of that meeting is to talk about the global terror threat. It is a threat for all countries.

Europe has been hit more, given that it is also the target of the terrorists and ISIS. We've seen it in Paris last year, as well as in Brussels. And together with President Obama, we worked on coordinating further our commitments, our organizations, our services when it comes to fighting against these terrorists. We are also making sure that between Europe and the United States there can be a very high level coordination.

But we're also well aware that the roots of terrorism, Islamist terrorism, is in Syria and in Iraq. We therefore have to act both in Syria and in Iraq, and this is what we're doing within the framework of the coalition. And we note that Daesh is losing ground thanks to the strikes we've been able to launch with the coalition. We are continuing to support Iraq. This is also a decision we have taken, supporting the Iraqi government and making sure that they can claim back their entire territory, including Mosul.

In Syria, we are acting both in terms of military support as well as politically. Here again, we are convinced that Daesh is losing ground and losing the battle. And in this respect, Raqqa is a target, and we shall support all the forces, and have in mind, in particular, the Arab forces as well as the Kurd forces, which are acting to that end.

There's also, politically, the need to make sure that the truce, which has been obtained -- the truce which is being complied with so far -- is also at the service of a political transition and a negotiation that shall involve all the stakeholders and we will have an opportunity to talk to a number of governments or heads of state of this region. But it is clear that this transition should not lead to reproducing the very same cause of the crisis of the war in Syria. And here again, this is our goal -- the goal of another government, another regime for the future of Syria.

Lastly, we talked about Libya. We fully acknowledge the Libyan government because it is that government -- the Seraj government -- under his leadership that will gather the international support and will bring about stability, and that will prevent the migration

flows that can both be a tragedy for the individuals, can also feed trafficking. And it is also about preventing Europe from having to deal with tens of thousands of people, even though Europe has a duty to make sure that the refugees can claim asylum. So we have to do everything so that stability can be now a priority for Libya.

We also discussed a number of other topics, including the agreement with Iran, given that both Barack Obama and myself and all the others who were involved in the negotiations, we've been playing a role, and now we have to make sure that the commitments are met. So it was important that we could get together. And once again, I would like to commend -- I mean, pay tribute to the friendship between our two countries as well as Barack Obama's ability to stand by us in the fight against terrorism.

Thank you, Barack.

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5:19 P.M. EDT