

Press Briefing by Obama, U.K. Prime Minister Cameron

16 January 2015

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

Washington, D.C

January 16, 2015

**REMARKS BY PRESIDENT OBAMA
AND PRIME MINISTER CAMERON OF THE UNITED
KINGDOM
IN JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE**

East Room

12:37 P.M. EST

PRESIDENT OBAMA: Good afternoon, everybody. This month marks a notable anniversary -- 200 years since the Battle of New Orleans. Here in America, we call it a great victory over a mighty United Kingdom. Our British friends call it a technicality. The treaty ending the war was signed weeks before.

Either way, we've long since made up. On this 200th anniversary of a great American victory, we count the United Kingdom as one of our greatest friends and strongest allies. And today it's a great pleasure to welcome Prime Minister David Cameron back to the White House.

Now, as many of you know, David recently noted how comfortable the two of us are working together. This sent some commentators into a tizzy. Some explored the linguistic origins of the word "bro." Others debated its definition. Several analyzed how this term has evolved over time. Some seemed confused and asked -- what does Obama mean?

And so, let me to put this speculation to rest. Put simply, David is a great friend. He's one of my closest and most trusted partners in the world. On many of the most pressing challenges that we face, we see the world the same way. We recognize that, as I've said before, when the United States and United Kingdom stand together, our nations are more secure and our people are more prosperous, and the world is safer and more just. Great Britain is our indispensable partner, and David has been personally an outstanding partner, and I thank you for your friendship.

With both of our economies growing and unemployment falling, we used our working dinner last night to discuss how we can help create more jobs for our people. We believe that this needs to be the year when the United States and the European Union make real progress toward the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership. And we share the view that boosting demand in Europe can also keep our economies growing.

As innovative economies in this information age, we're expanding our collaboration on digital technologies to improve how our governments serve our citizens and businesses. Given the urgent and growing danger of cyber threats, we've decided to expand our cooperation on cybersecurity to protect our critical infrastructure, our

businesses and the privacy of our people. And as leaders in the global fight against climate change, we believe that a strong commitment to reducing greenhouse gases will be an essential element of any ambitious climate agreement that we seek in Paris this year and that this actually will help spur the creation of more clean energy jobs on both sides of the Atlantic.

With regard to security, American-British unity is enabling us to meet challenges in Europe and beyond. We agree on the need to maintain strong sanctions against Russia until it ends its aggression in Ukraine, and on the need to support Ukraine as it implements important economic and democratic reforms. We agree that the international community needs to remain united as we seek a comprehensive diplomatic solution to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. And I'd add that additional sanctions on Iran at this time would undermine that international unity and set back our chances for a diplomatic solution. And as the two leading contributors to the global response to Ebola in West Africa, we urge the world to continue stepping up with the resources that are required so that we don't simply stop this disease, we do more to prevent future epidemics.

Now, much of our discussion obviously focused on the continuing threat of terrorism. And in the wake of the vicious attacks in Paris, as well as the news surfacing out of Belgium, today we continue to stand unequivocally not only with our French friends and allies, but with also all of our partners who are dealing with this scourge. I know David joins me when I say that we will continue to do everything in our power to help France seek the justice that is needed and that all our countries are working together seamlessly to prevent attacks and to defeat these terrorist networks.

With our combat mission in Afghanistan over, we're also focused with our NATO allies on advising and assisting and equipping Afghan forces to secure their own country and deny to al Qaeda any safe haven there. We'll continue to count on our British allies as our -- one of our strongest counterterrorism partners, whether it's helping countries fight back against al Qaeda affiliates or Boko Haram in Nigeria.

We reviewed our coalition's progress against ISIL. We are systematically taking out their fighters, we're destroying their infrastructure, we are putting them on the defensive and helping local forces in Iraq push these terrorists back. And David and I agree that we need to keep stepping up the training of Iraqi forces, and that we're not going to relent until this terrorist organization is destroyed.

The Paris attacks also underscored again how terrorist groups like al Qaeda and ISIL are actively trying to inspire and support people within our own countries to engage in terrorism. I led a special session of the United Nations Security Council last fall to rally the world to meet the threat of foreign terrorist fighters, including coming from Syria. David and the United Kingdom continue to be strong partners in this work, including sharing intelligence and strengthening border security.

At the same time, we both recognize that intelligence and military force alone is not going to solve this problem. So we're also going to keep working together on

strategies to counter the violent extremism that radicalizes, recruits and mobilizes people, especially young people, to engage in terrorism. And local communities -- families, neighbors, faith leaders -- have a vital role to play in that effort.

We also look forward to welcoming our British friends to our summit next month on countering violent terrorism. Because whether in Europe or in America, a critical weapon against terrorism is our adherence to our freedoms and values at home -- including the pluralism and the respect and tolerance that defines us as diverse and democratic societies.

And finally, I want to take this opportunity to publicly congratulate David on last month's Stormont House Agreement. It's a tribute to the courage and determination of everyone involved, especially the leaders of Northern Ireland as well as the governments of Ireland and the United Kingdom. The United States was pleased to play a small role in achieving this agreement, and we're going to keep doing what we need to do to support the peace process and a better future for the people of Northern Ireland.

So with that, let me turn it over to my good friend, David Cameron.

PRIME MINISTER CAMERON: Well, thank you very much, Barack. And thank you for welcoming me again to the White House. You are a great friend to Britain and to me personally. As leaders, we share the same values and, as you said, on so many issues, we see the world in the same way. And most of the time, we speak the same language. (Laughter.)

In the last six years since you became President, and in the nearly five since I've been Prime Minister, we've faced some big issues on our watch. And those challenges have boiled down to one word: Security. Economic security -- the jobs and the living standards of our citizens -- and national security -- the ability of our peoples to live safely and in peace.

And at the heart of both issues are the values that our countries cherish: Freedom of expression, the rule of law, and our democratic institutions. Those are the things that make both our countries strong and which give us confidence that even in the midst of the most violent storms, with strong leadership, we will come through to safer, to calmer and to brighter days.

During your presidency, you've had to deal with the aftermath of a massive banking crisis and a deep recession. When I became Prime Minister, Britain had the highest budget deficit in its peacetime history, our economy was in grave peril. Five years ago, we had 110,000 troops serving together in Afghanistan. Thanks to their efforts, today it is Afghan forces taking responsibility for security in their country.

But we continue to face difficult times for the world. First and foremost, we have to deal with the warning lights flashing in the global economy. Wheat growth in the

eurozone has slowed down in emerging markets. That is why it is vital for our shared prosperity that we both stick to the long-term economic plans that we've set out.

We agreed that 2015 should be a pivotal year for an ambitious and comprehensive EU-U.S. trade deal which could benefit the average household in Britain by 400 pounds a year. The U.K. is now the top destination for American and foreign investment, with 500 projects last year providing 32,000 jobs. And America is the U.K.'s biggest trade partner, with exports worth nearly 90 billion pounds. We want to build on this.

So our message on the economy today is simple: We are going to stick to the course. Because seeing through our economic plans is the only sustainable way to create jobs, to raise living standards, and to secure a better future for hardworking people.

Now, Britain and America both face threats to our national security from people who hate what our countries stand for and who are determined to do us harm. In recent weeks, we've seen appalling attacks in Paris, in Peshawar, in Nigeria. The world is sickened by this terrorism, so we will not be standing alone in this fight. We know what we're up against, and we know how we will win.

We face a poisonous and fanatical ideology that wants to pervert one of the world's major religions, Islam, and create conflict, terror and death. With our allies, we will confront it wherever it appears. In Iraq, the U.K. is the second largest contributor to the anti-ISIL coalition. RAF aircraft have conducted over 100 strikes and will continue to play a leading role. We will deploy additional intelligence and surveillance assets to help Iraqi forces on the ground, and we will ensure they are better trained and equipped to counter explosive devices.

But most important of all, we must also fight this poisonous ideology starting at home. In the U.K., we're passing a law so that every public body must combat extremism. And this morning, we have agreed to establish a joint group to identify what more we can do to counter the rise of domestic violent extremism, and to learn from one another.

In Europe, Russia has chosen to tear up the international rulebook and trample over the affairs of a sovereign state. This threatens our stability and our prosperity. It is important that every country understands that, and that no one in Europe forgets our history. We cannot walk on by. So we will continue to put pressure on Russia to resolve this crisis diplomatically, and at the same time, we will continue our efforts to support Ukraine on the path of reform, including with financial assistance. We also reaffirmed our obligations as NATO partners to stand by our allies, and we'll be contributing an additional thousand troops for exercises in Eastern Europe this year.

On Iran, we remain absolutely committed to ensuring that Iran cannot develop a nuclear weapon. The best way to achieve that now is to create the space for negotiations to succeed. We should not impose further sanctions now; that would be

counterproductive and it could put at risk the valuable international unity that has been so crucial to our approach.

We also have to keep pace with new threats, such as cyber attacks. We've discussed that in the last two days, and we've today agreed to deepen our cyber security cooperation to better protect ourselves.

Finally, we face -- the entire world faces a growing threat from diseases. Today, our fight is against Ebola. In the future, it could be against a global flu pandemic. Through our action in Sierra Leone, the U.S. action in Liberia, France and Guinea, we are beginning to turn the corner, but we must get better at responding to these global health emergencies and make sure we can master them before they master us.

So reforming the WHO, the World Health Organization; establishing a team of experts to be on standby to deploy anywhere in the world; a new international platform to stimulate the design and development of new drugs -- all of these things are needed. And let 2015, the year we must crack Ebola, also be the year we tackle extreme poverty and climate change.

On poverty, we must set new, clear goals to eradicate extreme poverty, to fight corruption and to build strong institutions. And on climate change, we want an outcome in Paris that keeps our goal of limiting global warming by 2050 to two degrees within reach. These two things -- and they go together -- have the potential to give security to future generations to come.

For almost two centuries, after those little difficulties we were discussing earlier, America and Britain have stood as kindred spirits in defending our freedoms and advancing our shared prosperity. Today, as we survey a world in flux, our alliance stands strong, rooted in its long history, and reinvigorated by the challenges we face today. If our forebears could join us here in the White House today, they might find the challenges that we're facing from ISIL to Ebola, from cyberterrorism to banking crises, they might find those hard to comprehend, but they would surely recognize the ties that bind us across the Atlantic and the values that our peoples hold so dear.

We've stood together so often, not just because we faced common threats but because we fundamentally believe in the same things. That is as true today as it has always been, and it hugely benefits our countries and the people that we're here to serve. Thank you very much.

PRESIDENT OBAMA: Thank you, David. We're going to take a few questions. We're going to start with Jonathan Karl of ABC.

Q: Thank you, Mr. President. You mentioned your opposition to the sanctions bill on Iran, and this is obviously a bipartisan bill supported by some very senior top members of your own party in Congress. Why do you oppose a bill that would only impose sanctions if you fail to reach an agreement? And if the Iranians fail to agree to take steps to curtail their nuclear program, would you go so far as to veto a bill supported by top Democrats in Congress on this issue?

And to Mr. Prime Minister, I understand you've been making phone calls to senators on this issue of the Iran sanctions bill, is that correct? Are you actually lobbying the U.S. Congress on this?

And if I may, Mr. President, I'd really like to hear your reaction to the news that Mitt Romney is thinking about running for President again. (Laughter.)

PRESIDENT OBAMA: On your last question -- (laughter) -- I have no comment. (Laughter.)

Q: None at all?

PRESIDENT OBAMA: On your first question, when I came into office, I made a commitment that Iran would not obtain a nuclear weapon, that we would do everything we could to prevent that. And that is important for our security and it's important for the world's security. If Iran obtained a nuclear weapon, then it would trigger an arms race in the Middle East, make our job in terms of preventing the proliferation of nuclear materials much more difficult. Given their missile capabilities, it would threaten directly our closest allies, including Israel, and ultimately could threaten us.

And so what we did was systematically, with the help of Congress, construct the most forceful, most effective sanctions regime in modern history. And what was remarkable was that when I came into office, the world was divided around this issue, and Iran was united. And through some very strong diplomatic work, we united the world and isolated Iran. And it's because of that work that we brought them to the negotiating table -- not for posturing, not for meetings that lead nowhere, but to a very hard-nosed, nuts-and-bolt discussion of their nuclear program.

Now, the interim deal that we entered into also froze progress on their nuclear program, rolled back in some cases the stockpiles of material that they had already accumulated, and provided us insight into their program that was unprecedented. We have people on the ground who are able to verify and inspect and tell us what exactly is going on. That's not just our assessment, that's the assessment of intelligence services around the world, including the Israelis.

So the agreement has held, and the negotiations have been serious. We have not lost ground. Iran has not accelerated its program during the time these negotiations have taken place. In fact, Iran's program has not only been in abeyance, but we've actually made gains in rolling back some of the stockpiles that they had.

Now, we have on the table currently a series of negotiations over the next several months to determine whether or not Iran can get to yes. And what's been remarkable is the unity that we have maintained with the world in isolating Iran and forcing them to negotiate in a serious way. The P5-plus-1 includes not only China, but also includes Russia. And they have continued to cooperate with us in setting forth positions that would give us assurances that Iran was not developing a nuclear weapon.

Now, I've always said that the chances that we can actually get a diplomatic deal are probably less than 50/50. Iran is a regime that is deeply suspicious of the West, deeply suspicious of us. In the past, they have surreptitiously and secretly advanced aspects of this program. We have huge differences with them on a whole range of issues. But if, in fact, we still have an opportunity to get a diplomatic deal that provides us verifiable assurances that they are not developing a nuclear weapon, that is the best possible outcome that we can arrive at right now.

And the question I had for members of Congress, including those folks in my own party is: Why is it that we would have to take actions that might jeopardize the possibility of getting a deal over the next 60 to 90 days? What is it precisely that is going to be accomplished?

I can tell you what the risks are, and I think David shares my assessment here. Under the interim deal that brought Iran to the table, we were not supposed to initiate new sanctions. Now, you'll hear arguments -- well, these technically aren't new sanctions, they're simply laws putting in place the possibility of additional sanctions. I assure that is not how Iran would interpret it or our partners would interpret it.

So the likelihood of the entire negotiations collapsing is very high. And if that happens, there is no constraint on Iran at that point going back and doing exactly what it had been doing before they came to the table: Developing a heavy water reactor that, once built, is extraordinarily difficult to dismantle and very difficult to hit militarily; going back at underground facilities that are very hard to reach militarily; accelerating advanced centrifuges that shorten the time span in which they can achieve breakout capacity.

And they would be able to maintain that the reason that they ended negotiations was because the United States was operating in bad faith and blew up the deal, and there would be some sympathy to that view around the world -- which means that the sanctions that we have in place now would potentially fray, because imposing these sanctions are a hardship on a number of countries around the world. They would love to be able to buy Iranian oil. And the reason that they've hung in there, despite it being against their economic interest, is because we have shown that we are credibly trying to solve this problem and avert some sort of military showdown.

Now, in that context, there is no good argument for us to try to undercut, undermine the negotiations until they've played themselves out. Now, if Iran ends up ultimately not being able to say yes, if they cannot provide us the kind of assurances that would lead myself and David Cameron and others to conclude that they are not obtaining a nuclear weapon, then we're going to have to explore other options. And I will be the first one to come to Congress and say we need to tighten the screws.

And, by the way, that's not the only options that are going to be available. I've consistently said we leave all options on the table. But Congress should be aware that if this diplomatic solution fails, then the risks and likelihood that this ends up being at some point a military confrontation is heightened, and Congress will have to own that as well, and that will have to be debated by the American people. And we may not be

able to rebuild the kind of coalition we need in that context if the world believes that we were not serious about negotiations.

So I take this very seriously. And I don't question the good faith of some folks who think this might be helpful. But it's my team that's at the table. We are steeped in this stuff day in, day out. We don't make these judgments blindly. We have been working on this for five, six, seven years. We consult closely with allies like the United Kingdom in making these assessments. And I am asking Congress to hold off, because our negotiators, our partners, those who are most intimately involved in this, assess that it will jeopardize the possibility of resolving -- providing a diplomatic solution to one of the most difficult and long-lasting national security problems that we've faced in a very long time. And Congress needs to show patience.

So with respect to the veto, I said to my Democratic caucus colleagues yesterday that I will veto a bill that comes to my desk, and I will make this argument to the American people as to why I'm doing so. And I respectfully request them to hold off for a few months to see if we have the possibility of solving a big problem without resorting potentially to war. And I think that's worth doing. We'll see how persuasive I am, but if I'm not persuading Congress, I promise you I'm going to be taking my case to the American people on this.

PRIME MINISTER CAMERON: I think the big picture is very clear. The sanctions that America and the European Union put in place have had an effect. That has led to pressure. That pressure has led to talks. And those talks at least have a prospect of success. And I would argue with the President, how much better is that than the other potential outcomes? And that is what we should be focusing on.

But to answer you very directly, yes, I have contacted a couple of senators this morning and I may speak to one or two more this afternoon -- not in any way as British Prime Minister to tell the American Senate what it should or shouldn't do; that wouldn't be right -- but simply to make the point as a country that stands alongside America in these vital negotiations, that it's the opinion of the United Kingdom that further sanctions or further threat of sanctions at this point won't actually help to bring the talks to a successful conclusion and they could fracture the international unity that there's been, which has been so valuable in presenting a united front to Iran.

And I say this as someone who played quite, I think, a strong role in getting Europe to sign up to the very tough sanctions, including oil sanctions, in the first place. And I would just simply make this point: Those sanctions have had an effect. And to those who said, if you do an interim deal, if you even start discussing with the Iranians any of these things, the sanctions will fall apart, the pressure will dissipate, no one will be able to stick at it. That has demonstrably been shown not to be true.

So the pressure is still there. And as the President says, if the Iranians say no and there is no deal, then by all means let's sit down and work out what extra sanctions to put in place. Because I think we're absolutely united in a simple thought, which is a deal that takes Iran away from a nuclear weapon is better than either Iran having a nuclear

weapon or military action to prevent it. In the end, it comes down to that simple choice. And so will I do what I can to help as one of the country's negotiating? Sure I will.

Q: Do you acknowledge a less than 50/50 --

PRIME MINISTER CAMERON: I think the way the President put it, I wouldn't disagree with. It's very hard to know what the Iranian thinking is about this. I'm the first British Prime Minister in 35 years I think to meet with an Iranian President, and it's very hard to know what their thinking is.

But there is a very clear offer there, which is to take Iran away from a nuclear weapon and to conclude an agreement with them which would be mutually beneficial. That's what should happen.

I think we've got a question from Nick Robinson at the BBC.

Q: Mr. Nick Robinson, BBC News. Prime Minister, with extra security being put in place today for the Jewish community and also for police officers, would people be right to conclude that the threat of an attack on the streets of Britain is now all but imminent?

And, Mr. President, you've spoken of the threat posed by fighters coming back from Syria. Do you ever worry that this is a legacy of the decision of the United States and the United Kingdom to in effect stand on the sidelines during Syria's bloody civil war?

And if I may briefly, if you'll forgive me, on the economy, you said you agree. Is he right? Is it time to stick to the plan?

PRIME MINISTER CAMERON: Well, first of all, look, we do face a very serious Islamist extremist terrorist threat in Europe, in America, across the world. And we have to be incredibly vigilant in terms of that threat. We've got to strengthen our police and security. We ought to make sure we do everything we can to keep our country safe. And that involves an incredibly long-term, patient, disciplined approach.

There is no single, simple thing that needs to be done. It means closing down the ungoverned spaces that the terrorists operate in. It means working against ISIL in Iraq and Syria. It means countering this poisonous, fanatical death cult of a narrative that is perverting the religion of Islam. It means working together with our oldest and best partners so that we share intelligence and security and we try and prevent terrorist atrocities from taking place. It means all of these things, and it is going to be a long, patient and hard struggle.

I'm quite convinced we will come through it and we will overcome it, because in the end, the values that we hold to of freedom, of democracy, of having open and tolerant societies -- these are the strongest values there can be. And in the end, we will come through. But like some of the challenges our countries have faced together in the past, it will take great discipline, great patience, great, hard work.

You asked specifically the question about imminence. We have a system in the United Kingdom where threat levels are set by the Joint Terrorism Assessment Centre. They're not set by politicians. They have judged that the threat we face is severe. That means, in their words, that an attack is highly likely. If ever there is an imminent threat of attack, it goes to the next level up, which is critical. But it's their decision, not mine. My responsibility is to make sure we marshal everything we have as a country in order to defeat the threat.

Q: On the Jewish community?

PRIME MINISTER CAMERON: And on the Jewish community, I think it's good that the metropolitan police have announced that they'll be stepping up on patrols. I met with the Jewish Leadership Council earlier this week. We already provide through their security organization, the Community Security Trust, we already provide government money to help protect Jewish schools. But I think this is -- we have to recognize in fighting terrorism, as we found in Britain before, you cannot simply rely on policing and security. This is a job for everyone. This is a role that we're all going to have to play in the vigilance and in making sure that we keep our community safe.

PRESIDENT OBAMA: With respect to Syria and the connection to foreign fighters, there is no doubt that in the chaos and the vacuum that's been created in big chunks of Syria, that that's given an opportunity for foreign fighters to both come in and come back out. And I chaired a U.N. Security Council meeting, and we are now busy working with our partners to implement a series of actions to identify who may be traveling to Syria in order to get trained, to fight, or to hatch plots that would be activated upon return to their home countries. So it's a very serious problem.

The notion that this is occurring because the United States or Great Britain or other countries stood on the sidelines I think is -- first of all, mischaracterizes our position. We haven't been standing on the sidelines; it's true we did not invade Syria. If the assertion is, is that had we invaded Syria we would be less prone to terrorist attacks, I'll leave it to you to play out that scenario and whether that sounds accurate.

We've been very active in trying to resolve a tragic situation in Syria -- diplomatically; through humanitarian efforts; through the removal of chemical weapons from Syria that had been so deadly. And now as ISIL has moved forward, we've been very active in degrading their capabilities inside of Syria, even as we're working with partners to make sure that the foreign fighter situation is resolved.

But I think David's point is the key one. This phenomenon of violent extremism -- the ideology, the networks, the capacity to recruit young people -- this has metastasized and it is widespread, and it has penetrated communities around the world.

I do not consider it an existential threat. As David said, this is one that we will solve. We are stronger, we are representing values that the vast majority of Muslims believe in -- in tolerance and in working together to build rather than to destroy. And so this is

a problem that causes great heartache and tragedy and destruction, but it is one that ultimately we're going to defeat. But we can't just defeat it through weapons.

One of the things that we spoke about is how do we lift up those voices that represent the vast majority of the Muslim world so that that counter-narrative against this nihilism is put out there as aggressively and as nimbly as the messages coming out from these fanatics. How do we make sure that we are working with local communities and faith leaders and families -- whether in a neighborhood in London or a neighborhood in Detroit, Michigan -- so that we are inoculating ourselves against this kind of ideology. And that's going to be slow, plodding, systematic work, but it's work that I'm confident we're going to be able to accomplish, particularly when we've got strong partners like the United Kingdom doing it.

Q: On the economy --

PRESIDENT OBAMA: On the economy, I would note that Great Britain and the United States are two economies that are standing out at a time when a lot of other countries are having problems, so we must be doing something right.

Major Garrett.

Q: Thank you, Mr. President. Good afternoon, Mr. Prime Minister. Good afternoon to you, sir.

Questions for all -- for both of you. I want to make sure we heard what you were trying to say. You clearly are directing a message to Congress in the context of Iranian negotiations. Were you also sending a message -- both of you -- to Iran that if the sanctions talks fail, that war footing is the next most likely alternative for this country and those who are allied with us in this common pursuit?

And atrocities in Paris, raids and threats either in Belgium and Netherlands, I'd like to ask you both: Do you believe Europe is at a turning point now in its recognition of what its threats are and its own mobilization in terms of new laws, security footing, larger budgets? And you both talked about cybersecurity. There is a crucial issue for both countries -- backdoors in encryption to protect people and also privacy. I'd like your comments on that. Thank you.

PRESIDENT OBAMA: I am not -- repeat, not -- suggesting that we are in immediate war footing should negotiations with Iran fail. But as David put it very simply -- if, in fact, our view is that we have to prevent Iran from getting a nuclear weapon, then we have to recognize the possibility that should diplomacy fail, we have to look at other options to achieve that goal.

And if you listen sometimes to the rhetoric surrounding this issue, I think there is sometimes the view that this regime cannot be trusted; that, effectively, negotiations with Iran are pointless. And since these claims are being made by individuals who see Iran as a mortal threat and want as badly as we do to prevent them from getting a nuclear weapon, the question then becomes: Well, what other alternatives exactly are available?

That is part of what we have to consider as to why it's so important for us to pursue every possible avenue to see if we can get a deal. Now, it's got to be good deal, not a bad deal. I've already shown myself willing to walk away from a bad deal. And the P5-plus-1 walked away with us. And so nobody is interested in some document that undermines our sanctions and gives Iran the possibility of, whether covertly or gradually, building up its nuclear weapons capacity. We're not going to allow that. And anything that we do, any deal that we arrive at -- if we were to arrive at one -- would be subject to scrutiny across the board, not just by members of Congress, but more importantly, by people who actually know how the technical aspects of nuclear programs can advance and how we can effectively verify in the most rigorous way possible that the terms of the deal are being met.

So the bottom line is this: We may not get there, but we have a chance to resolve the nuclear issue peacefully. And I should point out also, by the way, that if -- even if we get a nuclear deal and we are assured that Iran doesn't possess nuclear weapons, we've still got a whole bunch of problems with Iran on state-sponsored terrorism, their rhetoric towards Israel, their financing of Hezbollah. We've got differences with respect to Syria. It's not as if suddenly we've got a great relationship with Iran. It solves one particular problem that is urgent, and it solves it better than the other alternatives that might present themselves.

So my main message to Congress at this point is, just hold your fire. Nobody around the world, least of all the Iranians, doubt my ability to get some additional sanctions passed should these negotiations fail. That's not a hard vote for me to get through Congress. And so the notion that we need to have additional sanctions, or even the possibility of sanctions hanging over their head to force them to a better deal, I think the Iranians know that that is certainly in our back pocket if the negotiations fail.

With respect to violent extremism, my impression is that Europe has consistently taken this seriously. During the course of my presidency, we have worked collaboratively and with great urgency and a recognition that not only do you have foreigners who may be trying to hatch plots in Europe, but that, given large immigrant populations, it's important to reach out to and work with local communities and to have a very effective intelligence and counterterrorism cooperation between countries and between the United States and Europe.

There's no doubt that the most recent events has amplified those concerns. I think one of the things that I've learned over the last six years is that there's always more that we can do. We can always do it better. We learn from mistakes. Each incident that occurs teaches our professionals how we might be able to prevent these the next time.

And I'm confident that the very strong cooperation that already exists with Europe will get that much better in the months and years to come.

Q: Do you believe that Europe has been as sensitized as the United States and Great Britain has?

PRESIDENT OBAMA: Here's where I actually think that Europe has some particular challenges, and I said this to David. The United States has one big advantage in this whole process, and it's not that our law enforcement or our intelligence services, et cetera, are so much better -- although ours are very, very good, and I think Europeans would recognize that we've got capabilities others don't have. Our biggest advantage, Major, is that our Muslim populations, they feel themselves to be Americans. And there is this incredible process of immigration and assimilation that is part of our tradition that is probably our greatest strength. Now, it doesn't mean that we aren't subject to the kinds of tragedies that we saw at the Boston Marathon. But that, I think, has been helpful.

There are parts of Europe in which that's not the case, and that's probably the greatest danger that Europe faces -- which is why, as they respond, as they work with us to respond to these circumstances, it's important for Europe not to simply respond with a hammer and law enforcement and military approaches to these problems, but there also has to be a recognition that the stronger the ties of a North African -- or a Frenchman of North African descent to French values, French Republic, a sense of opportunity -- that's going to be as important, if not more important, in over time solving this problem. And I think there's a recognition of that across Europe, and it's important that we don't lose that.

The last point I'll make, and then I'll turn it over to David, is with respect to the issue of intelligence-gathering, signal intelligence, encryptions, this is a challenge that we have been working on since I've been President. Obviously, it was amplified when Mr. Snowden did what he did. It's gone off the pages of -- the front pages of the news, but we haven't stopped working on it. And we've been in dialogue with companies and have systematically worked through ways in which we can meet legitimate privacy concerns, but also meet the very real concerns that David has identified and my FBI Director, Jim Comey, identified.

Social media and the Internet is the primary way in which these terrorism organizations are communicating. Now, that's no different than anybody else, but they're good at it. And when we have the ability to track that in a way that is legal, conforms with due process, rule of law, and presents oversight, then that's the capability that we have to preserve.

And the biggest damage that was done as a consequence of the Snowden disclosures was I think, in some cases, a complete undermining of trust. Some would say that was justified. I would argue that although there are some legitimate concerns there, overall, the United States government and, from what I've seen, the British government, have operated in a scrupulous and lawful way to try to balance these security and privacy concerns. And we can do better, and that's what we're doing.

But we're still going to have to find ways to make sure that if an al Qaeda affiliate is operating in Great Britain or in the United States, that we can try to prevent real tragedy. And I think the companies want to see that as well. They're patriots. They have families that they want to see protected. We just have to work through in many cases what are technical issues. So it's not so much that there's a difference in intent,

but how to square the circle on these issues is difficult. And we're working with partners like Great Britain and the United Kingdom, but we're also going to be in dialogue with the companies to try to make that work.

PRIME MINISTER CAMERON: On the Iranian issue, I won't add much to what the President said. I'd just make this point, that I don't think you can characterize it as, if there's a deal then the pressure is off Iran, and if there isn't a deal, new pressure has to be applied to Iran. I mean, even if there is a deal, the key to that deal will be transparency and verification and making sure that this country isn't developing a nuclear weapon. And that will mean repeated pressure, even after a deal is done. I think that's very important.

And I would absolutely back up what Barack says about recognizing that in so many other ways, we have some major disagreements with what the Iranians have been doing. I mean, Britain has suffered particularly from the appalling way that our embassy and our staff were treated in that country. So we approach this with a huge amount of skepticism and concern. But the goal of an Iran without a nuclear weapon makes these talks worthwhile.

On the issue -- your question, has -- is this a turning point for Europe in terms of terrorism, I would argue that we turned some time ago. Maybe Britain in particular because of the appalling attacks that took place in 2005, but there have been attacks elsewhere in Europe. I mean, since I've been Prime Minister, there's probably been at least one major plot every year of quite a significant nature that we have managed to intercept, stop and prevent. So the awareness of the scale of the challenge we face is absolutely there across government, across parliament, across the different political parties in the police and intelligence services.

I think there is an opportunity for countries in Europe, who perhaps up to now have been less affected, to work with them and make sure that we share knowledge and skills. Because when you say, have you -- the turning point is making sure your legislation is up to date, making sure your police and security services have the capabilities they need, making sure you've got programs that can channel extremists away and de-radicalize them, making sure that you're better integrating your communities. It means doing all of those things.

I very much agree with what Barack says about the importance of building strong and integrated societies. I made a speech about this at Munich a couple of years ago, saying that it had been a mistake in the past when some countries had treated different groups and different religious groups as sort of separate blocks rather than trying to build a strong, common home together. That is what we should be doing, and that is what our policy is directed to.

And, of course, you need to have -- as I believe we are -- a multiracial, multiethnic society of huge opportunity where in one generation or two generations you can come to our country and you can be in the Cabinet; you can serve at the highest level in the armed forces; you can sit on the bench as a judge. I've got in my Cabinet someone

just like that, who in two generations his family has gone from arriving in Britain to sitting -- that's vitally important, as is combatting unemployment, combatting poverty.

But here's I think the really determining point: You can have, tragically, people who have had all the advantages of integration, who have had all the economic opportunities that our countries can offer, who still get seduced by this poisonous, radical death cult of a narrative. We've seen in recent weeks people who have gone to fight in Syria and who may threaten us here back at home who have had every opportunity and every advantage in life in terms of integration. So let's never lose sight of the real enemy here, which is the poisonous narrative that's perverting Islam. That is what we have to focus on, recognizing that of course we help ourselves in this struggle if we create societies of genuine opportunity, if we create genuine integration between our communities. But let's never lose sight of the real -- the heart of the matter.

As for the issue on the techniques necessary for our intelligence services to help keep us safe, all I would say -- and the President and I had a good discussion about this earlier -- I don't think either of us are trying to announce some new doctrine. The doctrine that I approach this -- what?

Q: (Off-mic.)

PRIME MINISTER CAMERON: Well, I'm sorry to disappoint you, but I take a very simple approach to this, which is ever since we've been sending letters to each other or making telephone calls to each other, or mobile phone calls to each other, or indeed contacting each other on the Internet, it has been possible in both our countries, in extremis -- in my country by a signed warrant by the Home Secretary -- to potentially listen to a call between two terrorists to stop them in their activity. In your country, a judicial process. We've had our own -- we're not asking for backdoors. We believe in very clear front doors through legal processes that should help to keep our countries safe.

And my only argument is that as technology develops, as the world moves on, we should try to avoid the safe havens that can otherwise be created for terrorists to talk to each other. That's the goal that I think is so important, because I'm in no doubt, as having been Prime Minister for four and a half years, having seen how our intelligence services work, I know that some of these plots that get prevented, the lives that get saved, there is a very real connection between that and the capabilities that our intelligence services within the law use to defend our people.

I think the final question is from Robert Moore from ITN.

Q: Thank you. Yes, Robert Moore with the British network, ITV News. Prime Minister, it's clear there is a sort of security alert underway at the moment around the Jewish community in Britain. Can I just be clear, is that based on specific intelligence? Should people be concerned about doing their daily activities this weekend? And do you regard a terrorist attack on British soil as almost inevitable?

And, Mr. President, you say there is a dialogue underway with the big American tech companies, but do you share the Prime Minister's view that the current threat

environment is so severe that there does need to be a swing of the pendulum a little bit, maybe from privacy towards counterterrorism, and that this area of private encrypted communications is a very dangerous one, potentially in terms of facilitating dialogue between terrorist groups?

PRIME MINISTER CAMERON: On the issue of the threat that we face, as I said, the level has been set at severe. That is set by an independent expert organization, so people can have full confidence that these things aren't ever done for any other motives than literally to look at the evidence that is there about terrorist threats and to set the level accordingly. When the level, as it is as the moment, is set at severe, that means that the authorities believe an attack is highly likely. If we believed it was imminent, then you would move to the next level, which is critical.

And we clearly do face a very real threat in our country. I mean, in recent months, as I was discussing with the President, we've had a number of potential attacks averted, for instance, on British police officers. So that is the threat picture. It's regularly reviewed, regularly updated, but it shouldn't be moved unless there is real evidence to do so.

In terms of the protection to the Jewish community and indeed other communities, and indeed to police officers themselves, this is based on what has happened in France, on the whole picture that we see. And it is sensible, precautionary measures to make sure we do what we can to reassure those communities -- communities who are all too aware of the threat that they face. And this is a bigger challenge for us.

I think one of the most moving sights in Paris was to see so many people holding up signs saying "Je suis flic," I'm a cop; "Je suis juif," I'm a Jew. And I thought that was incredibly moving, that people wanted to stand together with one community that had been singled out, and singled out not because of anything other than the fact they were Jewish. So I think it's very important that we speak up and stand up for those communities and give them the protection that they deserve.

PRESIDENT OBAMA: Obviously, in the wake of Paris, our attention is heightened. But I have to tell you, over the last six years threat streams are fairly constant. David deals with them every day, I deal with them every day. Our CT, our counterterrorism professionals deal with them every day. So I don't think there's a situation in which because things are so much more dangerous, the pendulum needs to swing. I think what we have to find is a consistent framework whereby our publics have confidence that their government can both protect them, but not abuse our capacity to operate in cyberspace. And because this is a whole new world, as David said, the laws that might have been designed for the traditional wiretap have to be updated.

How we do that needs to be debated, both here in the United States and in the U.K. I think we're getting better at it. I think we're striking the balance better. I think the companies here in the United States at least recognize that they have a responsibility to the public, but also want to make sure that they're meeting their responsibilities to their customers that are using their products. And so the dialogue that we're engaged in is designed to make sure that all of us feel confident that if there is an actual threat out there, our law enforcement and our intelligence officers can identify that threat

and track that threat at the same time that our governments are not going around phishing into whatever text you might be sending on your smartphone. And I think that's something that can be achieved.

There are going to be situations where there are hard cases. But for the most part, those who are worried about Big Brother sometimes obscure or deliberately ignore all the legal safeguards that have been put in place to assure people's privacy and to make sure that government is not abusing these powers. And on the other hand, there are times where law enforcement and those of us whose job it is to protect the public aren't thinking about those problems because we're trying to track and prevent a particular terrorist event from happening. And it's useful to have civil libertarians and others tapping us on the shoulder in the midst of this process and reminding us that there are values at stake as well. And I think that David and I welcome that kind of debate.

The technologies are evolving in ways that potentially make this trickier. If we get into a situation in which the technologies do not allow us at all to track somebody that we're confident is a terrorist; if we find evidence of a terrorist plot somewhere in the Middle East that traces directly back to London or New York, we have specific information and we are confident that this individual or this network is about to activate a plot, and despite knowing that information, despite having a phone number, or despite having a social media address or email address -- that we can't penetrate that, that's a problem.

And so that's the kind of dialogue that we're having to have with these companies. Part of it is a legal issue, part of it is a technical question. But overall, I'm actually confident that we can balance these imperatives, and we shouldn't feel as if because we've just seen such a horrific attack in Paris, that suddenly everything should be going by the wayside. Unfortunately, this has been a constant backdrop and I think will continue to be for any Prime Minister or President for some time to come, and we've got to make sure that we don't overreact but that we remain vigilant and are serious about our responsibilities there.

Thank you very much, everybody. Appreciate it. Thank you.

END 1:39 P.M. EST