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REMARKS BY PRESIDENT OBAMA AND PRIME MINISTER REINFELDT OF SWEDEN IN A JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE

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PRIME MINISTER REINFELDT: It's a great honor and pleasure for me to welcome President Barack Obama to Sweden. As you all know, this is a historic event -- the first bilateral visit ever by a President of the United States to Sweden.

We have had a very constructive meeting. There are many reasons why the relationship between the United States and Sweden is special. Many Swedes emigrated to the United States at the end of the 19th century and somewhere around 4 million Americans today claim Swedish heritage. Business ties flourish between our two countries. Sweden is, in fact, one of the largest investors per capita in the U.S., and we have considerable American investments in Sweden. The United States is the most important foreign employer in our country.

Our societies are founded on the same core values -- democracy, respect for human rights, and rule of law. All these values are at the heart of the deeds of Raoul Wallenberg, and I'm looking forward to the possibility to pay tribute to Raoul Wallenberg this afternoon, a man who chose not to be indifferent and who saved thousands of Hungarian Jews from the Holocaust.

The United States and Sweden also share ambitions when it comes to the opening of global trade flows. Trade has laid the foundation of Sweden's wealth and prosperity. Around 50 percent of our GDP comes from exports, and Sweden strongly support open trade regimes and, in particular, free trade agreements now being negotiated between the European Union and the United States. This will not only bring more jobs and growth to both our continents, it will also strengthen our political and economic partnership.

We also touched upon the economic situation in Europe and in the United States. I mentioned that the crisis has hit countries in Europe differently -- Sweden being one of those countries that has done relatively well during the crisis. But the need for structural reforms exists throughout Europe to stay competitive, and at the same

time preserving all our welfare ambitions.

We have also discussed climate change and its consequences. It represents one of the most important challenges to our societies. Sweden has reduced greenhouse gas emissions by 20 percent since 1990, while GDP at the same time has increased by 60 percent. So there is no contradiction between economic growth and the protection of environment.

I welcome President Obama's ambitious new Climate Action Plan. U.S. emissions have, in recent years, already fallen substantially, and your new plan will help United States to make even further reductions. We have agreed to work together in the international climate negotiations to make sure that other countries also are prepared to cut their emissions. This is the only way that we can protect our environment.

We have discussed a few foreign policy issues as well -- the most topical, of course, being the situation in Syria. Sweden condemns the use of chemical weapons in Syria in the strongest possible terms. It's a clear violation of international law. Those responsible should be held accountable. Sweden believes that serious matters concerning international peace and security should be handled by the United Nations. But I also understand the potential consequences of letting a violation like this go unanswered. In the long term, I know that we both agree that the situation in Syria needs a political solution.

So thank you once again, Mr. President, for coming to Sweden. I look forward to our program together this afternoon.

Please.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you so much. Hej. (Laughter.) I've just exhausted my Swedish. (Laughter.)

Thank you, Prime Minister Reinfeldt, for your very kind words and welcoming me today. I'm proud to be making the first-ever bilateral visit by a U.S. President to Sweden.

I've only been here a short time, but I already want to thank all the people here for the warm hospitality that's been extended to me and my delegation. This is truly one of the world's great cities. It is spectacularly beautiful. The Prime Minister tells me that the weather is like this year round. (Laughter.) And so like so many who've come here, I feel Stockholm in my heart, and I'm sure that I'll want to bring back my family to have a visit some time in the future.

I've said before that it's no accident that democracies are America's closest partners. And that includes Sweden. That's why I'm here today. As free peoples, we recognize that democracy is the most effective form of government ever devised for delivering progress and opportunity and prosperity and freedom to people. And as two of the most innovative economies on Earth, we cherish that freedom that allows us to innovate and create, which is why we're leaders in science and research and development -- those things that pioneers new industries and broaden our horizons.

We share a belief in the dignity and equality of every human being; that our daughters deserve the same opportunities as our sons; that our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters must be treated equally under the law; that our societies are strengthened and not weakened by diversity. And we stand up for universal human rights, not only in America and in Europe, but beyond, because we believe that when these rights are respected, nations are more successful and our world is safer and more just.

So I want to thank Sweden and the Swedish people for being such strong partners in pursuit of these values that we share. The partnership is rooted in deep friendship, but as was also mentioned, we have very strong people-to-people ties. My hometown of Chicago has a lot of people of Swedish descent. Vice President Biden was honored to welcome King Gustaf and Queen Silvia to the United States earlier this year to mark the 375th anniversary of the first Swedish colony in America, and I'm looking forward to visiting with the King and Queen tomorrow.

I should mention on behalf of hockey fans back home in Chicago, I have to say how grateful our championship Blackhawks are for their several teammates who hail from Sweden. So that's been an excellent export that we gladly accept. (Laughter.)

I had a chance to visit with Prime Minister Reinfeldt in the White House during my first year in office. And he has always proved to be a thoughtful and deliberative partner on a whole host of international issues, and I'm pleased that we've been able to strengthen that partnership in our discussions here today.

We of course discussed the appalling violence being inflicted on the Syrian people by the Assad regime, including the horrific chemical weapons attacks two weeks ago. I discussed our assessment, which clearly implicates the Syrian government in this outrage. The Prime Minister and I are in agreement that in the face of such barbarism the international community cannot be silent, and that failing to respond to this attack would only increase the risk of more attacks and the possibility that other countries would use these weapons as well.

I respect -- and I've said this to the Prime Minister -- the U.N. process. Obviously, the U.N. investigation team has done heroic work under very difficult circumstances. But we believe very strongly, with high confidence, that, in fact, chemical weapons were used and that Mr. Assad was the source. And we want to join with the international community in an effective response that deters such use in the future.

So I updated the Prime Minister on our efforts to secure congressional authorization for taking action as well as our effort to continue to build international support for holding the Assad regime accountable in order to deter these kinds of attacks in the future.

And we also discussed our broader strategy. The United States and Sweden are both major donors of humanitarian assistance to the Syrian people. We will continue those efforts. We're going to continue to try to strengthen the capabilities of an inclusive and representative opposition, and to support the diplomacy that could bring an end to all the violence and advance a political transition and a future in Syria where all people's rights are upheld. Those are goals that we share. And we will keep working towards those goals.

And more broadly, given Sweden's close partnership with NATO, we also touched on some of the other security challenges, and I expressed my appreciation for the extraordinary work that the Swedish armed forces has done in a whole range of issues, including Afghanistan, efforts to resolve some of the conflicts in Central Eastern Europe, and the ongoing training that's also being provided and the good example that's being provided by the Swedish armed forces here in Europe.

Mindful of the jobs that are supported by trade between our two countries, we discussed ways to partner more, including creating a clean energy partnership that creates jobs and combats climate change effectively. Sweden is obviously an extraordinary leader when it comes to tackling climate change and increasing energy efficiency, and developing new technologies. And the goal of achieving a carbon-neutral economy is remarkable, and Sweden is well on its way. We deeply respect and admire that and think we can learn from it.

In the United States, we've taken some historic steps -- doubling our electricity from wind and solar, improving the fuel efficiency of our cars, reducing our carbon pollution to the lowest levels in nearly 20 years -- but we all know we need to do more. So my new Climate Action Plan -- more clean energy, more energy efficiency, less emissions -- will allow us to do even more in the

years to come. And we look forward to a close partnership with Sweden on what is going to be a global challenge. And at the Royal Institute of Technology today I look forward to seeing some of the innovative ways that we can cooperate.

We also talked about trade and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, or T-TIP. I want to thank Sweden and the Prime Minister for the strong support of these negotiations, and I believe that for the U.S. and the EU to reach a high-standard, comprehensive agreement can create more jobs and opportunity on both sides of the Atlantic.

And as I head into the G-20, I shared my view that here in Europe and around the world, we've got to stay focused on creating jobs and growth. That's going to be critically important not only for our economies but also to maintain stability in many of our democracies that are under severe stress at this point.

And finally, I want to salute Sweden, along with all the Nordic countries, for your strong support for democracy and development -- strengthening democratic governance in Eastern Europe; global efforts against AIDS, TB, and malaria; responsible development in Africa.

I want to thank in advance the Prime Minister for hosting our meeting tonight with the leaders of all the Nordic countries, and I look forward to our discussions.

So to Prime Minister Reinfeldt, thank you so much for your hospitality. To the people of Sweden, thank you. This is a wonderful visit, and I'm looking forward to it producing concrete results that will enhance the lives of both the American people and the people of Sweden.

So with that, I think we'll take some questions.

Q Mr. President, welcome to Sweden.

PRESIDENT OBAMA: Thank you.

Q As you might know, the NSA surveillance affair has stirred up quite a few angry reactions, even here in Sweden. What do you want to say to those upset, and how do you think the affair affects the relationship between our countries? And, as a follow-up to that, I know that at home you are sometimes accused of wanting to turn the U.S. into Sweden. (Laughter.) Now that you're here -- you've been here for several hours -- what have you seen? What actually inspires you? What do you want to import to the U.S. in terms of ideas for society?

PRESIDENT OBAMA: Well, let me take the NSA question first, because this is a question that I've received in previous visits to Europe since the stories broke in The Guardian and I suspect I'll continue to get as I travel through Europe and around the world for quite some time.

Like other countries, we have an intelligence operation that tries to improve our understanding of what's happening around the world. And in light of 9/11, a lot of energy was focused on improving our intelligence when it came to combating terrorism.

And what I can say with confidence is that when it comes to our domestic operations, the concerns that people have back home in the United States of America that we do not surveil the American people or persons within the United States; that there are a lot of checks and balances in place designed to avoid a surveillance state.

There have been times where the procedures -- because these are human endeavors -- have not worked the way they should and we had to tighten them up. And I think there are legitimate questions that have been raised about the fact that as technology advances and capabilities grow, it may be that the laws that are currently in place are not sufficient to guard against the dangers of us being able to track so much.

Now, when it comes to intelligence gathering internationally, our focus is on counterterrorism, weapons of mass destruction, cybersecurity -- core national security interests of the United States. But what is true is, is that the United States has enormous capabilities when it comes to intelligence. One way to think about it is, in the same way that our military capabilities are significantly greater than in many other countries, the same is true for our intelligence capabilities. So even though we may have the same goals, our means are significantly greater.

And I can give assurances to the publics in Europe and around the world that we're not going around snooping at people's emails or listening to their phone calls. What we try to do is to target very specifically areas of concern.

Having said that, what I've said domestically and what I say to international audiences is with changes in technology, with the growth of our capabilities, if our attitude is because we can do it, we should go ahead and do it, then we may not be addressing some of the legitimate concerns and dangers that exist any time we're talking about intelligence gathering and surveillance.

So what I've asked my national security team to do, as well as independent persons who are well-known lawyers or civil libertarians

or privacy experts to do, is to review everything that we're doing with the instructions to them that we have to balance the ends with the means. And just because we can do something, doesn't mean we should do it. And there may be situations in which we're gathering information just because we can that doesn't help us with national security, but does raise questions in terms of whether we're tipping over into being too intrusive with respect to the interactions of other governments.

And that is something that we are currently reviewing carefully. We are consulting with the EU in this process. We are consulting with other countries in this process and finding out from them what are their areas of specific concern, and trying to align what we do in a way that I think alleviates some of the public concerns that people may have.

But this is always going to be -- there's going to be some balancing that takes place on these issues. Some of the folks who have been most greatly offended publicly we know privately engage in the same activities directed at us, or use information that we've obtained to protect their people. And we recognize that. But I think all of us have to take a very thoughtful approach to this problem. And I'm the first one to acknowledge that given advances in technology and the fact that so much of our information flow today is through the Internet, through wireless, that the risks of abuse are greater than they have been in the past.

Now, with respect to Sweden, I haven't had a chance to wander around Stockholm as much as I would like. It is a gorgeous country. What I know about Sweden I think offers us some good lessons. Number one, the work you've done on energy I think is something that the United States can, and will, learn from, because every country in the world right now has to recognize that if we're going to continue to grow, improve our standard of living while maintaining a sustainable planet, then we're going to have to change our patterns of energy use. And Sweden I think is far ahead of many other countries.

Sweden also has been able to have a robust market economy while recognizing that there are some investments in education or infrastructure or research that are important, and there's no contradiction between making public investments and being a firm believer in free markets. And that's a debate and a discussion that we often have in the United States.

I have to say that if I were here in Europe, I'd probably be considered right in the middle, maybe center-left, maybe center-right depending on the country. In the United States sometimes the names I'm called are quite different. (Laughter.)

And I think a third observation and final observation I'd make is I know that -- I'm sure Fredrik doesn't feel this as he's engaging in difficult debates here -- I do get a sense that the politics in Sweden right now involve both the ruling party and the opposition engaged in a respectful and rational debate that's based on facts and issues. And I think that kind of recognition that people can have political differences but -- while trying to achieve the same goals, that's something that Swedes should be proud of and should try to maintain.

Q Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you, sir. Have you made up your mind whether to take action against Syria whether or not you have a congressional resolution approved? Is a strike needed in order to preserve your credibility for when you set these sort of red lines? And were you able to enlist the support of the Prime Minister here for support in Syria?

PRESIDENT OBAMA: Let me unpack the question. First of all, I didn't set a red line; the world set a red line. The world set a red line when governments representing 98 percent of the world's population said the use of chemical weapons are abhorrent and passed a treaty forbidding their use even when countries are engaged in war.

Congress set a red line when it ratified that treaty. Congress set a red line when it indicated that -- in a piece of legislation titled the Syria Accountability Act -- that some of the horrendous things that are happening on the ground there need to be answered for.

And so when I said in a press conference that my calculus about what's happening in Syria would be altered by the use of the chemical weapons, which the overwhelming consensus of humanity says is wrong, that wasn't something I just kind of made up. I didn't pluck it out of thin air. There's a reason for it. That's point number one.

Point number two -- my credibility is not on the line. The international community's credibility is on the line. And America and Congress's credibility is on the line because we give lip service to the notion that these international norms are important.

And when those videos first broke and you saw images of over 400 children subjected to gas, everybody expressed outrage: How can this happen in this modern world? Well, it happened because a government chose to deploy these deadly weapons on civilian populations. And so the question is, how credible is the international community when it says this is an international norm that has to be observed? The question is, how credible is Congress when it passes a treaty saying we have to forbid the use of chemical weapons?

And I do think that we have to act, because if we don't, we are effectively saying that even though we may condemn it and issue resolutions, and so forth and so on, somebody who is not shamed by resolutions can continue to act with impunity. And those international norms begin to erode. And other despots and authoritarian regimes can start looking and saying, that's something we can get away with. And that, then, calls into question other international norms and laws of war and whether those are going to be enforced.

So, as I told the Prime Minister, I am very respectful of the U.N. investigators who went in at great danger to try to gather evidence about what happened. We want more information, not less. But when I said that I have high confidence that chemical weapons were used and that the Assad government through their chain of command ordered their use, that was based on both public sourcing, intercepts, evidence that we feel very confident about, including samples that have been tested showing sarin from individuals who were there.

And I'm very mindful of the fact that around the world, and here in Europe in particular, there are still memories of Iraq and weapons of mass destruction accusations, and people being concerned about how accurate this information is. Keep in mind, I'm somebody who opposed the war in Iraq and not interested in repeated mistakes of us basing decisions on faulty intelligence.

But having done a thoroughgoing evaluation of the information that is currently available, I can say with high confidence chemical weapons were used. And, by the way, Iran doesn't deny it. Even Syria doesn't actually deny that they were used. And that is what the U.N. investigators are supposed to be determining. And, frankly, nobody is really disputing that chemical weapons were used. The only remaining dispute is who used them, which is outside the parameters of the U.N. investigation. So the U.N. investigation will not be able to answer that preliminarily; they're not supposed to.

But what we know is, is that the opposition doesn't have the capability to deliver weapons on this scale. These weapons are in Assad's possession. We have intercepts indicating people in the chain of command, both before and after the attacks, with knowledge of these attacks. We can show that the rockets that delivered these chemical weapons went from areas controlled by Assad into these areas where the opposition was lodged. And the accumulation of evidence gives us high confidence that Assad carried this out.

And so the question is, after we've gone through all this, are we going to try to find a reason not to act? And if that's the case, then I think the world community should admit it. Because you can

always find a reason not to act. This is a complicated, difficult situation. And an initial response will not solve the underlying tragedy of the civil war in Syria. As Fredrik mentioned, that will be solved through, eventually, a political transition.

But we can send a very clear, strong message against the prohibition -- or in favor of the prohibition against using chemical weapons. We can change Assad's calculus about using them again. We can degrade his capabilities so that he does not use them again. And so what I'm talking about is an action that is limited in time and in scope, targeted at the specific task of degrading his capabilities and deterring the use of those weapons again.

And, in the meantime, we will continue to engage the entire international community in trying to find a solution to the underlying problems, which brings me to the last question. And that is what happens if Congress doesn't approve it. I believe that Congress will approve it. I believe Congress will approve it because I think America recognizes that, as difficult as it is to take any military action -- even as one as limited as we're talking about, even one without boots on the ground -- that's a sober decision. But I think America also recognizes that if the international community fails to maintain certain norms, standards, laws governing how countries interact and how people are treated, that over time, this world becomes less safe. It becomes more dangerous not only for those people who are subjected to these horrible crimes, but to all of humanity.

And we've seen that happen again and again in our history. And the people of Europe are certainly familiar with what happens when the international community finds excuses not to act.

And I would not have taken this before Congress just as a symbolic gesture. I think it's very important that Congress say that we mean what we say. And I think we will be stronger as a country in our response if the President and Congress does it together.

As Commander-in-Chief, I always preserve the right and the responsibility to act on behalf of America's national security. I do not believe that I was required to take this to Congress. But I did not take this to Congress just because it's an empty exercise; I think it's important to have Congress's support on it.

Q Mr. President, you've given very eloquent talks about the moral force of nonviolence. I was wondering, could you describe the dilemma to be a Nobel Peace Prize winner and getting ready to attack Syria? And also, in what way did the talk that you had today with Prime Minister Reinfeldt move the world a step closer to resolving the climate crisis?

PRESIDENT OBAMA: I would refer you to the speech that I gave when I received the Nobel Prize. And I think I started the speech by saying that, compared to previous recipients, I was certainly unworthy. But what I also described was the challenge that all of us face when we believe in peace but we confront a world that is full of violence and occasional evil. And the question then becomes, what are our responsibilities?

So I've made every effort to end the war in Iraq; to wind down the war in Afghanistan; to strengthen our commitment to multilateral action; to promote diplomacy as the solution to problems. The question, though, that all of us face -- not just me -- our citizens face, not just political leaders -- is at what point do we say we need to confront actions that are violating our common humanity?

And I would argue that when I see 400 children subjected to gas, over 1,400 innocent civilians dying senselessly in an environment in which you already have tens of thousands dying, and we have the opportunity to take some action that is meaningful, even if it doesn't solve the entire problem may at least mitigate this particular problem, then the moral thing to do is not to stand by and do nothing.

But it's difficult. This is the part of my job that I find most challenging every single day. I would much rather spend my time talking about how to make sure every 3- and 4-year-old gets a good education than I would spending time thinking about how can I prevent 3- and 4-year-olds from being subjected to chemical weapons and nerve gas.

Unfortunately, that's sometimes the decisions that I'm confronted with as President of the United States. And, frankly, as President of the United States, I can't avoid those questions because, as much as we are criticized, when bad stuff happens around the world, the first question is what is the United States going to do about it. That's true on every issue. It's true in Libya. It's true in Rwanda. It's true in Sierra Leone. It's now true in Syria. That's part of the deal.

What was the second question?

Q Climate.

PRESIDENT OBAMA: I think we have great opportunities -- I think this is a good chance for Fredrik to talk about our shared views here, because we have I think a joint belief that developed countries have to make progress, but we have to have an international framework to address where the increases in emissions are now occurring.

PRIME MINISTER REINFELDT: Okay, well, I totally agreed with that. I think it's been a very interesting development after Copenhagen. I learned to -- we were both present in Copenhagen, but we were saying that U.S. had the highest emissions in the world and that China was catching up. Now, only a few years later, we have a situation where China is now doubled the emissions of the ones we have in U.S. This is actually reshaping the situation when it comes to climate protection.

We are both responsible for lowering our emissions, and we are doing so. But we must also face the fact that we very soon have a situation where 25 percent of the global emissions is from European Union and United States together. So the world can say: Solve it -- pointing at a quarter. They need to take in the 75 percent outside of European Union and United States. That is our problem. We want to deal with this, but it has to be a global answer.

Q Thank you. Mr. President, tomorrow you'll see President Putin at the G-20 with Russia and U.S. relations seriously strained. Do you see value in trying to persuade him still to drop opposition to a Syrian strike, or are your efforts now in that excluding Russia from the decision? And looking back at your hopes for a reset, do you believe that you overestimated what you could change, or do you believe that Mr. Putin changed the rules midway? If you will indulge me, I have one more -- but it's all related.

PRESIDENT OBAMA: I will indulge you --

Q Thank you.

PRESIDENT OBAMA: -- to let you ask the question. I may not answer it, but go ahead.

Q Could you take us behind the scenes on that 45-minute walk around the South Lawn where you changed your mind and decided to take this before Congress?

And, Mr. Prime Minister --

PRESIDENT OBAMA: Oh, goodness. Margaret, you're really pressing things now. (Laughter.) So this is question number four now.

Q No, this is for the Prime Minister.

PRESIDENT OBAMA: Okay.

Q You have expressed some doubts about military action in Syria, and I'm wondering if you could be a little bit more specific about what your concerned the consequences may be and whether you believe that President Putin has any -- shares any burden of the responsibility for Mr. Assad's actions. Thank you.

PRESIDENT OBAMA: Okay. I mean, I'm going to try to remember all this. (Laughter.)

First of all, the reset in the Russian relationship was not done on a whim. There were specific U.S. interests that I believed we could pursue with Russia where interests overlapped that would help us both on our long-term national security and our economy. And we succeeded. We succeeded in passing a new START Treaty that reduced nuclear stockpiles for both the United States and Russia. Russia joined the WTO, which bound them to a set of international rules governing trade, which I think ultimately will be good for the Russian economy, but is also good for its trading partners and potential companies that are investing in Russia, and that includes U.S. companies.

We work together on counterterrorism issues. They have provided us significant assistance in supplying our troops in Afghanistan. There were a whole host of outcomes from that reset that were valuable to the United States.

Now, there's no doubt that, as I indicated a while back, we've kind of hit a wall in terms of additional progress. But I have not written off the idea that the United States and Russia are going to continue to have common interests even as we have some very profound differences on some other issues. And where our interests overlap, we should pursue common action. Where we've got differences, we should be candid about them, try to manage those differences but not sugarcoat them.

One area where we've got a significant difference right now is the situation in Syria. Russia has a longstanding relationship with the Assad regime and, as a consequence, it has been very difficult to get Russia, working through the Security Council, to acknowledge some of the terrible behavior of the Assad regime and to try to push towards the kind of political transition that's needed in order to stabilize Syria.

And I've said to Mr. Putin directly, and I continue to believe that even if you have great concerns about elements in the opposition -- and we've got some concerns about certain elements of the opposition like al Nusra -- and even if you're concerned about the territorial integrity of Syria -- and we're concerned about the territorial integrity of Syria -- if you, in fact, want to end the

violence and slaughter inside of Syria, then you're going to have to have a political transition, because it is not possible for Mr. Assad to regain legitimacy in a country where he's killed tens of thousands of his own people. That will not happen. So far, at least, Mr. Putin has rejected that logic.

As far as security action -- Security Council action -- we have gone repeatedly to the Security Council for even the most modest of resolutions condemning some of the actions that have taken place there, and it has been resisted by Russia.

And do I hold out hope that Mr. Putin may change his position on some of these issues? I'm always hopeful. And I will continue to engage him because I think that international action would be much more effective and ultimately we can end deaths much more rapidly if Russia takes a different approach to these problems.

In terms of my decision to take the issue to Congress, this had been brewing in my mind for a while. Some people have noted -- and I think this is true -- that had I been in the Senate in the midst of this period, I probably would have suggested to a Democratic or a Republican President that Congress should have the ability to weigh in on an issue like this that is not immediate, imminent, time-sensitive. When the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Mr. Dempsey, indicated to me that whether we struck today, tomorrow, or a month from now, we could still do so effectively, then I think that raised the question of why not ask Congress to debate this in a serious way?

Because I do think it raises issues that are going to occur for us and for the international community for many years to come. The truth of the matter is, is that under international law, Security Council resolution or self-defense or defense of an ally provides a clear basis for action. But increasingly, what we're going to be confronted with are situations like Syria, like Kosovo, like Rwanda, in which we may not always have a Security Council that can act -- it may be paralyzed for a whole host of reasons -- and yet we've got all these international norms that we're interested in upholding. We may not be directly, imminently threatened by what's taking place in a Kosovo or a Syria or a Rwanda in the short term, but our long-term national security will be impacted in a profound way, and our humanity is impacted in a profound way.

And so I think it's important for us to get out of the habit in those circumstances -- again, I'm not talking about circumstances where our national security is directly impacted, we've been attacked, et cetera, where the President has to act quickly -- but in circumstances of the type that I describe, it's important for us to get out of the habit of just saying, well, we'll let the President kind of stretch the boundaries of his authority as far as he can;

Congress will sit on the sidelines, snipe; if it works, the sniping will be a little less; if it doesn't, a little more; but either way, the American people and their representatives are not fully invested in what are tough choices.

And we as a country and the world are going to start having to take tough choices. I do get frustrated -- although I understand how complex this is, and any time you're involving military action, then people will ask, well, this may do more harm than good. I understand those arguments; I wrestle with them every day. But I do have to ask people, well, if, in fact, you're outraged by the slaughter of innocent people, what are you doing about it?

And if the answer is, well, we should engage diplomatically -- well, we've engaged diplomatically. If the answer is, well, we should shine the spotlight and shame these governments -- well, these governments oftentimes show no shame. Well, we should act internationally -- well, sometimes because of the various alignments it's hard to act through a Security Council resolution.

And so either we resign ourselves to saying there's nothing we can do about it and we'll just shake our heads and go about our business, or we make decisions even when they're difficult. And I think this is an example of where we need to make decisions even though they're difficult. And I think it's important for Congress to be involved in that decision.

PRIME MINISTER REINFELDT: I think I should answer the question. I think you're right in saying that this is a very difficult decision to take and, as always, it's a balancing act. And we've been discussing this during our talks.

Just to remind you, you're now in Sweden -- a small country with a deep belief in the United Nations. You're also in a country where, I think yesterday or the day before, we took the decision that all the people that are now coming from the war in Syria are allowed to stay permanently in Sweden. So a lot of the people following this press conference here in Sweden are actually just now coming from Syria and, of course, wondering what is the view of their country. And they have a lot of their countrymen also in this country, so we have a lot of roots and links to Syria.

I think the main problem has been for two and a half years now that we have a war without a clear political solution. And, that, at the end of the day, must be -- we must get a cease-fire. We must get a peace process. We must get people to talk to each other.

I totally understand the complex situation also on the opposition, because we have part of the opposition also here in

Sweden, which is now conducted of different groups. They want to get Assad out of the picture, but what do they want instead? That is, of course, a question we need to attend to.

The weapons inspection that was present in Damascus is headed by a Swede. So in this country, of course, we are asking for the time to be able to see what were their findings, especially since President Obama has sent the decision also to Congress. We think that that gives us some more time, and we are welcoming that.

Having said that, I also said I understand the absolute problem of not having a reaction to use of chemical weapons and what kind of signal that sends to the world in a time where we are developing our view on international law -- not saying that you're allowed to do whatever you like to your own people as long as it's inside your own borders, no. We have these -- we need to protect people. We need to look at the interest of each and every one. So this is the development we are seeing. That's the same discussion we are having in Sweden.

So I understand, especially the U.S. President needs to react; otherwise he will get another kind of discussion. But this small country will always say let's put our hope into the United Nations. Let us push on some more to get a better situation.

Of course, President Putin has a responsibility in that; of course. Because everyone understands that Russia and also China has been outside of the decision-making that we would have needed a long time ago to put more clear pressure and more political solution.

So that is what we have been discussing today. If you balance all these sentences, that shows how difficult this is.

PRESIDENT OBAMA: Thank you.

END 3:36 P.M. CEST