

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY / MIDDLE EAST UPDATE
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1. [Presidents Obama, Karzai to Discuss Afghanistan's Transition \(01-08-2013\)](#)

By Phillip Kurata
Staff Writer

Washington — Afghan President Hamid Karzai is in Washington this week for talks with President Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton as Afghanistan prepares for far-reaching security and political transitions.

Obama and Karzai plan to hold a summit at the White House January 11, a day after Clinton and the Afghan leader meet at the State Department. White House press secretary Jay Carney said Karzai's visit is about the "transition in Afghanistan and our shared vision of an enduring partnership between the United States and Afghanistan."

The Obama administration plans to withdraw the 66,000 U.S. combat troops in Afghanistan by the end of 2014, leaving Afghan national forces in control of security. Discussions are under way about keeping a residual U.S. force in Afghanistan beyond 2014, but no agreements have been reached. Afghanistan also is preparing for a presidential election in 2014 that will select a successor to Karzai, who is nearing the end of his second term.

In May 2012, the U.S. and Afghan presidents met in Kabul and signed a strategic partnership agreement that lays out the framework for U.S.-Afghan relations for the next decade. At the time, Obama said the agreement “sends a clear message to the Afghan people: As you stand up, you will not stand alone.” The agreement contains “shared commitments to combat terrorism and strengthen democratic institutions. It supports Afghan efforts to advance development and dignity for their people,” Obama added.

In July 2012, the Afghan government and the international donor community met in Tokyo to define the international community’s pledge of support for Afghanistan through 2025. The Tokyo conference also set benchmarks for Afghanistan to improve governance, rule of law, anti-corruption efforts and development performance. The participants in the Tokyo conference promised to provide \$16 billion for Afghanistan’s development through 2015.

State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland said the full range of issues between the United States and Afghanistan will be discussed during Karzai’s stay — security, political, economic and regional.

“The United States is deeply invested with our international partners in supporting and helping Afghanistan as it continues to move forward on all these fronts. And that’s what this visit is going to be about,” she said.

Nuland said Afghanistan has come a long way under Karzai’s leadership, especially considering where the country was in 2001. She noted that Afghanistan “is now a democratic country with an elected government, with human rights for all.”

[Defense Briefing on Afghan President Karzai’s Visit](#) (01-08-2013)

[Soldiers, Civilians Plan to Help Afghan Women](#) (12-28-2012)

[Inclusive Afghan-Led Reconciliation Efforts Crucial, U.S. Says](#) (12-21-2012)

[Amb. DiCarlo at U.N. Security Council Debate on Afghanistan](#) (12-19-2012)

2. Navy Ship Takes Security Cooperation Underwater (01-08-2013)

By Kim Dixon
U.S. Military Sealift Command

Stuttgart, Germany — U.S. Military Sealift Command’s rescue and salvage ships are a bit like insurance — operating quietly in the background until they, along with their embarked Mobile Diving and Salvage Unit (MDSU) companies, are needed to be quickly on the scene for a mission, such as towing or debeaching a stranded ship or salvaging a vessel.

While these types of missions often make headlines, some of the most influential work by these ships is done during that background time, conducting security cooperation engagements with the U.S. Navy’s allied and partner nations throughout the world.

Currently on deployment to the U.S. Africa Command area of responsibility, the USNS Grapple has already worked with two countries, and is scheduled for a third, hosting bilateral diving exchanges and preparing for any future combined missions.

“A bilateral diving exchange allows us to work hand in hand with our host nations, such as Spain, Algeria and Morocco on this deployment,” said civil service mariner Captain Curtis Smith, master

of the Grapple. “In the grand scheme of things, if an amphibious or subsurface event occurs that would require the use of multinational support, we will have an understanding of each nation’s techniques, assets and limitations with regard to a specific means of diving.”

The Grapple crew and MDSU Company 2-4 recently conducted diving exchanges in Spain and Algeria, with Morocco scheduled for early in the new year. During these bilateral exchanges, the MDSU dive team works hand in hand with the host nation’s divers on various types of diving, such as ship, surface-supplied, scuba, and re-breather diving.

The Grapple civil service mariner crew is on hand to provide support to the training by operating the shipboard crane that lowers the dive stage, and by assisting in developing materials for training scenarios, such as developing a four-bolt flange that can be either something to fix or something to find. The bilateral diving exchanges always begin with an initial assessment of each country’s diving and salvage capability to provide a productive starting point.

In Cartagena, Spain, from November 24 to 30, and in Jijel, Algeria, from December 10 to 14, the U.S. Navy divers hosted classroom training onboard the Grapple, covering operational and emergency procedures for surface-supplied diving using the Kirby Morgan 37 diving helmet, which is bright yellow and looks like a cross between an old-fashioned dive helmet and something worn by intergalactic explorers.

They also discussed several scuba-related procedures, including anti-terrorism force protection (ATFP) diving techniques and low-visibility searching techniques.

In Spain, after the classroom training, both countries’ divers conducted familiarization dive training off the Grapple using the surface-supplied dive helmet and the dive stage, which lowered divers to a 35-foot (10-meter) depth. Successfully completing the familiarization dives, the Grapple crew moored the ship in 160 feet (50 meters) of water where the 18 U.S. Navy dive team members and eight Spanish divers performed deep diving operations using surface-supplied surface-decompression dives.

One final scuba diving operation saw the divers team up to inspect a new wreck site 75 feet (23 meters) under water that the Spanish navy diver school intends to use in future training.

Similarly, in Algeria where 20 Algerian military divers participated, one group of U.S. Navy divers conducted 10-meter surface-supplied dives off the Grapple with some of their Algerian diver counterparts while at the same time, pierside, another combined group performed search and ATFP dives using scuba equipment. This was the first bilateral diving operation from an American vessel in Algeria in 12 years.

Success in these exchanges is measured by a slightly more intangible yardstick than traditional rescue or salvage operations.

“Success of a bilateral diving exchange is directly determined by what each military can take away from their interaction with each other,” Captain Smith said. “The exchange of diving knowledge between militaries ideally ends with each country taking away new or better ideas for better ways to perform safe diving operations, to include salvage operations, search operations, and ATFP security operations. Additionally, each engagement between the Spanish, Algerian, and American military forces during the Africom deployment has provided a positive effect on foreign relations between each of the governments involved.”

3. U.S., NATO Patriots Deploy to Augment Turkish Air Defenses (01-08-2013)

By Donna Miles
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, Jan. 8, 2013 – With advance elements of two U.S. Patriot missile batteries already on the ground in Turkey, additional defenders are prepared to deploy tomorrow in support of NATO's missile defense mission there.

Airmen from the 721st Aerial Port Squadron loaded equipment for U.S. Army Europe's 10th Army Air and Missile Defense Command and 44th Expeditionary Signal Battalion, and the 32nd AAMDC from Fort Bliss, Texas, aboard a C-5 aircraft today at Ramstein Air Base in Germany, officials at U.S. Army Europe and U.S. Air Forces in Europe confirmed.

The 10th AAMDC will provide command and control for two Patriot missile batteries from the 32nd AAMDC.

Meanwhile, roughly 400 U.S. personnel and equipment from the 3rd Battalion, 2nd Air Defense Artillery, based at Fort Sill, Okla., began flowing into Turkey late last week to man the equipment, U.S. European Command officials said. Additional equipment will arrive by sea later this month.

In Turkey, the U.S. forces will be joined by missile defenders from Germany and the Netherlands, the only other NATO nations with PAC-3 Patriot anti-missile systems, which are each contributing two batteries to the mission.

NATO foreign ministers agreed in late November to provide Turkey the air defense support it had requested. The request came after shells from Syria's political unrest -- which a new United Nations report estimated this week has claimed 60,000 lives -- spilled into Turkey.

"NATO has decided to augment Turkey's air defense capabilities in order to defend the population and territory of Turkey and contribute to the de-escalation of the crisis along the alliance's border," the ministers said in a statement released following the meeting.

"Turkey is an important NATO ally, and we welcome the opportunity to support the Turkish government's request in accordance with the NATO standing defense plan," said Navy Vice Adm. Charles Martoglio, Eucom's deputy commander.

Martoglio said the Patriot batteries will fall under NATO command once the systems become operational within the next several weeks.

He emphasized that the deployment will be defensive only, and won't support a no-fly zone or any offensive operation.

Army Lt. Col. Robert Ozanich, intelligence and security officer for the Kaiserslautern-based 10th AAMDC, said the command-and-control element his command is deploying will interact with the Turkish government and NATO forces to ensure they are providing the protections Turkey has requested.

With experience throughout the European theater under their belts -- including recent deployments to Poland and to Israel during the Austere Challenge 2012 exercise -- the deploying soldiers have

the experience and hands-on time with their equipment to carry out the mission, Ozanich said. “One of the biggest pieces is making sure that our soldiers are ready,” he said.

Equally important, he said, they have had the opportunity to work side by side with partner militaries and to develop an awareness of cultural customs, courtesies and sensitivities.

“The people going forward look forward to doing the mission they have trained for,” Ozanich said. “Our expectations are that we will be able to successfully complete this mission and provide the necessary protections to Turkey.”

“It’s good to be in Turkey,” said Army Maj. Brian Carlin, who deployed to Turkey with the advance elements. “We believe the measure of deterrence that we can add makes our soldiers’ time away from friends and families back home worthwhile. Protecting our allies is what this alliance is all about.”

At this point, it’s unclear how long the deployment will last. That, officials said, will be determined by the contributing nations in coordination with Turkey and NATO.

(Jesse Granger and Army Staff Sgt. Joel Salgado from U.S. Army Europe contributed to this article.)

Biographies:

[Navy Vice Adm. Charles Martoglio](#)

Related Sites:

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4. Obama Nominates Two for National Security Team (01-07-2013)

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — President Obama rounded out his second-term national security team January 7 by nominating former U.S. Senator Chuck Hagel for defense secretary and White House counterterrorism adviser John Brennan to head the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

With the recent nomination of Senate Foreign Relations Chairman John Kerry to become the next secretary of state, Obama has completed the major appointments for the crucial national security team during his second and final four-year term. All three nominations must be confirmed by the U.S. Senate.

The three nominees, along with Vice President Biden, would perform crucial roles in providing timely advice and helping to shape and implement the president’s national security strategy.

“The work of protecting our nation is never done, and we’ve still got much to do: ending a war in Afghanistan and caring for those who have borne the battle, preparing for the full range of threats, from the unconventional to the conventional, including things like cybersecurity, and within our military, continuing to ensure that our men and women in uniform can serve the country they love no matter who they love,” Obama said during a White House ceremony announcing the nominations.

In nominating Hagel, Obama reached across the political aisle to select his next secretary of defense. Hagel, a Republican from Nebraska, served in the U.S. Senate from 1997 to 2009. He is currently a professor at Georgetown University's Edmund W. Walsh School of Foreign Service, chairman of the Atlantic Council and co-chairman of the President's Intelligence Advisory Board. While serving in the Senate, Hagel served on the Foreign Relations Committee; the Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee; the Select Committee on Intelligence; and the Committee on Rules and Administration.

Hagel, if confirmed by the Senate, would become the first former U.S. enlisted serviceman and first Vietnam War veteran to become secretary of defense, according to the president. Hagel, twice wounded, is an Army veteran.

"Chuck Hagel is the leader that our troops deserve," Obama said at the White House. "Chuck Hagel's leadership of our military would be historic."

"And Chuck recognizes that American leadership is indispensable in a dangerous world. He understands that America stands strongest when we stand with allies and with friends," Obama added.

Senate Armed Services Chairman Carl Levin said in a statement January 7 that he regarded former Senator Hagel as "well-qualified" to be the next defense secretary. Levin and his committee will oversee Hagel's nomination. Senator Jim Inhofe, the top Republican on the armed services panel, said he would seek full clarification of Hagel's policy positions during the confirmation hearing, which hasn't been scheduled.

Hagel would succeed Defense Secretary Leon Panetta.

John Brennan has served as the president's deputy national security adviser for homeland security and counterterrorism for the past four years. He is a 25-year veteran of the Central Intelligence Agency and is regarded as one of the president's closest advisers.

"A 25-year veteran of the CIA, John knows what our national security demands: intelligence that provides policymakers with the facts, strong analytic insights and a keen understanding of a dynamic world," Obama said at the nomination ceremony. "John developed and has overseen our comprehensive counterterrorism strategy, a collaborative effort across the government, including intelligence and defense and homeland security and law enforcement agencies."

"John has an invaluable perspective on the forces, the history, the culture, the politics, the economics, and the desire for human dignity driving so much of the changes in today's world," Obama added.

Brennan would succeed former CIA Director David Petraeus, who resigned in November.

5. Treasury Sets Sanctions on DRC Militant Groups (01-04-2013)

Washington — The U.S. Department of the Treasury has designated two militant groups fomenting violence and instability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The action against Mouvement du 23 Mars (M23) and the Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda (FDLR) was taken under Executive Order 13413, which targets people contributing to the DRC conflict.

M23 and the FDLR, operating in eastern DRC, have committed serious crimes involving the targeting of children, Treasury said in a January 3 press release. The crimes include recruitment as well as killing, maiming and sexual violence. M23 is also being designated for receiving arms and materiel related to military activities that have contributed directly to the conflict.

Under the designations, U.S. persons are prohibited from providing support to M23 and the FDLR, and any of their assets within U.S. jurisdiction must be frozen.

A credible body of evidence demonstrates support for M23 from the Rwandan government, including significant military and logistical support as well as operational and political guidance, Treasury said. The United States has repeatedly called for a permanent end to all support for M23 and the FDLR as well as other armed groups operating in the DRC.

“The United States is committed to working with the international community to end the violence perpetrated against children in the DRC and exposing those responsible for these atrocities,” said David S. Cohen, under secretary of the Treasury for terrorism and financial intelligence. “We also urge Rwanda to halt its assistance to M23 and prevent any and all forms of support to Congolese armed groups.”

M23 has recently taken control of large parts of eastern DRC. It is made up of forced recruits and rebels who mutinied from the DRC armed forces. The FDLR is led by Rwandan Hutus who were involved in the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Top commanders of both groups, M23’s Bosco Ntaganda and the FDLR’s Sylvestre Mudacumura, are wanted by the International Criminal Court.

Both groups have been actively recruiting and using children in armed conflict, Treasury said. They have been responsible for campaigns of horrific violence against civilians, and they have used their resources to undermine peace efforts in the region.

On December 31, 2012, the United Nations Security Council’s DRC Sanctions Committee, with the support of the United States, added M23 and the FDLR to its consolidated travel ban and asset-freeze list. The United States and the Security Council previously designated several leaders of M23 and the FDLR for their roles in the conflict.

6. Obama Signs \$633 Billion Defense Authorization Act (01-03-2013)

By Jim Garamone
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, Jan. 3, 2013 – President Barack Obama signed the \$633 billion fiscal 2013 National Defense Authorization Act into law yesterday.

The legislation, which cleared Congress last month, authorizes the department to act in any number of instances. “There are certain things that cannot be done without the authorization act,” said a senior defense official speaking on background.

The act allows the department to institute pay raises, bonuses and incentive pay for personnel. “All military construction has to be authorized under this act,” the official said.

It includes a 1.7 percent pay raise for military personnel, and contains \$527.5 billion for DOD's base budget, \$88.5 billion for overseas contingency operations and \$17.8 billion for national security programs in the Energy Department and Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board.

It also extends the Commanders' Emergency Response Program that has been used in Afghanistan and Iraq. It authorizes a one-year extension of the Afghan Infrastructure Fund and extends the Coalition Support Fund and the Pakistan Counterinsurgency Fund. In Iraq, the law authorizes U.S. training activities, the official said.

The law also authorizes changes needed to deter sexual assault in the military.

In addition, it establishes the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission, which will examine all aspects of military compensation. Officials stress that any possible changes to military retirement benefits that the group recommends will not affect current service members.

Air Force structure was of some concern to the department going into the process, but officials say they were pleased with the outcome. The Air Force also received 32 more C-130 aircraft than requested.

"But the Air Force is allowed to do everything else. They are allowed to do their divestures and moves," the official said. "The only thing kept out of service's force structure plan was we had to keep the Global Hawk Block 30 unmanned aircraft."

The act raises the co-pay for medications under TRICARE through 2022. The legislation also limits any annual increases in pharmacy co-payments to increases in retiree cost of living adjustments.

"It is a little bit toward what we need to start paying for how much health care is costing," the official said.

The authorization also provides DOD funds for servicewomen who need abortions in case of rape or incest. "So they don't have to take leave and come home or go out on the economy," the official said. "This is the first time this has been approved."

Among other programs, the act authorizes the defense biofuel initiative as well as counternarcotic authorities. "We use this a little bit in Afghanistan, but it's mostly in the southern border and Colombia," she said. "It has to get done."

Passage of the legislation is particularly important this year because the department is operating on a continuing resolution through March, which may be continued again through the rest of the fiscal year. The resolution maintains funding at 2012 budget levels. Without this authority, "Things really do shut down," the official said.

"It actually is things that keep the war going and things that ... keep the economy going because it is pay, recruiting, military construction," the official said.

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[Panetta Thanks Congress, Seeks End to Sequestration](#)

[Panetta Memo Describes Possible Sequestration Effects](#) (12-20-2012)

7. Treasury Dept. Says Four Companies Linked to Iran Weapons Program (12-21-2012)

Treasury's Cohen said the United States "will continue to expose the companies and individuals involved in Iran's illicit weapons program."

Washington — The U.S. Department of the Treasury has designated four companies and one individual under Executive Order (E.O.) 13382 for ties to Iran's weapons program. One company, the SAD Import Export Company, also has provided weaponry to the Assad regime in Syria, the department says.

E.O. 13382 sanctions proliferators of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and their supporters. Designations under the order generally prohibit transactions between the named entities and any U.S. person, and freeze any assets the designees may have under U.S. jurisdiction.

The designations also carry consequences under the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act of 2010. As of December 21, foreign financial institutions that facilitate significant transactions or provide significant financial services for the sanctioned entities and individual can lose access to the U.S. financial system.

Under E.O. 13382, the Treasury Department designated the SAD Import Export Company, Chemical Industries and Development of Materials Group, and Marine Industries Organization for their ties to Iran's Defense Industries Organization (DIO) or Iran's Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces Logistics. The United Nations Sanctions Committee also designated the SAD Import Export Company December 20 under the U.N. asset freeze authority of Security Council Resolution 1737 dealing with Iran.

Doostan International Company was designated for its support to Iran's Aerospace Industries Organization, which was identified as a WMD proliferator by the president in the Annex to E.O. 13382.

The Treasury Department also designated Mustafa Esbati, the director of Marine Industries Organization.

DIO has been linked by the International Atomic Energy Agency to Iran's centrifuge production and was previously cited for its involvement in the Iranian nuclear program. DIO is also identified in the Annex to U.N. Security Council Resolution 1737.

In addition to its involvement in Iran's WMD program, DIO has been used by the Iranian government to assist the Assad regime's violent crackdown in Syria, the Treasury Department said.

According to the department, SAD Import Export Company shipped weapons to the Syrian Armed Forces on behalf of DIO. These shipments were designed to assist the Syrian government's production of mortars and missiles, which have been used against the civilian population of Syria.

"We will continue to expose the companies and individuals involved in Iran's illicit weapons program," Treasury Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence David S. Cohen said. "We will also continue to work to hold Iran accountable for its failure to meet its international nonproliferation obligations and to expose its support of the Assad regime's violence."

8. U.S., NATO Forces Maintain Vigil in Kosovo (12-20-2012)

By Donna Miles
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, Dec. 20, 2012 – Returned this week from a trip to Kosovo, the commander of NATO and U.S. European Command recognized the 5,000 NATO forces that continue to preserve the peace there and said he hopes to reduce their numbers in 2013 if the situation allows.

Navy Adm. James G. Stavridis, writing in his command blog, recalled the 1990s when almost 60,000 NATO troops conducted peacekeeping missions in the Balkans, sometimes engaging in vigorous combat.

More than 100,000 people died during a turbulent decade following the breakup of the former Yugoslavia, he noted. In one single incident in Srebrenica in Bosnia, almost 8,000 men and boys were massacred during the worst war crime in Europe since World War II.

The international community rallied to promote peace talks between warring ethnic and religious groups, and under a United Nations mandate NATO contributed forces to help stem the violence.

Today, the NATO presence has dropped from 15,000 in 2009 to the current 5,000, deployed from the United States and 29 other nations.

Most are in Kosovo, Stavridis said, with the mission of maintaining a safe and secure environment and ensuring freedom of movement.

Despite occasional demonstrations, roadblocks and violence, “the situation is largely under control,” he reported.

“We are hoping to reduce the NATO force further in the coming year, although that will be very situation-dependent,” he said.

“The key will be steady and sustained international pressure on both Serbia and Kosovo to resolve their difficulties, which range from border disputes to customs arrangements along their extensive and contested border,” he said.

Stavridis praised the European Union’s recent efforts to bring the two prime ministers together to address these differences.

He offered assurance that NATO forces will remain as needed to underpin these initiatives. “NATO will also stay steady,” he said. “We’ll continue performing our U.N.-mandated mission to the best of our ability.”

“As the cold winter approaches, I’m thankful for the 5,000 troops far from their homes,” Stavridis wrote. “They are standing the watch, keeping the peace, and shaping a more peaceful world in the Balkans: something that looked impossible a decade ago.”

NATO’s contribution has helped shape a vastly different security environment in the Balkans over the past decade, he said.

“While tensions remain, Croatia, Albania and Slovenia are members of NATO,” he said. “Bosnia-Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro are all in various stages of applying for NATO membership. Serbia wants in the European Union. Kosovo is recognized by nearly 100 nations.”

In addition, many of these countries have troops deployed to Afghanistan as part of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force there, Stavridis noted.

Biographies:

[Navy Adm. James G. Stavridis](#)

Related Sites:

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9. Deputy Secretary Burns' Testimony on Benghazi Attacks (12-20-2012)

Following is the prepared testimony of Deputy Secretary of State William Burns before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations December 20 on the attacks on U.S. compounds in Benghazi, Libya, that killed Ambassador Chris Stevens and three other Americans. Burns also testified before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs the same day.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity. Secretary Clinton asked me to express how much she regrets not being able to be here today.

Since the terrorist attacks on our compounds in Benghazi, State Department officials and senior members from other agencies have testified in four Congressional hearings, provided more than 20 briefings for Members and staff, and submitted thousands of pages of documents – including now the full classified report of the Accountability Review Board. Secretary Clinton has also sent a letter covering a wide range of issues for the record. So today, I would like to highlight just a few key points.

The attacks in Benghazi took the lives of four courageous Americans. Ambassador Stevens was a friend and a beloved member of the State Department community for twenty years. He was a diplomat's diplomat, and he embodied the best of America.

Even as we grieved for our fallen friends and colleagues, we took action on three fronts:

First, we took immediate steps to further protect our people and posts. We stayed in constant contact with embassies and consulates around the world facing large protests, dispatched emergency security teams, received reporting from the intelligence community, and took additional precautions where needed. You'll hear more about all this from my partner Tom Nides.

Second, we intensified a diplomatic campaign aimed at combating the threat of terrorism across North Africa. We continue to work to bring to justice the terrorists responsible for the attacks in Benghazi. And we are working with our partners to close safe havens, cut off terrorist finances, counter extremist ideology, and slow the flow of new recruits.

And third, Secretary Clinton ordered an investigation to determine exactly what happened in Benghazi. I want to convey our appreciation to the Accountability Review Board's chairman and vice-chairman, Ambassador Thomas Pickering and Former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen. And also Hugh Turner, Richard Shinnick, and Catherine Bertini.

The Board's report takes a clear-eyed look at serious, systemic problems. Problems which are unacceptable. Problems for which — as Secretary Clinton has said — we take responsibility. And problems which we have already begun to fix.

Before Tom walks you through what we're doing to implement fully all of the Board's recommendations, I'd like to add a few words based on my own experiences as a career diplomat in the field. I have been a very proud member of the Foreign Service for more than thirty years, and have had the honor of serving as a Chief of Mission overseas.

I know that diplomacy, by its very nature, must sometimes be practiced in dangerous places. As Secretary Clinton has said, our diplomats cannot work in bunkers and do their jobs. When America is absent, there are consequences. Our interests suffer, and our security at home is threatened.

Chris Stevens understood that as well as anyone. Chris also knew that every Chief of Mission has the responsibility to ensure the best possible security and support for our people. As senior officials here in Washington, we share that profound responsibility. We have to constantly improve, reduce the risks our people face, and make sure they have the resources they need.

That includes the men and women of the State Department's Diplomatic Security Service. I have been deeply honored to serve with many of these brave men and women. They are professionals and patriots who serve in many places where there are no Marines on post and little or no U.S. military presence in country. Like Secretary Clinton, I trust them with my life.

It's important to recognize that our colleagues in the Bureau of Diplomatic Security and Near East Affairs and across the Department, at home and abroad, get it right countless times a day, for years on end, in some of the toughest circumstances imaginable. We cannot lose sight of that.

But we learned some very hard and painful lessons in Benghazi. We are already acting on them. We have to do better.

We owe it to our colleagues who lost their lives in Benghazi. We owe it to the security professionals who acted with such extraordinary heroism that awful night to try to protect them. And we owe it to thousands of our colleagues serving America with great dedication every day in diplomatic posts around the world.

We will never prevent every act of terrorism or achieve perfect security — but we will never stop working to get better and safer. As Secretary Clinton has said, the United States will keep leading and keep engaging around the world, including in those hard places where America's interests and values are at stake.

Thank you.
