

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY UPDATE
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1. [Hagel Praises Romania as Steadfast U.S. Ally \(06-05-2014\)](#)

American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, June 5, 2014 – Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel today praised Romania as a “steadfast friend and ally of the United States,” noting several of its contributions to regional and world security.

At a joint news conference with Romanian Defense Minister Mircea Dusa, Hagel thanked his counterpart for Romania’s hospitality for U.S. service members at MK Air Base and aboard the USS Vella Gulf, which is making a port visit in Constanta, Romania.

In a meeting before the news conference, Hagel said, he and Dusa reaffirmed the strong partnership between their nations.

“I wanted to visit Romania to make clear that the United States appreciates Romania’s contributions to security in the region and around the world,” he added. “Romanian troops served with honor in Iraq. Some 1,200 remain deployed in Afghanistan, ... and the United States is grateful for Romania’s steadfast commitment to the NATO mission there, especially as your nation marks 10 years of NATO membership. America recognizes the sacrifices of Romanian troops -- and their families -- over the past decade of war.”

Today, the secretary said, Romania continues to provide critical support for shared strategic objectives by permitting U.S. and coalition troops to transit in and out of Afghanistan through MK Air Base. “Well over 50,000 U.S. troops transited MK in the first 100 days of operations,” he added, “and later today, I look forward to seeing the full scope of our operations at MK, which includes soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines.”

MK Air Base will remain essential for the new phase of efforts in Afghanistan when the current mission concludes there at year’s end the secretary said. “It also demonstrates the United States’ and Romania’s broader defense cooperation,” he added, “which is becoming even more important in the wake of Russia’s actions in Ukraine. Minister Dusa and I discussed those actions and the situation in Ukraine.”

At a NATO defense ministers conference in Brussels earlier this week, Hagel said, he reaffirmed America's commitment to the collective security of all NATO allies. He also noted that President Barack Obama visited neighboring Poland this week. The Vella Gulf’s port visit in Romania, he added, is “a clear expression of this commitment.”

Another example, Hagel said, is Obama's announcement this week that he will ask Congress for up to \$1 billion to enhance the readiness of U.S. and allied forces in Europe, including more U.S. troop rotations for exercises and training and a stronger presence of U.S. ships in the Black Sea.

“The U.S. has maintained a regular naval presence in the Black Sea since mid-March, with the USS Truxton, the USS Donald Cook and the USS Taylor all conducting port calls in Romania, and we will sustain this tempo going forward,” he said. “We are also stepping up our cooperation with other partners and allies surrounding the Black Sea, including Bulgaria, Georgia, Turkey, and Ukraine.”

In Brussels, the secretary said, he emphasized that as the United States increases its commitments to European security, it wants European allies to do the same. “Romania has already decided to increase investment in its defense enterprise,” he added. “The United States also appreciates the kinds of investments Romania is making ... in infrastructure, advanced capabilities, and modernization.”

One important example of Romania's increased defense investments is its purchase of F-16 fighter jets, Hagel said, noting that Romania already has had several training engagements with the United States and Portugal in preparation for receiving the F-16s. “As I told the minister,” he said, “the United States intends to continue working with Romania to strengthen its military aviation capabilities. Having seen the results of America’s joint Aviation Detachment in Poland, I hope to begin similar cooperation between the U.S., Poland and Romania.”

Missile defense is another important area of cooperation between the United States and Romania, Hagel said. “Following a successful recent test, we are on track for the Aegis Ashore ballistic missile defense system to be installed in Romania next year,” he said. “And Vice President Joe Biden reviewed our missile defense cooperation when he was here last month.”

This new system will be part of Phase II of the European Phased Adaptive Approach, Hagel said, and once operational, it will mark another milestone in the U.S.-Romanian defense relationship “and another major achievement as Romania fortifies its position on the front line of regional security.”

Biographies:
[Chuck Hagel](#)

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2. Obama Lauds Poland as Inspiration for Democratic Change (06-04-2014)

Washington — President Obama marked the 25th anniversary of Polish elections that helped end the communist domination of Eastern Europe and said the sacrifices made by Poles have helped to strengthen democracy around the world.

Obama spoke in Warsaw June 4 at a celebration of Poland's "Freedom Day," when, in 1989, non-communist leaders were allowed to compete and win office for the first time and could begin steering Poland toward greater openness and economic growth.

The president recalled how the events of 1989 marked the fall of communist rule across Europe and helped to create a continent "more integrated, more prosperous and more secure."

"We must never forget that the spark for so much of this revolutionary change, this blossoming of hope, was lit by you, the people of Poland," he said. "Our democracies must be defined not by what or who we're against, but by a politics of inclusion and tolerance that welcomes all our citizens."

Poland exhibits the strength of democracy when its citizens make their voices heard, political parties compete in open and honest elections and an independent judiciary exists to uphold the rule of law, Obama said.

"Here in Poland we see a vibrant press and a growing civil society that holds leaders accountable — because governments exist to lift up their people, not to hold them down," the president said.

"Thank you for reminding the world that no matter how brutal the crackdown, no matter how long the night, the yearning for liberty and dignity does not fade away. It will never go away. Thank you, Poland, for your iron will and for showing that ... ordinary citizens can grab the reins of history, and that freedom will prevail — because, in the end, tanks and troops are no match for the force of our ideals," he said.

President Obama also noted that this year marks the 15th anniversary of Poland's membership in NATO. He reminded that, as NATO allies, "Article 5 is clear — an attack on one is an attack on all."

TODAY'S UKRAINIANS ARE THE "HEIRS OF SOLIDARITY"

In his remarks, President Obama called attention to the situation in Ukraine, following Russia's occupation of Crimea and the ongoing conflict in the eastern part of the country. President Obama said that, like Poland 25 years ago, the people of Ukraine today reject violence and corruption. Rather, "what we have seen in Ukraine has been an incredible outpouring of democracy in the face of actions by Russia."

“The Ukrainians of today are the heirs of Solidarity,” he said, referring to the Polish political movement that challenged communism in the 1980s.

They were “men and women like you who dared to challenge a bankrupt regime,” he said.

Ukraine can “be a thriving, vital democracy that has strong relationships with Europe and has strong relationships with Russia. But that can only happen if we stand clearly behind them during this difficult time,” he said.

“We stand together because we believe that upholding peace and security is the responsibility of every nation. The days of empire and spheres of influence are over. Bigger nations must not be allowed to bully the small, or impose their will at the barrel of a gun or with masked men taking over buildings. And the stroke of a pen can never legitimize the theft of a neighbor’s land,” he said.

A free and independent Ukraine does not need to choose between Europe and Russia, but needs strong ties with both, and with the United States, he said.

Ukrainians have freely elected a new president and “have now embarked on the hard road of reform,” Obama said, and he urged other European countries to stand beside Ukraine.

Speaking with Ukraine President-elect Petro Poroshenko in Warsaw, Obama said the United States is offering an additional \$1 billion in loan guarantees to the International Monetary Fund to provide assistance to the country. He said he and Poroshenko had discussed additional ways to help with Ukraine’s reform and transition process.

The White House also released a fact sheet detailing how \$23 million in U.S. security assistance has been allocated to train and professionalize Ukraine’s law enforcement and military to help the country secure its borders and preserve its territorial integrity and sovereignty in the face of Russia’s occupation of Crimea and the concerted effort by Russian-backed separatists to destabilize eastern Ukraine.

President Obama will travel next to Brussels to attend the G7 Summit and then to France to attend the D-Day 70th anniversary commemorations.

3. We Need More Visas for Afghan Allies, Kerry Says (06-04-2014)

This commentary by Secretary of State John Kerry was first published online by the Los Angeles Times on June 2. There are no republication restrictions.

We need more visas, now, for our Afghan allies by John Kerry

The way a country winds down a war in a faraway place and stands with those who risked their own safety to help in the fight sends a message to the world that is not soon forgotten.

As President Obama announced last week, the U.S. will withdraw all but 9,800 troops from Afghanistan by the end of the year, and by the end of 2016, only a small force will be left at the U.S. Embassy in Kabul. As the withdrawal proceeds, the United States is in danger of sending the

wrong message to Afghan interpreters and others who risked their lives helping our troops and diplomats do their jobs in Afghanistan over the last decade.

The State Department and other government agencies have over the last year improved the path to safety for record numbers of our Afghan allies, but now we need urgent help from Congress to continue that progress and fulfill our obligation.

The Afghan special immigrant visa program was established by Congress in 2009 to help Afghans whose work for the U.S. government put them in danger of retaliation. The program, modeled after one for Iraqis, was designed to identify people who faced genuine threats and to speed their entry to this country.

The effort got off to a slow start. Delays in processing applications and lack of transparency in making decisions created problems. Bluntly stated, the process wasn't keeping up with the demand. A full-scale State Department review revealed statistics and anecdotes that highlighted unconscionably long processing times for applicants, including on background checks conducted by other U.S. agencies. Some deserving people were simply falling through the cracks. This was unacceptable to me and to the president.

To fix it, the State Department first looked inward. We identified and dealt with inefficiencies and gaps in our own operation. We mobilized additional resources, particularly at the embassy in Kabul where staffers volunteered for extra duty and cut processing times in half.

We made the system easier to use for Afghans. U.S. diplomats moved around Afghanistan, explaining the rules and procedures to potential applicants. We encouraged people to apply early to maintain a steady flow of cases and minimize wait times. Congress helped by clarifying the rules about how applicants can demonstrate that they face threats.

Even as we streamlined the process, we applied strict safeguards to prevent anyone who posed a threat to the U.S. from slipping through the process. And, because the State Department is just one stop on a visa applicant's journey from paperwork to port of entry, we worked with our interagency partners to help clear their backlogs as well.

The results have been dramatic. Nearly 5,000 Afghans, mainly interpreters and their family members, have received visas under the program since Oct. 1, 2013, compared with roughly 1,600 in the previous 12 months. More than 1,000 Afghan interpreters received visas in March and April alone.

This success has created a new challenge. At the current fast pace, we expect to reach the 2014 fiscal year visa cap of 3,000, authorized by Congress, sometime in July. This leaves us in danger of stranding hundreds of deserving Afghans until a new batch of visas is approved for fiscal year 2015. It's an outcome that will be dangerous for applicants — and damaging to our national credibility the next time we have to rely on local knowledge.

Keeping our word requires passing legislation this summer to authorize additional visas for the remainder of this fiscal year and for the next fiscal year. We don't want to lose the hard-won momentum or put lives at risk.

Fortunately, the special immigrant visa program has strong support among members of both parties. This is not a partisan issue. Nor is it a gift to Afghans. Rather, this effort fulfills the commitment to those who risked their lives working alongside Americans in Afghanistan.

At the State Department, we have done our best to honor that obligation. Now there is a unique opportunity for Democrats and Republicans in Congress to work together once again to authorize enough visas for this program. It's the least we can do for our Afghan allies.

4. Obama Announces Initiative to Strengthen European Security (06-03-2014)

Washington — President Obama reaffirmed the “enduring commitment” of the United States to the security of Poland and other NATO allies and announced a \$1 billion fund to increase U.S. military deployments to Europe to bolster military readiness on the continent.

Speaking with Polish President Bronislaw Komorowski in Warsaw June 3, Obama said the United States is upholding its commitment to the collective defense of NATO allies and called on all members to “carry their share and truly invest in the capabilities of the alliance that are needed for the future.”

Under Obama’s initiative, the United States would increase the number of American military personnel on rotation through its Central and Eastern European allies, preposition additional military equipment in Europe, and expand exercises and training to increase military readiness.

The president urged the U.S. Congress to approve up to \$1 billion in support of the initiative, which he said will be “a powerful demonstration of America’s unshakable commitment to our NATO allies.”

NATO effectiveness depends on “how we are working collectively together to make sure that when any NATO member is threatened, all of us can respond rapidly — whether it’s through air, sea, or land,” he said.

Obama acknowledged that Russia’s occupation of Crimea and its activities in eastern Ukraine have added “a sense of urgency” to the upcoming NATO summit in Wales and have threatened international principles of territorial integrity, sovereignty and freedom.

President Obama added, “If Russia is observing basic international law and principles, there should be cooperation between Russia and NATO; where Russia violates international law and international principle, NATO will stand firm in asserting those principles.”

At the same time, the president emphasized, “We are interested in good relations with Russia; we are not interested in threatening Russia.” But “we also believe that the principles of territorial integrity and sovereignty have to be respected, and that Russia has violated them,” he said.

Obama said Russia stands to face further economic sanctions if “we continue to see Russia actively destabilizing one of its neighbors in the way that we’ve seen of late.”

TRADE, ENERGY SECURITY ALSO DISCUSSED

In addition to European security enhancements and the situation in Ukraine, the president and Polish leaders also discussed the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), and ways to facilitate potential energy exports from the United States to Europe.

In his remarks with Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk June 3, Obama said Poland has been a supporter of an ambitious trans-Atlantic trade agreement, which would also facilitate U.S. natural gas exports to the country and other TTIP partners.

He noted Poland's economic progress over the past 25 years and the difficult reforms it required.

"But as you drive through Warsaw, you see that Poland is a country on the move, one with one of the largest and fastest-growing economies in Europe, a manufacturing powerhouse and a hub of high-tech innovation," Obama said.

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[Obama Announces New Counterterrorism Partnerships Fund](#)

[America Must Always Lead on Global Stage, Obama Says](#)

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[Remarks by President Obama and President Komorowski of Poland in a Joint Press Conference](#)

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5. Hagel Greet U.S. Troops at Bagram Airfield in Afghanistan (06-01-2014)

By Cheryl Pellerin

American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, June 1, 2014 – Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel stopped at Bagram Airfield today on his way from Singapore to Brussels to thank U.S. troops for their service in Afghanistan and to share the intense gratification of freeing prisoner of war Army Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl after nearly five years in captivity.

Bergdahl went missing from his post in Afghanistan in June 2009. The now 28-year-old soldier was thought captured by the Haqqani network, an Islamist insurgent group operating in Afghanistan.

But yesterday, after years of work by U.S. government agencies, the governments of Qatar and Afghanistan, and the international community, President Barack Obama ordered special operations forces personnel to recover Bergdahl from Afghanistan and move him to safety.

The operation went off safely and smoothly, and doctors at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany are now caring for the former prisoner of war.

At Bagram, Marine Corps Gen. Joseph F. Dunford Jr., commander of the International Security Assistance Force and U.S. Forces-Afghanistan, introduced the secretary to the gathered soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, Coast Guardsmen and DOD civilians as "a combat vet from Vietnam and wearing two purple hearts."

Hagel took the microphone and greeted the troops, acknowledging that Obama had made an unannounced visit to the base over Memorial Day weekend with superstar country singer Brad Paisley, who played a surprise concert for the troops.

"Nothing makes me more proud than to say I served in uniform and served in the United States Army," Hagel told them, over some cheers in the background. "I'm proud of that and I want you to know it, and I'm proud of you all."

The secretary added, "This is a happy day ... for our country, for our armed forces, because we got one of our own back last night."

On behalf of the American people and the men and women in uniform and those who work for the Defense Department all over the world, Hagel said, and to the many people and personnel from all the services who had something to do with the recovery effort, "I want to thank you for that."

Hagel said the week has been interesting for many reasons, including Obama's announcement about America's post-2014 role in Afghanistan.

"We all recognize the tremendous progress made over the last 13 years," the secretary added, "and that progress is clearly a direct result of the men and women of the U.S. armed forces and how you have helped the Afghan people build and strengthen their institutions, and put the people on a path to being able to defend themselves, govern themselves, support themselves and secure themselves."

The U.S. role is not finished, he said, but the nation will phase out of one role at the end of 2014 and phase into another with its ISAF partners over the next two years.

"That will be important because we can continue to help the Afghan people and their military continue to strengthen their efforts to secure their own country," Hagel said. "You should be very proud of that. We're proud of you for being able to do that."

The secretary said he knows that "more than occasionally" the troops must ask themselves if anybody is paying attention to their work in Afghanistan.

"We are," he said. "The American people want our job finished here but they want it finished the right way, and you want to finish it the right way. The president of the United States and I want to finish it the right way, and I think we're on a path to doing that over the next two years."

Hagel added, "Of our coalition partners, who have been particularly important to us in this effort, most will continue to have a role with us over the next two years."

Before taking questions from the troops, the secretary thanked them again for their service, paying special attention to a group of service members sitting in the front row, some of them with patched-up wounds, others on crutches.

"I read each of your stories coming in from Singapore this morning," he told them. "We admire your character, your courage and not only what you did on the battlefield and contributions you made to our country and Afghanistan but what you're doing now."

"You are tremendous inspirations to everybody," Hagel said, "and I want to thank you personally for that. And I want to thank your families in particular ... they anchor us and help each of us get through this, especially men and women who serve in combat."

Hagel's next stops on his 12-day trip to countries in Asia and Europe include Brussels for a NATO defense ministerial, Romania, and France for stops in Paris and Normandy to commemorate with President Barack Obama the Allied victory in World War II and the sacrifice and courage shown on the beaches of Normandy on June 6, 1944.

Biographies:

[Chuck Hagel](#)

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6. U.S. Envoy on Ongoing Violations by Russia, Situation in Ukraine (05-29-2014)

Ongoing Violations of OSCE Principles and Commitments by the Russian Federation and the Situation in Ukraine

By Ambassador Daniel B. Baer to the Permanent Council, Vienna, Austria

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First, we are deeply concerned by the hostage taking by separatist forces of fifteen monitors of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission. We are relieved that eleven of the fifteen hostages have been released; four, however, remain captive. This is unacceptable and all OSCE participating States must use their influence to secure the release of the monitors and to guarantee the security of the SMM. We call for the immediate and unconditional release of the hostages, the end of all harassment of SMM staff, and full respect for the SMM to carry out its mandate, unimpeded and across all of the territory of Ukraine. The United States fully supports the work of the SMM to assist the government and people of Ukraine in securing and advancing their democratic future.

We are pleased by this morning's news that the Verkhovna Rada ratified the memorandum of understanding on deployment of the Special Monitoring Mission, which will allow for the continued strengthening of the SMM.

We are also alarmed by reports of an influx of weapons and armed groups crossing the Russian border, including Chechen fighters, to stir up unrest. We again urge the separatists to lay down their weapons and all those with influence and ability to take steps to stem the flow of weapons and fighters across the Russia-Ukraine border.

As we've already noted, Sunday's elections demonstrated the ability of Ukraine to triumph over adversity and outside efforts to destabilize the country, to vote in large numbers in credible elections for unity, and to choose a democratic and prosperous future. Ukraine's electoral officials successfully sought to enfranchise voters and provided every possible opportunity for voting despite the chaos and violence perpetrated by separatist militants. Turnout was historically high across the country. Even in those conflict-affected areas where polling was able to take place, nearly 200,000 Ukrainians turned out to vote, despite the danger to themselves. The Ukrainian government and electoral officials also countered cyber-attacks aimed at shutting down the Central Election Commission, enabling tabulation and reporting of results to be completed in a timely fashion.

We've heard some criticisms today of Ukrainian elections, and I would just note that the OSCE observers reported that 98% of the polling stations that were assessed, were positively assessed. As a point of comparison, we note that in the 2012 presidential election in Russia, one-third of polling stations were negatively assessed, and there were reports of massive abuse of administrative resources and coercion.

As separatists created hurdles and roadblocks, the Government of Ukraine has sought to overcome these hurdles, to truly listen to its citizens across the country, and find ways to provide the prosperous and democratic future all Ukrainians deserve. The government of Ukraine has worked tirelessly to implement its commitments and to stabilize the security situation, including those laid out on April 17 in Geneva. We heard again today the false allegation that the Ukrainian government did not take steps immediately to implement Geneva. As we've said many times before, they took a number of steps, including immediately beginning the clearing and cleaning of barricades and the protest sites in the streets around the Maidan in Kyiv.

The United States wishes to reiterate its deepest concern about the media freedom and safety of journalists in Crimea and Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts. We note the Representative on Freedom of the Media's May 23 report and join her in condemning "on-going attacks on journalists that are nothing short of gross and severe violations of fundamental human rights." Most of these attacks – which include acts of intimidation, assault, kidnapping and torture – are part of a concerted effort by separatist militants and self-declared authorities in Crimea and areas of Donetsk and Luhansk to clamp down on freedom of expression.

For example, on May 11, Crimean film director and pro-Maidan activist Oleg Sentsov was reportedly arrested and held incommunicado by Russian Security Services in Simferopol, and charged with terrorism. We join the Russian and Ukrainian filmmakers' unions in calling for his immediate release and dismissal of these charges. We deplore the recent killings of Italian photojournalist Andrea Rocchelli and his Russian assistant Andrei Mironov, who had been arrested this February for exercising peacefully his rights in his native Russia, and send our deepest condolences to their families and colleagues. We join Representative Mijatovic in calling for a thorough investigation by Ukrainian authorities of the circumstances leading to these tragic deaths.

Mr. Chairman, Ukraine's elections present a new opportunity to resolve the current crisis. President-elect Poroshenko has made clear his intention to engage all citizens and regions of Ukraine, as well as Ukraine's neighbors, in ending the crisis, restoring governance, and strengthening national unity. The United States welcomes President-elect Poroshenko and the Ukrainian government's commitment to quickly implement the reforms necessary for Ukraine to bring the country together and to develop a sustainable economy, an attractive investment climate, and a transparent and accountable government that is responsive to the concerns and aspirations of all Ukrainians.

Sunday's elections provide a new opportunity to see relations begin to normalize between Russia and Ukraine. We take note of public pronouncements by Russia's government to respect the expressed will of the Ukrainian people. We expect Russia to follow through in word and deed and to engage the Poroshenko government, take shared steps to de-escalate the situation, and use its influence over the separatists to stop violence.

This morning's news that a Ukrainian army helicopter carrying 14 persons was shot down, reportedly by anti-aircraft weaponry – that is to say, weaponry that is not commonly available – underscores our concerns. We call on Russia to publically condemn separatist violence, follow through on words with actions, and exercise its influence to play a constructive rather than a destructive role.

We take note of the recent moves by Russia to pull some of its military forces back from the Ukrainian border. This is a positive step. And yet many units and much military equipment remain and the pace of their removal should be accelerated. Russia should take additional steps to provide transparency about its moves, using OSCE mechanisms as appropriate.

Russia needs to end its illegal occupation and attempted annexation of Crimea. We firmly support Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and condemn and reject Russia's occupation and attempted annexation of Crimea.

Finally before closing, Mr. Chair, I would like to thank our Russian colleague for the announcement by the Russian Federation of a substantial contribution to the SMM. We welcome the announcement that Russia will be the twentieth participating State to contribute to this important shared endeavor.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Related Sites:

[U.S. Envoy at OSCE on Ukraine's May 25 Elections](#)

[U.S. Envoy's Response to Head of OSCE Mission in Moldova](#)

7. America Must Always Lead on Global Stage, Obama Says (05-28-2014)

By Army Sgt. 1st Class Tyrone C. Marshall Jr.
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, May 28, 2014 – President Barack Obama addressed the U.S. Military Academy's graduating Class of 2014 today in West Point, New York, emphasizing the importance of American global leadership and the cadets' role in the future of world affairs.

"You are the first class to graduate since 9/11 who may not be sent into combat in Iraq or Afghanistan," he said. "When I first spoke at West Point in 2009, we still had more than 100,000 troops in Iraq."

At the time, Obama said, the U.S. military was preparing to surge in Afghanistan, counterterrorism efforts were focused on al-Qaida's core leadership, and America was just beginning a long climb out of the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression.

Four and half years later, Obama noted, the landscape has changed, with U.S. troops out of Iraq and the war in Afghanistan winding down.

"Al-Qaida's leadership in the border region between Pakistan and Afghanistan has been decimated, and Osama bin Laden is no more," he said. By most measures, Obama said, America has rarely been stronger, relative to the rest of the world.

"Think about it -- our military has no peer," he said. "The odds of a direct threat against us by any nation are low, and do not come close to the dangers we faced during the Cold War."

U.S. values inspire leaders in parliaments and new movements in public squares around the globe, Obama said, and when a typhoon hits the Philippines, or girls are kidnapped in Nigeria, or masked men occupy a building in Ukraine, the world looks to America for help.

"The United States is, and remains, the one indispensable nation," Obama said. "That has been true for the century past, and will likely be true for the century to come."

The president cautioned that the world is “changing with accelerating speed,” which he said presents not only opportunity, but also new dangers.

“We know all too well after 9/11 just how technology and globalization has put power once reserved for states in the hands of the individual, raising the capacity of terrorists to do harm,” Obama said. “Russia’s aggression toward former Soviet states unnerves capitals in Europe, while China’s economic rise and military reach worries its neighbors.”

As developing nations embrace democracy and market economies, Obama said, 24-hour news cycles make it impossible to ignore sectarian conflicts, failing states and popular uprisings that might have received only passing notice a generation ago.

“It will be your generation’s task to respond to this new world,” he told the graduating cadets. “The question we face -- the question each of you will face -- is not whether America will lead, but how we will lead, not just to secure our peace and prosperity, but also to extend peace and prosperity around the globe.”

Obama noted that “regional aggression” in places such as Syria, southern Ukraine, the South China Sea or anywhere else in the world will “ultimately impact our allies, and could draw in our military.”

Beyond this rationale, the president said, he believes the U.S. has an “abiding self-interest” in global security, but he cautioned that it’s not to say every problem has a military solution. He quoted former president and five-star Army Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower, who in 1947 said, “War is mankind’s most tragic and stupid folly; to seek or advise its deliberate provocation is a black crime against all men.”

“Like Eisenhower, this generation of men and women in uniform know all too well the wages of war,” Obama said. “That includes those of you here at West Point. Four of the service members who stood in the audience when I announced the surge of our forces in Afghanistan gave their lives in that effort. A lot more were wounded. I believe America’s security demanded those deployments.”

The president said he is “haunted” by those who were killed or wounded, and would betray his duty to the graduates and the country if he ordered military intervention to fix a problem somewhere in the world or to avoid looking weak.

“Here’s my bottom line,” Obama said. “America must always lead on the world stage. If we don’t, no one else will. The military that you have joined is, and always will be, the backbone of that leadership. But U.S. military action cannot be the only -- or even primary -- component of our leadership in every instance.”

Just because we have the best hammer, Obama said, it doesn’t mean that every problem is a nail, and due to high costs associated with military action, civilian leaders should be clear about how that power should be used.

The president explained four principles in his vision for how the United States and its military should lead in the years to come.

First, Obama said, the United States will use military force --unilaterally if necessary -- to defend its core interests if its people are threatened, when their livelihoods are at stake and when the security of its allies is in danger.

“In these circumstances, we still need to ask tough questions about whether our actions are proportional and effective and just,” he said. “International opinion matters, but America should never ask permission to protect our people, our homeland, or our way of life.”

Secondly, the president said, for the foreseeable future, the most direct threat to America, at home and abroad, remains terrorism.

“But a strategy that involves invading every country that harbors terrorist networks is naive and unsustainable,” Obama said. “I believe we must shift our counterterrorism strategy -- drawing on the successes and shortcomings of our experience in Iraq and Afghanistan -- to more effectively partner with countries where terrorist networks seek a foothold.”

The need for a new strategy, he said, reflects the fact that the threat from al-Qaida no longer comes from a centralized leadership, but rather from decentralized affiliates and extremists.

Obama said his fourth and final element of American leadership is “our willingness to act on behalf of human dignity.”

“America’s support for democracy and human rights goes beyond idealism,” he said. “It is a matter of national security. Democracies are our closest friends and are far less likely to go to war. Economies based on free and open markets perform better and become markets for our goods. Respect for human rights is an antidote to instability and the grievances that fuel violence and terror.”

While a new century has brought no end to tyranny, Obama said, American efforts in diplomacy and foreign assistance, as well as the sacrifices of its military, have led to more people living under elected governments today than at any time in human history.

“Ultimately, global leadership requires us to see the world as it is, with all its danger and uncertainty,” he said. “We have to be prepared for the worst, prepared for every contingency.”

But American leadership also requires seeing the world as it should be, Obama said -- a place where individual human aspirations matter, hope and not just fear governs, and where truth written in the nation’s founding documents can steer the currents of history in a direction of justice.

“We cannot do that without you,” he said. “Class of 2014, you have taken this time to prepare on the quiet banks of the Hudson. You leave this place to carry forward a legacy that no other military in human history can claim. Leaving here, you carry with you the respect of your fellow citizens. You will represent a nation with history and hope on our side.

“Your charge now,” he added, “is not only to protect our country, but to do what is right and just. As your commander in chief, I know you will.”

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8. Japan's PM Abe, U.S. Navy Chief Discuss Cooperation at Sea (05-28-2014)

Washington — Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and the U.S. chief of naval operations, Admiral Jonathan Greenert, met May 27 in Abe's office to discuss regional security and maritime-partnership opportunities between the United States and Japan.

“Given the increasingly severe security environment in the Asia-Pacific region, the importance of the Japan-U.S. alliance has become even greater than ever,” Abe said. “Through your visit I understand that we'll see further collaboration between the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force as well as the U.S. Navy, and that would mean, of course, the alliance between Japan and the United States. I believe that would have a positive impact on the peace and stability of the entire Asia-Pacific region.”

During the meeting, the U.S. Navy said in a May 27 press release, Abe explained that Japan's political leadership has been examining the relationship between their constitution and the right of collective self-defense and other issues that would enable Japan to more swiftly and efficiently contribute to regional and global peace and stability.

Japan's debate about exercising the right of collective self-defense has been followed with interest by Greenert, the Navy said. Greenert said that from his view collective self-defense provides greater opportunity for more effective cooperation among critical allies, which is key to maintaining the security of Northeast Asia.

President Obama's public reaffirmation of the U.S.-Japan defense treaty during his visit to Tokyo in April helped promote stability in the region and brought the two nations closer together, Abe said.

Greenert, having lived and served in Japan, said he understands the significance of the Asia-Pacific region, the partnerships there and the U.S.-Japan alliance. He added that as the chief of naval operations for nearly three years, he has enjoyed a close relationship with his counterpart in the Maritime Self-Defense Force, chief of staff Admiral Katsutoshi Kawano, and that the two will continue to bring their navies together while he is at the helm.

“I commit to you and the Kaijo Jieitai and to Japan that through the remainder of my tour I will work as hard as possible to make the alliance even that much more stronger,” Greenert said.

Greenert was awarded Japan's Grand Cordon of the Order of the Rising Sun medal a day earlier by Defense Minister Itsunori Onodera during a series of visits with political and military leaders at the Japanese Ministry of Defense.

Greenert said he humbly accepted the honor on behalf of the men and women who make up the Navy, for it is they who are the lifeblood and spirit of the organization.

Greenert is in Japan at the invitation of Kawano, the Navy said. While in Japan he will also meet with U.S. service members and their families at Yokosuka Naval Base and Naval Air Facility Atsugi.

9. Dempsey Discusses Iran's Influence in Region (05-28-2014)

By Jim Garamone
American Forces Press Service

ABU DHABI, United Arab Emirates, May 28, 2014 – A diplomatic solution to the problems caused by Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons technology is infinitely preferable to a military operation, but the military option remains available, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff said here today.

Army Gen. Martin E. Dempsey said in an interview that the United States maintains a "credible and capable amount of military force in the region so that if the diplomatic track fails, it is available to my leaders."

President Barack Obama has stated many times that the United States will not allow Iran to develop nuclear weapons. "If Iran takes the opportunity and comes to that conclusion diplomatically, everyone will be better off," he said.

But ending Iran's nuclear ambitions won't solve the problem the country poses to the region, the chairman said.

"They exert malign influence in others ways, to include surrogates and proxies such as Lebanese Hezbollah and the IRGC Quds Force. They are the region's biggest trafficker in weapons. They are very active in a malign way in cyber," he said. "There are many things that cause me concern about Iran, both regionally and globally, that will not be solved even if the nuclear issue is solved."

Unless they change their behavior, Dempsey said, Iranian leaders will be held accountable for other things, adding that the United States would like Iran to change its behavior and be a constructive influence in the world.

"But we're not naive," he said. "There's a pretty significant distance to where we are today with Iran and where we might like to be."

With its rich history and a culture that has influenced the world, Dempsey said, Iran can take a constructive turn. "We certainly would hope Iran would take advantage of those things and stop its malign activities," he added.

Biographies:

[Army Gen. Martin E. Dempsey](#)

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