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## State of the Union References to the Middle East 2009-2023

Compiled by Eric Feely

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The following is a comprehensive collection of quotes on Middle East issues as delivered in State of the Union addresses during the Obama, Trump, and Biden administrations.

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### PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA

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February 24, 2009

[\(Read the full speech\)](#)

#### Iraq and Afghanistan

Finally, because we're also suffering from a deficit of trust, I am committed to restoring a sense of honesty and accountability to our budget. That is why this budget looks ahead 10 years and accounts for spending that was left out under the old rules. And for the first time, that includes the full cost of fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan. For 7 years, we have been a nation at war. No longer will we hide its price.

Along with our outstanding national security team, I'm now carefully reviewing our policies in both wars, and I will soon announce a way forward in Iraq that leaves Iraq to its people and responsibly ends this war. And with our friends and allies, we will forge a new and comprehensive strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan to defeat al-Qaeda and combat extremism, because I will not allow terrorists to plot against the American people from safe havens halfway around the world. We will not allow it.

#### Guantanamo Bay

To overcome extremism, we must also be vigilant in upholding the values our troops defend, because there is no force in the world more powerful than the example of America. And that is why I have ordered the closing of the detention center at Guantanamo Bay and will seek swift and certain justice for captured terrorists. Because living our values doesn't make us weaker, it makes us safer and it makes us stronger. And that is why I can stand here tonight and say without exception or equivocation that the United States of America does not torture. We can make that commitment here tonight.

#### Israel

To seek progress towards a secure and lasting peace between Israel and her neighbors, we have appointed an envoy to sustain our effort. To meet the challenges of the 21st century—from terrorism to nuclear proliferation, from pandemic disease to cyber threats to crushing poverty—we will strengthen old alliances, forge new ones, and use all elements of our national power.

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January 27, 2010

[\(Read the full speech\)](#)

### **Afghanistan and Iraq**

And in Afghanistan, we're increasing our troops and training Afghan security forces so they can begin to take the lead in July of 2011 and our troops can begin to come home. We will reward good governance, work to reduce corruption, and support the rights of all Afghans, men and women alike. We're joined by allies and partners who have increased their own commitments and who will come together tomorrow in London to reaffirm our common purpose. There will be difficult days ahead, but I am absolutely confident we will succeed.

As we take the fight to al-Qaeda, we are responsibly leaving Iraq to its people. As a candidate, I promised that I would end this war, and that is what I am doing as President. We will have all of our combat troops out of Iraq by the end of this August. We will support the Iraqi government as they hold elections, and we will continue to partner with the Iraqi people to promote regional peace and prosperity. But make no mistake: This war is ending, and all of our troops are coming home.

Tonight all of our men and women in uniform, in Iraq, in Afghanistan, and around the world, they have to know that we—that they have our respect, our gratitude, our full support. And just as they must have the resources they need in war, we all have a responsibility to support them when they come home. That's why we made the largest increase in investments for veterans in decades last year. That's why we're building a 21st century VA. And that's why Michelle has joined with Jill Biden to forge a national commitment to support military families.

### **Nuclear Weapons**

Now, even as we prosecute two wars, we're also confronting perhaps the greatest danger to the American people, the threat of nuclear weapons. I've embraced the vision of John F. Kennedy and Ronald Reagan through a strategy that reverses the spread of these weapons and seeks a world without them. To reduce our stockpiles and launchers, while ensuring our deterrent, the United States and Russia are completing negotiations on the farthest reaching arms control treaty in nearly two decades. And at April's Nuclear Security Summit, we will bring 44 nations together here in Washington, DC, behind a clear goal: securing all vulnerable nuclear materials around the world in 4 years so that they never fall into the hands of terrorists.

### **Iran**

Now, these diplomatic efforts have also strengthened our hand in dealing with those nations that insist on violating international agreements in pursuit of nuclear weapons. That's why the international community is more united and the Islamic Republic of Iran is more isolated. And as Iran's leaders continue to ignore their obligations, there should be no doubt: They too will face growing consequences. That is a promise.

### **Democracy and Human Rights**

As we have for over 60 years, America takes these actions because our destiny is connected to those beyond our shores. But we also do it because it is right. That's why we stand with the girl who yearns to go to school in Afghanistan, why we support the human rights of the women marching through the streets of Iran, why we advocate for the young man denied a job by corruption in Guinea. For America must always stand on the side of freedom and human dignity—always.

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January 25, 2011

[\(Read the full speech\)](#)

### **Iraq**

Look to Iraq, where nearly 100,000 of our brave men and women have left with their heads held high. American combat patrols have ended, violence is down, and a new government has been formed. This year, our civilians will forge a lasting partnership with the Iraqi people, while we finish the job of bringing our troops out of Iraq. America's commitment has been kept. The Iraq war is coming to an end.

### **Counterterrorism**

Of course, as we speak, al-Qaeda and their affiliates continue to plan attacks against us. Thanks to our intelligence and law enforcement professionals, we're disrupting plots and securing our cities and skies. And as extremists try to inspire acts of violence within our borders, we are responding with the strength of our communities, with respect for the rule of law, and with the conviction that American Muslims are a part of our American family.

### **Afghanistan**

We've also taken the fight to al-Qaeda and their allies abroad. In Afghanistan, our troops have taken Taliban strongholds and trained Afghan security forces. Our purpose is clear: By preventing the Taliban from reestablishing a stranglehold over the Afghan people, we will deny al-Qaeda the safe haven that served as a launching pad for 9/11.

Thanks to our heroic troops and civilians, fewer Afghans are under the control of the insurgency. There will be tough fighting ahead, and the Afghan government will need to deliver better governance. But we are strengthening the capacity of the Afghan people and building an enduring partnership with them. This year, we will work with nearly 50 countries to begin a transition to an Afghan lead, and this July, we will begin to bring our troops home.

In Pakistan, al-Qaeda's leadership is under more pressure than at any point since 2001. Their leaders and operatives are being removed from the battlefield. Their safe havens are shrinking. And we've sent a message from the Afghan border to the Arabian Peninsula to all parts of the globe: We will not relent, we will not waver, and we will defeat you.

### **Iran**

American leadership can also be seen in the effort to secure the worst weapons of war. Because Republicans and Democrats approved the new START Treaty, far fewer nuclear weapons and launchers will be deployed. Because we rallied the world, nuclear materials are being locked down on every continent so they never fall into the hands of terrorists. Because of a diplomatic effort to insist that Iran meet its obligations, the Iranian government now faces tougher sanctions, tighter sanctions than ever before.

### **Democracy**

Recent events have shown us that what sets us apart must not just be our power—it must also be the purpose behind it. In south Sudan—with our assistance—the people were finally able to vote for independence after years of war. Thousands lined up before dawn. People danced in the streets. One man who lost four of his brothers at war summed up the scene around him. "This was a battlefield for most of my life," he said. "Now we want to be free."

And we saw that same desire to be free in Tunisia, where the will of the people proved more powerful than the writ of a dictator. And tonight let us be clear: The United States of America stands with the people of Tunisia and supports the democratic aspirations of all people

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**January 24, 2012**

[\(Read the full speech\)](#)

### **Iraq and Afghanistan**

Last month, I went to Andrews Air Force Base and welcomed home some of our last troops to serve in Iraq. Together, we offered a final, proud salute to the colors under which more than a million of our fellow citizens fought and several thousand gave their lives.

We gather tonight knowing that this generation of heroes has made the United States safer and more respected around the world. For the first time in 9 years, there are no Americans fighting in Iraq. For the first time in two decades, Usama bin Laden is not a threat to this country. Most of al-Qaeda's top lieutenants have been defeated. The Taliban's momentum has been broken, and some troops in Afghanistan have begun to come home.

Ending the Iraq war has allowed us to strike decisive blows against our enemies. From Pakistan to Yemen, the al-Qaeda operatives who remain are scrambling, knowing that they can't escape the reach of the United States of America.

From this position of strength, we've begun to wind down the war in Afghanistan. Ten thousand of our troops have come home. Twenty-three thousand more will leave by the end of this summer. This transition to Afghan lead will continue, and we will build an enduring partnership with Afghanistan so that it is never again a source of attacks against America.

### **Arab Spring**

As the tide of war recedes, a wave of change has washed across the Middle East and North Africa, from Tunis to Cairo, from Sana'a to Tripoli. A year ago, Qadhafi was one of the world's longest serving dictators, a murderer with American blood on his hands. Today, he is gone. And in Syria, I have no doubt that the Asad regime will soon discover that the forces of change cannot be reversed and that human dignity cannot be denied.

How this incredible transformation will end remains uncertain. But we have a huge stake in the outcome. And while it's ultimately up to the people of the region to decide their fate, we will advocate for those values that have served our own country so well. We will stand against violence and intimidation. We will stand for the rights and dignity of all human beings: men and women; Christians, Muslims, and Jews. We will support policies that lead to strong and stable democracies and open markets, because tyranny is no match for liberty.

### **Iran**

And we will safeguard America's own security against those who threaten our citizens, our friends, and our interests. Look at Iran. Through the power of our diplomacy, a world that was once divided about how to deal with Iran's nuclear program now stands as one. The regime is more isolated than ever before. Its leaders are faced with crippling sanctions, and as long as they shirk their responsibilities, this pressure will not relent.

Let there be no doubt: America is determined to prevent Iran from getting a nuclear weapon, and I will take no options off the table to achieve that goal. But a peaceful resolution of this issue is still possible, and far better. And if Iran changes course and meets its obligations, it can rejoin the community of nations.

## Israel

The renewal of American leadership can be felt across the globe. Our oldest alliances in Europe and Asia are stronger than ever. Our ties to the Americas are deeper. Our ironclad commitment—and I mean ironclad—to Israel's security has meant the closest military cooperation between our two countries in history.

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February 12, 2013

[\(Read the full speech\)](#)

## Afghanistan

Tonight we stand united in saluting the troops and civilians who sacrifice every day to protect us. Because of them, we can say with confidence that America will complete its mission in Afghanistan and achieve our objective of defeating the core of al-Qaeda.

Already, we have brought home 33,000 of our brave service men and women. This spring, our forces will move into a support role, while Afghan security forces take the lead. Tonight I can announce that over the next year, another 34,000 American troops will come home from Afghanistan. This drawdown will continue, and by the end of next year, our war in Afghanistan will be over.

Beyond 2014, America's commitment to a unified and sovereign Afghanistan will endure, but the nature of our commitment will change. We're negotiating an agreement with the Afghan government that focuses on two missions: training and equipping Afghan forces so that the country does not again slip into chaos and counterterrorism efforts that allow us to pursue the remnants of al-Qaeda and their affiliates.

## Counterterrorism

Today, the organization that attacked us on 9/11 is a shadow of its former self. It's true, different al-Qaeda affiliates and extremist groups have emerged, from the Arabian Peninsula to Africa. The threat these groups pose is evolving. But to meet this threat, we don't need to send tens of thousands of our sons and daughters abroad or occupy other nations. Instead, we'll need to help countries like Yemen and Libya and Somalia provide for their own security and help allies who take the fight to terrorists, as we have in Mali. And where necessary, through a range of capabilities, we will continue to take direct action against those terrorists who pose the gravest threat to Americans.

Now, as we do, we must enlist our values in the fight. That's why my administration has worked tirelessly to forge a durable legal and policy framework to guide our counterterrorism efforts. Throughout, we have kept Congress fully informed of our efforts. I recognize that in our democracy, no one should just take my word for it that we're doing things the right way. So, in the months ahead, I will continue to engage Congress to ensure not only that our targeting, detention, and prosecution of terrorists remains consistent with our laws and system of checks and balances, but that our efforts are even more transparent to the American people and to the world.

## Iran

Likewise, the leaders of Iran must recognize that now is the time for a diplomatic solution, because a coalition stands united in demanding that they meet their obligations, and we will do what is necessary to prevent them from getting a nuclear weapon.

## Democracy and Human Rights

In the Middle East, we will stand with citizens as they demand their universal rights and support stable transitions to democracy. We know the process will be messy, and we cannot presume to dictate the course of change in countries like Egypt, but we can and will insist on respect for the fundamental rights of all people. We'll keep the pressure on a Syrian regime that has murdered its own people and support opposition leaders that respect

the rights of every Syrian. And we will stand steadfast with Israel in pursuit of security and a lasting peace. These are the messages I'll deliver when I travel to the Middle East next month.

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**January 28, 2014**

[\(Read the full speech\)](#)

### **Afghanistan**

Tonight, because of the extraordinary troops and civilians who risk and lay down their lives to keep us free, the United States is more secure. When I took office, nearly 180,000 Americans were serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. Today, all our troops are out of Iraq. More than 60,000 of our troops have already come home from Afghanistan. With Afghan forces now in the lead for their own security, our troops have moved to a support role. Together with our allies, we will complete our mission there by the end of this year, and America's longest war will finally be over.

After 2014, we will support a unified Afghanistan as it takes responsibility for its own future. If the Afghan government signs a security agreement that we have negotiated, a small force of Americans could remain in Afghanistan with NATO allies to carry out two narrow missions: training and assisting Afghan forces and counterterrorism operations to pursue any remnants of al-Qaeda. For while our relationship with Afghanistan will change, one thing will not: our resolve that terrorists do not launch attacks against our country.

### **Counterterrorism**

The fact is, that danger remains. While we've put al-Qaeda's core leadership on a path to defeat, the threat has evolved as al-Qaeda affiliates and other extremists take root in different parts of the world. In Yemen, Somalia, Iraq, Mali, we have to keep working with partners to disrupt and disable those networks. In Syria, we'll support the opposition that rejects the agenda of terrorist networks. Here at home, we'll keep strengthening our defenses and combat new threats like cyber attacks. And as we reform our defense budget, we will have to keep faith with our men and women in uniform and invest in the capabilities they need to succeed in future missions.

We have to remain vigilant. But I strongly believe our leadership and our security cannot depend on our outstanding military alone. As commander in chief, I have used force when needed to protect the American people, and I will never hesitate to do so as long as I hold this office. But I will not send our troops into harm's way unless it is truly necessary, nor will I allow our sons and daughters to be mired in open-ended conflicts. We must fight the battles that need to be fought, not those that terrorists prefer from us: large-scale deployments that drain our strength and may ultimately feed extremism.

### **Drones**

So even as we actively and aggressively pursue terrorist networks through more targeted efforts and by building the capacity of our foreign partners, America must move off a permanent war footing. That's why I've imposed prudent limits on the use of drones. For we will not be safer if people abroad believe we strike within their countries without regard for the consequence.

### **Guantanamo Bay**

And with the Afghan war ending, this needs to be the year Congress lifts the remaining restrictions on detainee transfers and we close the prison at Guantanamo Bay. Because we counter terrorism not just through intelligence and military actions, but by remaining true to our constitutional ideals and setting an example for the rest of the world.

### **Syria**

You see, in a world of complex threats, our security, our leadership, depends on all elements of our power,

including strong and principled diplomacy. American diplomacy has rallied more than 50 countries to prevent nuclear materials from falling into the wrong hands and allowed us to reduce our own reliance on cold war stockpiles. American diplomacy, backed by the threat of force, is why Syria's chemical weapons are being eliminated.

And we will continue to work with the international community to usher in the future the Syrian people deserve, a future free of dictatorship, terror, and fear. As we speak, American diplomacy is supporting Israelis and Palestinians as they engage in the difficult but necessary talks to end the conflict there, to achieve dignity and an independent state for Palestinians and lasting peace and security for the State of Israel, a Jewish state that knows America will always be at their side.

## **Iran**

And it is American diplomacy, backed by pressure, that has halted the progress of Iran's nuclear program and rolled back parts of that program for the very first time in a decade. As we gather here tonight, Iran has begun to eliminate its stockpile of higher levels of enriched uranium. It's not installing advanced centrifuges. Unprecedented inspections help the world verify every day that Iran is not building a bomb. And with our allies and partners, we're engaged in negotiations to see if we can peacefully achieve a goal we all share: preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon.

These negotiations will be difficult. They may not succeed. We are clear eyed about Iran's support for terrorist organizations like Hezbollah, which threatens our allies. And we're clear about the mistrust between our nations, mistrust that cannot be wished away. But these negotiations don't rely on trust. Any long-term deal we agree to must be based on verifiable action that convinces us and the international community that Iran is not building a nuclear bomb. If John F. Kennedy and Ronald Reagan could negotiate with the Soviet Union, then surely a strong and confident America can negotiate with less powerful adversaries today.

The sanctions that we put in place helped make this opportunity possible. But let me be clear: If this Congress sends me a new sanctions bill now that threatens to derail these talks, I will veto it. For the sake of our national security, we must give diplomacy a chance to succeed. If Iran's leaders do not seize this opportunity, then I will be the first to call for more sanctions and stand ready to exercise all options to make sure Iran does not build a nuclear weapon. But if Iran's leaders do seize the chance—and we'll know soon enough—then Iran could take an important step to rejoin the community of nations, and we will have resolved one of the leading security challenges of our time without the risks of war

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**January 20, 2015**

[\(Read the full speech\)](#)

## **Afghanistan**

Tonight, for the first time since 9/11, our combat mission in Afghanistan is over. Six years ago, nearly 180,000 American troops served in Iraq and Afghanistan. Today, fewer than 15,000 remain. And we salute the courage and sacrifice of every man and woman in this 9/11 generation who has served to keep us safe. We are humbled and grateful for your service.

I believe in a smarter kind of American leadership. We lead best when we combine military power with strong diplomacy, when we leverage our power with coalition building, when we don't let our fears blind us to the opportunities that this new century presents. That's exactly what we're doing right now. And around the globe, it is making a difference.

## Counterterrorism

First, we stand united with people around the world who have been targeted by terrorists, from a school in Pakistan to the streets of Paris. We will continue to hunt down terrorists and dismantle their networks, and we reserve the right to act unilaterally, as we have done relentlessly since I took office, to take out terrorists who pose a direct threat to us and our allies.

At the same time, we've learned some costly lessons over the last 13 years. Instead of Americans patrolling the valleys of Afghanistan, we've trained their security forces, who have now taken the lead, and we've honored our troops' sacrifice by supporting that country's first democratic transition. Instead of sending large ground forces overseas, we're partnering with nations from South Asia to North Africa to deny safe haven to terrorists who threaten America.

In Iraq and Syria, American leadership—including our military power—is stopping ISIL's advance. Instead of getting dragged into another ground war in the Middle East, we are leading a broad coalition, including Arab nations, to degrade and ultimately destroy this terrorist group. We're also supporting a moderate opposition in Syria that can help us in this effort and assisting people everywhere who stand up to the bankrupt ideology of violent extremism.

Now, this effort will take time. It will require focus. But we will succeed. And tonight I call on this Congress to show the world that we are united in this mission by passing a resolution to authorize the use of force against ISIL. We need that authority

## Iran

Our diplomacy is at work with respect to Iran, where, for the first time in a decade, we've halted the progress of its nuclear program and reduced its stockpile of nuclear material. Between now and this spring, we have a chance to negotiate a comprehensive agreement that prevents a nuclear-armed Iran, secures America and our allies, including Israel, while avoiding yet another Middle East conflict. There are no guarantees that negotiations will succeed, and I keep all options on the table to prevent a nuclear Iran.

But new sanctions passed by this Congress, at this moment in time, will all but guarantee that diplomacy fails: alienating America from its allies, making it harder to maintain sanctions, and ensuring that Iran starts up its nuclear program again. It doesn't make sense. And that's why I will veto any new sanctions bill that threatens to undo this progress. The American people expect us only to go to war as a last resort, and I intend to stay true to that wisdom.

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January 12, 2016

[\(Read the full speech\)](#)

## Counterterrorism

Now, as someone who begins every day with an intelligence briefing, I know this is a dangerous time. But that's not primarily because of some looming superpower out there, and it's certainly not because of diminished American strength. In today's world, we're threatened less by evil empires and more by failing states. The Middle East is going through a transformation that will play out for a generation, rooted in conflicts that date back millennia.

Priority number one is protecting the American people and going after terrorist networks. Both al-Qaeda and now ISIL pose a direct threat to our people, because in today's world, even a handful of terrorists who place no value on human life, including their own, can do a lot of damage. They use the Internet to poison the minds of individuals inside our country. Their actions undermine and destabilize our allies. We have to take them out.

But as we focus on destroying ISIL, over-the-top claims that this is world war III just play into their hands. Masses of fighters on the back of pickup trucks, twisted souls plotting in apartments or garages, they pose an enormous danger to civilians; they have to be stopped. But they do not threaten our national existence. That is the story ISIL wants to tell. That's the kind of propaganda they use to recruit. We don't need to build them up to show that we're serious, and we sure don't need to push away vital allies in this fight by echoing the lie that ISIL is somehow representative of one of the world's largest religions. We just need to call them what they are: killers and fanatics who have to be rooted out, hunted down, and destroyed.

And that's exactly what we're doing. For more than a year, America has led a coalition of more than 60 countries to cut off ISIL's financing, disrupt their plots, stop the flow of terrorist fighters, and stamp out their vicious ideology. With nearly 10,000 airstrikes, we're taking out their leadership, their oil, their training camps, their weapons. We're training, arming, and supporting forces who are steadily reclaiming territory in Iraq and Syria.

If this Congress is serious about winning this war and wants to send a message to our troops and the world, authorize the use of military force against ISIL. Take a vote. [Applause] Take a vote. But the American people should know that with or without congressional action, ISIL will learn the same lessons as terrorists before them. If you doubt America's commitment—or mine—to see that justice is done, just ask Usama bin Laden. Ask the leader of al-Qaeda in Yemen, who was taken out last year, or the perpetrator of the Benghazi attacks, who sits in a prison cell. When you come after Americans, we go after you. And it may take time, but we have long memories, and our reach has no limits.

Our foreign policy has to be focused on the threat from ISIL and al-Qaeda, but it can't stop there. For even without ISIL, even without al-Qaeda, instability will continue for decades in many parts of the world: in the Middle East, in Afghanistan and parts of Pakistan, in parts of Central America, in Africa and Asia. Some of these places may become safe havens for new terrorist networks. Others will just fall victim to ethnic conflict or famine, feeding the next wave of refugees. The world will look to us to help solve these problems, and our answer needs to be more than tough talk or calls to carpet-bomb civilians. That may work as a TV sound bite, but it doesn't pass muster on the world stage.

### **Syria**

We also can't try to take over and rebuild every country that falls into crisis, even if it's done with the best of intentions. That's not leadership; that's a recipe for quagmire, spilling American blood and treasure that ultimately will weaken us. It's the lesson of Vietnam; it's the lesson of Iraq. And we should have learned it by now.

Now, fortunately there is a smarter approach: a patient and disciplined strategy that uses every element of our national power. It says America will always act, alone if necessary, to protect our people and our allies, but on issues of global concern, we will mobilize the world to work with us and make sure other countries pull their own weight. That's our approach to conflicts like Syria, where we're partnering with local forces and leading international efforts to help that broken society pursue a lasting peace.

### **Iran**

That's why we built a global coalition, with sanctions and principled diplomacy, to prevent a nuclear-armed Iran. And as we speak, Iran has rolled back its nuclear program, shipped out its uranium stockpile, and the world has avoided another war.

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## PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP

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February 28, 2017

[\(Read the full speech\)](#)

### Counterterrorism

Our obligation is to serve, protect, and defend the citizens of the United States. We are also taking strong measures to protect our nation from radical Islamic terrorism.

According to data provided by the Department of Justice, the vast majority of individuals convicted of terrorism and terrorism-related offenses since 9/11 came here from outside of our country. We have seen the attacks at home, from Boston to San Bernardino to the Pentagon, and, yes, even the World Trade Center.

We have seen the attacks in France, in Belgium, in Germany, and all over the world. It is not compassionate, but reckless to allow uncontrolled entry from places where proper vetting cannot occur. Those given the high honor of admission to the United States should support this country and love its people and its values. We cannot allow a beachhead of terrorism to form inside America. We cannot allow our nation to become a sanctuary for extremists.

That is why my administration has been working on improved vetting procedures, and we will shortly take new steps to keep our nation safe and to keep those out who will do us harm. As promised, I directed the Department of Defense to develop a plan to demolish and destroy ISIS, a network of lawless savages that have slaughtered Muslims and Christians, and men and women and children of all faiths and all beliefs. We will work with our allies, including our friends and allies in the Muslim world, to extinguish this vile enemy from our planet.

I have also imposed new sanctions on entities and individuals who support Iran's ballistic missile program and reaffirmed our unbreakable alliance with the State of Israel.

### Partners

But our partners must meet their financial obligations. And now, based on our very strong and frank discussions, they are beginning to do just that. In fact, I can tell you, the money is pouring in. Very nice. We expect our partners—whether in NATO, the Middle East, or in the Pacific—to take a direct and meaningful role in both strategic and military operations, and pay their fair share of the cost. Have to do that.

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January 30, 2018

[\(Read the full speech\)](#)

### Defense

As we rebuild America's strength and confidence at home, we are also restoring our strength and standing abroad. Around the world, we face rogue regimes, terrorist groups, and rivals like China and Russia that challenge our interests, our economy, and our values. In confronting these horrible dangers, we know that weakness is the surest path to conflict and unmatched power is the surest means to our true and great defense.

For this reason, I am asking Congress to end the dangerous defense sequester and fully fund our great military. As part of our defense, we must modernize and rebuild our nuclear arsenal, hopefully, never having to use it, but making it so strong and so powerful that it will deter any acts of aggression by any other nation or anyone else. Perhaps someday in the future, there will be a magical moment when the countries of the world will get

together to eliminate their nuclear weapons. Unfortunately, we are not there yet, sadly.

## **ISIS**

Last year, I also pledged that we would work with our allies to extinguish ISIS from the face of the Earth. One year later, I am proud to report that the coalition to defeat ISIS has liberated very close to 100 percent of the territory just recently held by these killers in Iraq and in Syria and in other locations as well. But there is much more work to be done. We will continue our fight until ISIS is defeated.

Army Staff Sergeant Justin Peck is here tonight. Near Raqqa, last November, Justin and his comrade, Chief Petty Officer Kenton Stacy, were on a mission to clear buildings that ISIS had rigged with explosive so that civilians could return to that city, hopefully, soon and, hopefully, safely.

Clearing the second floor of a vital hospital, Kenton Stacy was severely wounded by an explosion. Immediately, Justin bounded into the booby-trapped and unbelievably dangerous and unsafe building, and found Kenton, but in very, very bad shape. He applied pressure to the wound and inserted a tube to reopen an airway. He then performed CPR for 20 straight minutes during the ground transport and maintained artificial respiration through 2½ hours and through emergency surgery.

Kenton Stacy would have died if it were not for Justin's selfless love for his fellow warrior. Tonight Kenton is recovering in Texas, Raqqa is liberated, and Justin is wearing his new Bronze Star, with a "V" for valor. Staff Sergeant Peck, all of America salutes you.

Terrorists who do things like place bombs in civilian hospitals are evil. When possible, we have no choice but to annihilate them. When necessary, we must be able to detain and question them. But we must be clear: Terrorists are not merely criminals, they are unlawful enemy combatants. And when captured overseas, they should be treated like the terrorists they are.

In the past, we have foolishly released hundreds and hundreds of dangerous terrorists, only to meet them again on the battlefield, including the ISIS leader, al-Baghdadi, who we captured, who we had, who we released. So today I'm keeping another promise. I just signed, prior to walking in, an order directing Secretary Mattis—who is doing a great job, thank you—to reexamine our military detention policy and to keep open the detention facilities in Guantanamo Bay. I am asking Congress to ensure that, in the fight against ISIS and al-Qaeda, we continue to have all necessary power to detain terrorists, wherever we chase them down, wherever we find them. And in many cases, for them, it will now be Guantanamo Bay.

## **Afghanistan**

At the same time, as of a few months ago, our warriors in Afghanistan have new rules of engagement. Along with their heroic Afghan partners, our military is no longer undermined by artificial timelines, and we no longer tell our enemies our plans.

## **Israel**

Last month, I also took an action endorsed unanimously by the U.S. Senate just months before. I recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. Shortly afterwards, dozens of countries voted in the United Nations General Assembly against America's sovereign right to make this decision. In 2016, American taxpayers generously sent those same countries more than \$20 billion in aid. That is why tonight I am asking Congress to pass legislation to help ensure American foreign-assistance dollars always serve American interests and only go to friends of America, not enemies of America.

## **Iran**

As we strengthen friendships all around the world, we are also restoring clarity about our adversaries. When the people of Iran rose up against the crimes of their corrupt dictatorship, I did not stay silent. America stands with

the people of Iran in their courageous struggle for freedom. I am asking Congress to address the fundamental flaws in the terrible Iran nuclear deal.

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**February 5, 2019**

[\(Read the full speech\)](#)

### **Israel**

One of the most complex set of challenges we face, and have for many years, is in the Middle East. Our approach is based on principled realism, not discredited theories that have failed for decades to yield progress. For this reason, my administration recognized the true capital of Israel and proudly opened the American Embassy in Jerusalem.

### **Afghanistan and Iraq**

Our brave troops have now been fighting in the Middle East for almost 19 years. In Afghanistan and Iraq, nearly 7,000 American heroes have given their lives. More than 52,000 Americans have been badly wounded. We have spent more than \$7 trillion in fighting wars in the Middle East.

As a candidate for President, I loudly pledged a new approach. Great nations do not fight endless wars. When I took office, ISIS controlled more than 20,000 square miles in Iraq and Syria, just 2 years ago. Today, we have liberated virtually all of the territory from the grip of these bloodthirsty monsters. Now, as we work with our allies to destroy the remnants of ISIS, it is time to give our brave warriors in Syria a warm welcome home.

I have also accelerated our negotiations to reach—if possible—a political settlement in Afghanistan. The opposing side is also very happy to be negotiating. Our troops have fought with unmatched valor. And thanks to their bravery, we are now able to pursue a possible political solution to this long and bloody conflict.

In Afghanistan, my administration is holding constructive talks with a number of Afghan groups, including the Taliban. As we make progress in these negotiations, we will be able to reduce our troop's presence and focus on counterterrorism. And we will indeed focus on counterterrorism. We do not know whether we'll achieve an agreement, but we do know that, after two decades of war, the hour has come to at least try for peace. And the other side would like to do the same thing. It's time.

### **Counterterrorism**

Above all, friend and foe alike must never doubt this nation's power and will to defend our people. Eighteen years ago, violent terrorists attacked the USS *Cole*. And last month, American forces killed one of the leaders of that attack. We are honored to be joined tonight by Tom Wibberley, whose son, Navy Seaman Craig Wibberley, was one of the 17 sailors we tragically lost. Tom, we vow to always remember the heroes of the USS *Cole*. Thank you, Tom.

### **Iran**

My administration has acted decisively to confront the world's leading state sponsor of terror: the radical regime in Iran. It is a radical regime. They do bad, bad things. To ensure this corrupt dictatorship never acquires nuclear weapons, I withdrew the United States from the disastrous Iran nuclear deal. And last fall, we put in place the toughest sanctions ever imposed by us on a country.

We will not avert our eyes from a regime that chants "Death to America" and threatens genocide against the Jewish people. We must never ignore the vile poison of anti-Semitism or those who spread its venomous creed. With one voice, we must confront this hatred anywhere and everywhere it occurs.

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February 4, 2020

[\(Read the full speech\)](#)

### **Abraham Accords**

My administration is also strongly defending our national security and combating radical Islamic terrorism. Last week, I announced a groundbreaking plan for peace between Israel and the Palestinians. Recognizing that all past attempts have failed, we must be determined and creative in order to stabilize the region and give millions of young people the chance to realize a better future.

### **Counterterrorism**

Three years ago, the barbarians of ISIS held over 20,000 square miles of territory in Iraq and Syria. Today, the ISIS territorial caliphate has been 100 percent destroyed, and the founder and leader of ISIS—the bloodthirsty killer known as al-Baghdadi—is dead.

We are joined this evening by Carl and Marsha Mueller. In 2013, while caring for suffering civilians in Syria, Kayla was kidnapped, tortured, and enslaved by ISIS and kept as a prisoner of al-Baghdadi himself. After more than 500 horrifying days of captivity, al-Baghdadi murdered young, beautiful Kayla. She was just 26 years old.

On the night that U.S. Special Forces Operations ended al-Baghdadi’s miserable life, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Mark Milley, received a call in the Situation Room. He was told that the brave men of the elite special forces team that so perfectly carried out the operation had given their mission a name: “Task Force 8–14.” It was a reference to a special day: August 14, Kayla’s birthday. Carl and Marsha, America’s warriors never forgot Kayla, and neither will we. Thank you.

Every day, America’s men and women in uniform demonstrate the infinite depth of love that dwells in the human heart. One of these American heroes was Army Staff Sergeant Christopher Hake.

On Easter Sunday of 2008, Chris was out on patrol in Baghdad when his Bradley fighting vehicle was hit by a roadside bomb. That night, he made the ultimate sacrifice for our country. Sergeant Hake now rests in eternal glory in Arlington, and his wife Kelli is in the Gallery tonight, joined by their son, who is now a 13-year-old and doing very, very well. To Kelli and Gage: Chris will live in our hearts forever. He is looking down on you now. Thank you

The terrorist responsible for killing Sergeant Hake was Qasem Soleimani, who provided the deadly roadside bomb that took Chris’s life. Soleimani was the Iranian regime’s most ruthless butcher, a monster who murdered or wounded thousands of American service members in Iraq. As the world’s top terrorist, Soleimani orchestrated the deaths of countless men, women, and children. He directed the December assault and went on to assault U.S. forces in Iraq. Was actively planning new attacks when we hit him very hard. And that’s why, last month, at my direction, the U.S. military executed a flawless precision strike that killed Soleimani and terminated his evil reign of terror forever

Our message to the terrorists is clear: You will never escape American justice. If you attack our citizens, you forfeit your life.

### **Iran**

In recent months, we have seen proud Iranians raise their voices against their oppressive rulers. The Iranian regime must abandon its pursuit of nuclear weapons; stop spreading terror, death, and destruction; and start working for the good of its own people.

Because of our powerful sanctions, the Iranian economy is doing very, very poorly. We can help them make a very good and short-time recovery. It can all go very quickly, but perhaps they are too proud or too foolish to

ask for that help. We are here. Let's see which road they choose. It is totally up to them.

## **Afghanistan**

As we defend American lives, we are working to end America's wars in the Middle East. In Afghanistan, the determination and valor of our warfighters has allowed us to make tremendous progress, and peace talks are now underway. I am not looking to kill hundreds of thousands of people in Afghanistan, many of them totally innocent. It is also not our function to serve other nations as law enforcement agencies. These are warfighters that we have—the best in the world—and they either want to fight to win or not fight at all. We are working to finally end America's longest war and bring our troops back home

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## **PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN**

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**April 28, 2021**

[\(Read the full speech\)](#)

### **Iran Nuclear**

On Iran and North Korea—nuclear programs that present serious threats to American security and the security of the world—we're going to be working closely with our allies to address the threats posed by both of these countries through diplomacy, as well as stern deterrence.

### **Afghanistan and Counterterrorism**

And American leadership means ending the forever war in Afghanistan. We have, without hyperbole, the greatest fighting force in the history of the world. I'm the first President in 40 years who knows what it means to have a son serving in a war zone. Today, we have service members serving in the same war zone as their parents did. We have service members in Afghanistan who were not yet born on 9/11.

The war in Afghanistan, as we remember the debates here, were never meant to be multigenerational undertakings of nation building. We went to Afghanistan to get terrorists—the terrorists who attacked us on 9/11—and we said we would follow Usama bin Laden to the gates of hell to do it. If you've been to the upper Kunar Valley, you've kind of seen the gates of hell. And we delivered justice to bin Laden. We degraded the terrorist threat of al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. And after 20 years of value—valor and sacrifice, it's time to bring those troops home.

Look, even as we do, we will maintain an over-the-horizon capacity to suppress future threats to the homeland. And make no mistake: In 20 years, terrorism has metastasized. The threat has evolved way beyond Afghanistan. And those of you in the intelligence committees, the foreign relations committee, the defense committees, you know well: We have to remain vigilant against the threats to the United States wherever they come from. Al-Qaeda and ISIS are in Yemen, Syria, Somalia, other places in Africa, the Middle East, and beyond.

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**March 1, 2022**

[\(Read the full speech\)](#)

### **Iraq and Afghanistan**

And our troops in Iraq have faced—and Afghanistan—have faced many dangers. One being stationed at bases, breathing in toxic smoke from burn pits. Many of you have been there. I've been in and out of Iraq and Afghanistan over 40 times. These burn pits that incinerate waste—the wastes of war, medical and hazardous

material, jet fuel, and so much more. And they come home—many of the world’s fittest and best trained warriors in the world—never the same: headaches, numbness, dizziness, a cancer that would put them in a flag-draped coffin. I know.

One of those—one of those soldiers was my son, Major Beau Biden. I don’t know for sure if the burn pit that he lived near—that his hooch was near in Iraq and, earlier than that, in Kosovo is the cause of his brain cancer and the disease of so many other troops. But I’m committed to find out everything we can

I’m also calling on Congress to pass a law to make sure veterans devastated by toxic exposure in Iraq and Afghanistan finally get the benefits and the comprehensive health care they deserve.

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**February 7, 2023**

[\(Read the full speech\)](#)

## **Oil**

Have you noticed—Big Oil just reported its profits. Record profits. Last year, they made \$200 billion in the midst of a global energy crisis. I think it’s outrageous.

Why? They invested too little of that profit to increase domestic production. And when I talked to a couple of them, they say, “We were afraid you were going to shut down all the oil wells and all the oil refineries anyway, so why should we invest in them?” I said, “We’re going to need oil for at least another decade...and beyond that. We’re going to need it. Production. If they had, in fact, invested in the production to keep gas prices down—instead they used the record profits to buy back their own stock, rewarding their CEOs and shareholders.