

*Administration of Barack Obama, 2015*

**Remarks Following a Meeting With Secretary of Defense Ashton B. Carter  
and an Exchange With Reporters**  
*February 17, 2015*

*The President.* Well, I just had an opportunity to meet for the first time in his official capacity with my new Secretary of Defense, Ash Carter, who talked about a wide range of security challenges and opportunities that we face around the world: everything from making sure that we are dismantling ISIL, and not only stabilizing the situation in Iraq, but addressing the foreign fighter issue and countering the narrative of violent extremism that has been turbocharged through the Internet.

We had a chance to talk about situations like Ukraine. We also had an opportunity to talk about how we maintain the strongest and most effective military in the world and how we keep faith with our outstanding men and women in uniform.

I could not be more confident that Ash Carter is going to do an outstanding job as Secretary of Defense. And he is hitting the ground running, having already spent a lot of time in this administration and in the Pentagon.

So I want to thank the Senate for confirming him almost unanimously. And I look forward to working with him in the years to come. I think America will be well served by Mr. Ash Carter. Great.

*U.S. District Court Opinion in Texas, et al. v. United States/President's Executive  
Actions on Immigration/Immigration Reform Legislation*

Q. Mr. President, was there——

Q. Immigration?

Q. ——on the immigration issue today?

*The President.* I disagree with the Texas judge's ruling, and the Justice Department will appeal. This is not the first time where a lower court judge has blocked something or attempted to block something that ultimately was shown to be lawful. And I'm confident that it is well within my authority and the tradition of the executive branch's prosecutorial discretion to execute this policy, which will help us make our borders safer, will help us go after criminals and those that we don't want in this country, will help people get on the right side of the law and get out of the shadows.

And keep in mind that this is something that we necessarily have to make choices about because we've got 11 million people here who we're not all going to deport. Many of them are our neighbors. Many of them are working in our communities. Many of their children are U.S. citizens. And as we saw with the executive action that I took for DREAMers—people who have come here as young children and are American by any other name except for their legal papers, who want to serve this country, oftentimes want to go into the military or start businesses or in other ways contribute—I think the American people overwhelmingly recognize that to pretend like we are going to ship them off is unrealistic and not who we are.

So I've also said throughout this process that the only way we're going to get a broken immigration system fully fixed is by Congress acting. And we know that there has been

bipartisan support in the past for comprehensive immigration reform. I held off taking these executive actions until we had exhausted all possibilities of getting congressional action done. With a new Congress, my hope has been that they now get serious in solving the problem. Instead, what we've had is a series of votes to kick out young people who have grown up here and everybody recognizes are part of our community and threats to defund the Department of Homeland Security, which would make it even harder for us to protect our borders and to keep our people safe.

So my strong advice right now to Congress is, if they are seriously concerned about immigration, about our borders, about being able to keep criminals out of this country, then what they should be doing is working together and working with this administration for a comprehensive immigration policy that allows us to continue to be both a nation of laws and a nation of immigrants. And certainly they need to start funding the Department of Homeland Security so that they can go forward with all the functions that Republicans say they want carried out, including strong border security functions.

But with respect to the ruling, we—I disagree with it. I think the law is on our side and history is on our side. And we are going to appeal it. For those who are now wondering whether or not they should apply, we are going to refer those questions to the Department of Homeland Security that's already begun the planning process. And we will be prepared to implement this fully as soon as the legal issues get resolved.

Q. Why not wait until the higher court rules on your programs before implementing them?

*The President.* Well, keep in mind, we're not going to disregard this Federal court ruling. The law is the law in this country, and we take things a step at a time. So we're not going to be actually taking applications in until this case is settled. But we are doing the preparatory work because this is a big piece of business and it's important for us to do in order for us to actually secure our borders effectively and allocate limited resources to the most important tasks and functions that the Department of Homeland Security has.

We should not be tearing some mom away from her child when the child has been born here and that mom has been living here for the last 10 years, minding her own business and being a important part of the community. We should be focusing on stopping people at the borders, reinforcing our effectiveness there, going after criminals and felons who are in our midst who we can deport, strengthening our systems for legal immigration. Those are all the things that we could be doing through a comprehensive immigration reform bill, and in fact, we know that there has been in the past bipartisan support for that.

But as I said before, I'm not willing to just stand by and do nothing and engage in a lot of political rhetoric. I'm interested in actually solving problems. I'd like to see Congress take that same approach.

In the meantime, the Department of Homeland Security will continue with the planning because we want to make sure as soon as these legal issues get resolved, which I anticipate they will in our favor, that we are ready to go. Okay?

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:32 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Andrew S. Hanen, U.S. District Judge for the Southern District of Texas. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

*Categories:* Addresses and Remarks: Secretary of Defense Ashton B. Carter, meeting; Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters :: White House.

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