

on a whole host of issues. I want to thank him for all the work that we've done together: the cooperation in Afghanistan; the work that we most recently did in trying to provide freedom for Libya; and in addition, the NATO obligations that both of us carry out together, most recently symbolized by the agreement of Turkey to host a missile defense radar.

Prime Minister Erdogan has shown great leadership on a range of issues and promoting democracy. And we are very grateful to him for the work that we've done together.

I do want to stress my deepest condolences for the loss of life through the explosion that took place in Ankara. And I understand that the investigation is ongoing, but I think that this reminds us that terrorism exists in many parts of the world and that Turkey and the United States are going to be strong partners in preventing terrorism. And we look forward to working with you on these issues.

So, Mr. Prime Minister, thank you for your service, and thank you for your friendship.

Prime Minister Erdogan. Thank you very much, Mr. President. I'm very pleased that we have this occasion to meet during this week as we meet here for the 66th General Assembly of the United Nations.

And as you have described the relationship between Turkey and the United States, we have a model partnership. And this is a process which is ongoing in which we have taken some very important steps and we will continue to take some important steps. One of those issues that is very common to both of us is fighting against terrorism and fighting against terrorism based on a common platform. We have, unfortunately, lost three citizens today as a result of the blast in Ankara, but in the later hours there was another attack in Siirt, in a city in the eastern part of Turkey, where four young girls

were killed as a result of an attack in a car, and these were civilian citizens. And so these are events which give us great sadness. And this is an area which we have to work on.

As for whether or not we can completely eradicate terrorism, I'm not very optimistic in thinking that perhaps we can completely eradicate it. But I think that we have a lot of room to work together to make sure that we minimize terrorism to the lowest possible extent. And to do that we have to keep working together on many areas of this effort, work together in planning, use technology so that we can continue to take joint steps in trying to fight against terrorism. And those are some of the issues that we all will talk about.

I have also recently visited Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya, and we have also worked together in those countries, and Afghanistan as well, and also in Iraq. So these are many of the areas where we will continue to talk to each other so that Turkey and the United States continue with this model partnership to move into a better future.

And let me take this opportunity to—also to thank you for your hospitality today.

President Obama. Thank you very much, everybody.

Middle East

Q. [Inaudible]

Q. Was there any discussion of the Palestinian—[inaudible]?

President Obama. We're starting the meeting now.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:46 p.m. at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel. Prime Minister Erdogan spoke in Turkish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Statement on the Repeal of the United States Military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" Policy

September 20, 2011

Today the discriminatory law known as "don't ask, don't tell" is finally and formally re-

pealed. As of today, patriotic Americans in uniform will no longer have to lie about who they

are in order to serve the country they love. As of today, our Armed Forces will no longer lose the extraordinary skills and combat experience of so many gay and lesbian servicemembers. And today, as Commander in Chief, I want those who were discharged under this law to know that your country deeply values your service.

I was proud to sign the Repeal Act into law last December because I knew that it would enhance our national security, increase our military readiness, and bring us closer to the principles of equality and fairness that define us as Americans. Today's achievement is a tribute to all the patriots who fought and marched for change: to Members of Congress from both parties who voted for repeal, to our

civilian and military leaders who ensured a smooth transition, and to the professionalism of our men and women in uniform who showed that they were ready to move forward together, as one team, to meet the missions we ask of them.

For more than two centuries, we have worked to extend America's promise to all our citizens. Our Armed Forces have been both a mirror and a catalyst of that progress, and our troops, including gays and lesbians, have given their lives to defend the freedoms and liberties that we cherish as Americans. Today every American can be proud that we have taken another great step toward keeping our military the finest in the world and toward fulfilling our Nation's founding ideals.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser in New York City *September 20, 2011*

The President. Hello, everybody! Hello, New York! I'm in a New York state of mind. Thank you. Thank you. What do you think about Michelle Obama? She's not bad.

Everybody, please have a seat. Have a seat. Did you notice how she's getting cuter? [Laughter] She is remarkable, and it is the reason that I've got remarkable kids. I have improved my gene pool. [Laughter] And it is true, this is the closest we get to a date—which I'm going to have to fix in about 14 months. [Laughter]

It is wonderful to see all of you. Thank you so much for being here tonight in this spectacular setting. There are a couple of people I want to make sure to acknowledge: First of all, the remarkable Alicia Keys—thank you so much, Alicia, for your performance; one of the finest public servants in the country, Mayor Cory Booker; the outstanding former mayor of New York City, David Dinkins; the New York City public advocate, Bill de Blasio; and my dear friend, the DNC Treasurer, Andy Tobias. We love Andy.

Now, the truth is, this is not my idea of a date night. Normally, our dates don't end with me being before 400 of our closest friends. But it is wonderful to be here. And I'm here be-

cause I need your help. I need your help, just like I needed your help in 2008. In fact, I need your help to finish what we started in 2008.

Back then, we started this campaign not because we thought it was a sure thing; I just want to remind everybody of that. The odds were not good. This was not going to be a cakewalk. My name was Barack Hussein Obama. [Laughter] You didn't need a poll to know that might be an issue. [Laughter] But we forged ahead because we had an idea about what this country is, what it has been, and what it can be.

Most of the people in this room—many of our parents, our grandparents—we grew up with a faith in an America where hard work and responsibility paid off, and if you stepped up, and if you did your job, and if you were loyal to your company, that loyalty would be rewarded with a decent salary and good benefits; you might get a raise. And you had an assurance that life would be better for your kids and your grandkids.

Over the last decade—over the last couple of decades, that faith was shaken. Seemed as if the rules changed. The deck kept getting stacked against middle class Americans, and nobody in Washington seemed willing or able to do anything about it. And in 2007, all of this