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## News Transcript

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**Presenter: Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates and Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Adm. Mike Mullen**

**November 30,  
2010**

### DOD News Briefing with Secretary Gates and Adm. Mullen from the Pentagon

SEC. GATES: Good afternoon.

This past February, I established a high-level working group to review the issues associated with implementing a repeal of the "don't ask, don't tell" law regarding homosexual men and women serving in the military, and based on those findings to develop recommendations for implementation should the law change. The working group has completed their work, and today the department is releasing their report to the Congress and to the American public.

Admiral Mullen and I will briefly comment on the review's findings and our recommendations for the way ahead.

We will take some questions. And then the working group's co-chairs, General Counsel Jeh Johnson and Army General Carter Ham, will provide more detail on the report, and answer any questions you might have on methodology, data and recommendations.

When I first appointed Mr. Johnson and General Ham to assume this duty, I did so with the confidence that they would undertake this task with the thoroughness, the seriousness, professionalism and objectivity befitting a task of this magnitude and consequence. I believe that a close and serious reading of this report will demonstrate they've done just that. We are grateful for the service they have rendered in taking on such a complex and controversial subject.

The findings of their report reflect nearly 10 months of research and analysis along several lines of study, and represent the most thorough and objective review ever of this difficult policy issue and its impact on the American military.

First, the group reached out to the force to better understand their views and attitudes about a potential repeal of the "don't ask, don't tell" law. As was made clear at the time and is worth repeating today, this outreach was not a matter of taking a poll of the military to determine whether the law should be changed. The very idea of asking the force to in effect vote on such a matter is antithetical to our system of government, and would have been without precedent in the long history of our civilian-led military.

The president of the United States, the commander in chief of the armed forces, made his position on this matter clear, a position I support. Our job as the civilian and military leadership of the Department of Defense was to determine how best to prepare for such a change should the Congress change the law.

Nonetheless, I thought it critically important to engage our troops and their families on this issue, as ultimately it will be they who will determine whether or not such a transition is successful. I believe that we had to learn the attitudes, obstacles and concerns that would need to be addressed should the law be changed. We could do this only by reaching out and listening to our men and women in uniform and their families.

The working group undertook this through a variety of means, from a mass survey answered by tens of thousands of troops and their spouses to meetings with small groups and individuals, including hearing from those discharged under the current law.

Mr. Johnson and General Ham will provide more detail on the results of the survey of troops and their families.

But in summary, a strong majority of those who answered the survey -- more than two-thirds -- do not object to gays and lesbians serving openly in uniform. The findings suggest that for large segments of the military, repeal of "don't ask, don't tell," though potentially disruptive in the short term, would not be the wrenching, traumatic change that many have feared and predicted.

The data also shows that within the combat arms specialties and units, there is a higher level of discontent, of discomfort and resistance to changing the current policy. Those findings and the potential implications for America's fighting forces remain a source of concern to the service chiefs and to me. I'll discuss this later.

Second, the working group also examined thoroughly all the potential changes to the department's regulations and policies dealing with matters such as benefits, housing, relationships within the ranks, separations and discharges. As the co-chairs will explain in a few minutes, the majority of concerns often raised in association with the repeal -- dealing with sexual conduct, fraternization, billeting arrangements, marital or survivor benefits -- could be governed by existing laws and regulations.

Existing policies can and should be applied equally to homosexuals as well as heterosexuals. While a repeal would require some changes to regulations, the key to success, as with most things military, is training, education, and, above all, strong and principled leadership up and down the chain of command.

Third, the working group examined the potential impact of a change in the law on military readiness, including the impact on unit cohesion, recruiting and retention, and other issues critical to the performance of the force. In my view, getting this category right is the most important thing we must do.

The U.S. armed forces are in the middle of two major military overseas campaigns -- a complex and difficult drawdown in Iraq, a war in Afghanistan -- both of which are putting extraordinary stress on those serving on the ground and their families. It is the well-being of these brave young Americans, those doing the fighting and the dying since 9/11, that has guided every decision I have made in the Pentagon since taking this post nearly four years ago. It will be no different on this issue. I am determined to see that if the law is repealed, the changes are implemented in such a way as to minimize any negative impact on the morale, cohesion and effectiveness of combat units that are deployed, about to deploy to the front lines.

With regards to readiness, the working group report concluded that overall and with thorough preparation -- and I emphasize thorough preparation -- there is a low risk from repealing "don't ask, don't tell." However, as I mentioned earlier, the survey data showed that a higher proportion -- between 40 (percent) and 60 percent -- of those troops serving in predominately all-male combat specialties -- mostly Army and Marines, but including the Special Operations formations of the Navy and the Air Force -- predicted a negative effective on unit cohesion from repealing the current law.

For this reason, the uniform service chiefs are less sanguine about the working -- than the working group about the level of risk of repeal with regard to combat readiness.

The views of the chiefs were sought out and taken seriously by me and by the authors of this report. The chiefs will also have the opportunity to explain their -- to provide their expert military advice to the Congress, as they have to me and to the president. Their perspective deserves serious attention and consideration, as it reflects the judgment of decades of experience and the sentiment of many senior officers.

In my view, the concerns of combat troops as expressed in the survey do not present an insurmountable barrier to successful repeal of "don't ask, don't tell." This can be done and should be done without posing a serious risk to military readiness. However, these findings do lead me to conclude that an abundance of care and preparation is required if we are to avoid a disruptive and potentially dangerous impact on the performance of those serving at the tip of the spear in America's wars.

This brings me to my recommendations on the way ahead. Earlier this year, the House of Representatives passed legislation that would repeal "don't ask, don't tell" after a number of steps take place, the last being certification by the president, the secretary of Defense and the chairman that the new policies and regulations were consistent with the U.S. military's standards of readiness, effectiveness, unit cohesion, and recruiting and retention.

Now that we have completed this review, I strongly urge the Senate to pass this legislation and send it to the president for signature before the end of this year.

I believe this is a matter of some urgency because, as we have seen in the past year, the federal courts are increasingly becoming involved in this issue. Just a few weeks ago, one lower court ruling forced the department into an abrupt series of changes that were no doubt confusing and distracting to men and women in the ranks. It is only a matter of

time before the federal courts are drawn once more into the fray, with the very real possibility that this change would be imposed immediately by judicial fiat -- by far the most disruptive and damaging scenario I can imagine, and one of the most hazardous to military morale, readiness and battlefield performance.

Therefore, it is important that this change come via legislative means; that is, legislation informed by the review just completed. What is needed is a process that allows for a well-prepared and well-considered implementation -- above all, a process that carries the imprimatur of the elected representatives of the people of the United States.

Given the present circumstances, those that choose not to act legislatively are rolling the dice that this policy will not be abruptly overturned by the courts. The legislation presently before the Congress would authorize a repeal of the "don't ask, don't tell" pending a certification by the president, secretary of Defense and the chairman. It would not harm military readiness.

Nonetheless, I believe that it would be unwise to push ahead with full implementation of repeal before more can be done to prepare the force -- in particular, those ground combat specialties and units -- for what could be a disruptive and disorienting change.

The working group's plan, with a strong emphasis on education, training and leader development, provides a solid road map for a successful full implementation of repeal, assuming that the military is given sufficient time and preparation to get the job done right.

The department has already made a number of changes to regulations that within existing law applied more exacting standards to procedures, investigating or separating troops for suspected homosexual conduct -- changes that have added a measure of common sense and decency to a legally and morally fraught process.

I would close on a personal note and a personal appeal. This is the second time that I have dealt with this issue as a leader in public life, the prior case being in CIA in 1992 when I directed that openly gay applicants be treated like all other applicants; that is, whether as individuals they met our competitive standards. That was and is a situation significantly different in circumstance and consequence than confronting -- than that confronting the United States armed forces today.

Views toward gay and lesbian Americans have changed considerably during this period, and have grown more accepting since "don't ask, don't tell" was first enacted. But feelings on this matter can still run deep and divide often starkly along demographic, cultural and generational lines, not only in society as a whole but in the uniformed ranks as well.

For this reason, I would ask, as Congress takes on this debate, for all involved to resist the urge to lure our troops and their families into the politics of this issue. What is called for is a careful and considered approach, an approach that to the extent possible welcomes all who are qualified and capable of serving their country in uniform, but one that does not undermine out of haste or dogmatism those attributes that make the U.S. military the finest fighting force in the world.

The stakes are too high for a nation under threat, for a military at war, to do any less.

Admiral?

ADM. MULLEN: Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

I, too, wish to thank Jeh Johnson and Carter Ham, as well as everyone involved in the working group, for their extraordinary efforts over much of the past year. I fully endorse their report, its findings and the implementation plan recommended by the working group.

The working group was given a tall order -- indeed, nothing less than producing the first truly comprehensive assessment of not only the impact of repeal of the law governing "don't ask, don't tell," but also about how best to implement a new policy across the joint force. As the secretary indicated, the working group surveyed our troops and their spouses, consulted proponents and opponents of repeal, and examined military experience around the world. They also spoke with serving gays and lesbians, as well as former members of the military who are gay and lesbian. The result is one of the most expansive studies ever done on military personnel issues, and I applaud the time that was taken to arrive at solid, defensible conclusions.

More critically, I was gratified to see that the working group focused their findings and recommendations, rightly, on those who would be most affected by a change in the law: our people, all of our people. And so for the first time, the chiefs and I have more than just anecdotal evidence and hearsay to inform the advice we give our civilian leaders. We've discussed this issue extensively amongst ourselves and with the secretary, and the chiefs and I met with the president as

recently as yesterday.

I only want to add three points to what the secretary's already laid out.

First, I think it's noteworthy that the working group found strong leadership to be the single most important factor in implementing any repeal. That may sound fairly obvious, but it is a key, critical point.

We all have our opinions, and those opinions matter. This is without question a complex social and cultural issue. But at the end of the day, whatever the decision of our elected leaders may be, we in uniform have an obligation to follow orders. When those orders involve significant change such as this would, we need to find ways to lead the way forward. Our troops and their families expect that from us, and I think the American people do as well.

Second, we've heard loud and clear that our troops also expect us to maintain high standards of conduct and professionalism, both as we move forward in this debate and should repeal occur. We treat people with dignity and respect in the armed forces, or we don't last long. No special cases, no special treatment, if we're going to continue to comport ourselves with honor and hold ourselves accountable across the board to impeccably high standards, repeal or no repeal.

Finally, the report shows that however low the overall risk of repeal may be with respect to readiness, cohesion and retention, it is not without its challenges. We can best address those challenges by having it within our power and our prerogative to manage the implementation process ourselves.

Should repeal occur, I share the secretary's desire that it come about through legislation -- through the same process with which the law was enacted, rather than precipitously through the courts. I further hope that such debate in the Congress will be as fully informed by the good work done in this report as my advice to the secretary and to the president is.

Thank you.

Q: Secretary Gates, you said it would be unwise to proceed with repeal until there is more groundwork. How long do you envision that process lasting? And is this a concern and a recommendation that is shared by the White House in -- as far as once Congress acts there still being a period in which the policy is in place?

Admiral Mullen, do you also share that recommendation?

SEC. GATES: Well, first of all, just to be clear, what we're talking about is that, should the Congress vote to repeal the law, what we are asking for is the time subsequent to that to prepare adequately before the change is implemented in the force. How long that would take, frankly, I don't know. There is the -- the report, as you will see in the implementation plan, lays out an ambitious agenda of things that need to be done, including not only leadership training but training of a military force of over 2 million people.

I would say this. I think we all would expect that if this law is implemented, the president would be -- is -- if repeal is passed, the president would be watching very closely to ensure that we don't dawdle or try to slow-roll this. So I think his expectation would be that we would prepare as quickly as we properly and comprehensively could, and then we would be in a position to move toward the certification. But how long that would take I think -- I don't know.

ADM. MULLEN: There will -- there will be level -- there is a level of risk here, as is laid out in the report. And I would hope you spend as much time on the implementation plan as the report, because the implementation plan certainly from all the military leadership is strongly endorsed should this law change.

And it is in that implementation plan that the risk levels are mitigated, and principally mitigated through leadership -- certainly the training, the guidance, but the engagement of the leadership. And having enough time to do that is critically important as we would look at implementation. That's what really mitigates any risk that's out there.

Q: Mr. Secretary, you said the chiefs are less sanguine than the working group. What specifically have they told you about their concerns? And why in a time of war accept any increase in the level of risk?

SEC. GATES: Well, the chiefs will speak for themselves on Friday. And the chairman has spent much more time with them than I have on this. I think -- I think it's fair to say that their concerns revolve around stress on a force after nearly 10 years of war. And I think they are concerned about the higher levels of negative response from the ground combat units and the Special Operations units that I have talked about in my -- in my remarks.

I think that -- I would just like to go back and underscore the chairman's point, and that is the level of risk is tied intimately to the quality of preparation. And to do this -- so I guess I would put it this way: If a court ordered us to do this tomorrow, I believe the force -- the risk to the force would be high, if we had no time to prepare.

If we have plenty of time to prepare the force, to prepare the leadership, I think the more effectively we do that preparation the lower the risk.

Chairman?

ADM. MULLEN: I've engaged, actually, many, many times with the chiefs over the last -- over the last many months, and so we've had very, very extensive discussions about this. And from the standpoint of a change in the law -- I mean, my perspective is, as what I would call my -- certainly was my personal opinion, is now my professional view, that this is a policy change that we can make. And we can do it in a relatively low-risk fashion, given the time and given the ability to mitigate whatever risk is out there through strong leadership.

In fact, part of this is the fact that we have been at war for so long. We have -- one of the discussions about this is affecting combat effectiveness or combat readiness. I've never been associated with a better military than we are right now and better military leaders. And I have tremendous confidence that should this change, that they'll be able to implement it, very specifically.

Q: That's true, but what about the other chiefs?

ADM. MULLEN: Well, again, the chiefs will speak for themselves on Friday.

Q: Mr. Secretary, you raised the issue of combat arms, and the report shows that of those polled, 50 percent in Army combat arms are opposed, 60 percent in Marine combat arms. And there's also the issue of chaplains. The report says that there's very strong opposition among the chaplains there as well.

What would you say to both groups? How would you deal with this with both groups?

SEC. GATES: Well, the interesting -- one of the other considerations in this that the -- that the report revealed is even in combat arms units, those who -- among those who believed they had served with a gay person before, the level of comfort with going forward was something like 90 percent.

So part of this is a question of unfamiliarity. Part of it is stereotypes. And part of it is just sort of inherent resistance to change when you don't know what's on the other side.

And so I think -- I think that the contrast between the significant levels of concern for those who had -- who said they had never served with someone who is gay as opposed to those who had is an important consideration. But what I would say to them is, you know, frankly, if the Congress of the United States repeals this law, this is the will of the American people, and you are the American military, and we will do this, and we will do it right, and we will do everything in our power to mitigate the concerns that you have.

Q: And on the chaplains?

SEC. GATES: Saying --

Q: The report -- (inaudible) -- a very large number view homosexuality as a sin or an abomination.

SEC. GATES: And the report -- the report identifies that the chaplains already serve in a force many of whose members do not share their values, who do not share their beliefs. And there is an obligation to care for all. But it also is clear that the chaplains are not going to be asked to teach something they don't believe in. And so I think that the -- I think the report is pretty clear on that.

Q: Thank you. Non-"don't ask, don't tell" question quick?

SEC. GATES: Sure.

Q: WikiLeaks. Post-WikiLeaks reaction. What's your sense on whether the information-sharing climate and environment created after 9/11 to encourage greater cooperation and transparency among the intelligence communities and

the military led to these three massive data dumps?

And how concerned are you now there may be an overreaction to clamp down on information dispersal because of the disclosures?

SEC. GATES: One of the common themes that I heard from the time I was a senior agency official in the early 1980s in every military engagement we were in was the complaint of the lack of adequate intelligence support. That began to change with the Gulf War in 1991, but it really has changed dramatically after 9/11.

And clearly the finding that the lack of sharing of information had prevented people from, quote/unquote, "connecting the dots" led to much wider sharing of information, and I would say especially wider sharing of information at the front, so that no one at the front was denied -- in one of the theaters, Afghanistan or Iraq -- was denied any information that might possibly be helpful to them. Now, obviously, that aperture went too wide. There's no reason for a young officer at a forward operating post in Afghanistan to get cables having to do with the START negotiations. And so we've taken a number of mitigating steps in the department. I directed a number of these things to be undertaken in August.

First, the -- an automated capability to monitor workstations for security purposes. We've got about 60 percent of this done, mostly in -- mostly stateside. And I've directed that we accelerate the completion of it.

Second, as I think you know, we've taken steps in CENTCOM in September and now everywhere to direct that all CD and DVD write capability off the network be disabled. We have -- we have done some other things in terms of two-man policies -- wherever you can move information from a classified system to an unclassified system, to have a two-person policy there.

And then we have some longer-term efforts under way in which we can -- and, first of all, in which we can identify anomalies, sort of like credit card companies do in the use of computer; and then finally, efforts to actually tailor access depending on roles.

But let me say -- let me address the latter part of your question. This is obviously a massive dump of information. First of all, I would say unlike the Pentagon Papers, one of the things that is important, I think, in all of these releases, whether it's Afghanistan, Iraq or the releases this week, is the lack of any significant difference between what the U.S. government says publicly and what these things show privately, whereas the Pentagon Papers showed that many in the government were not only lying to the American people, they were lying to themselves.

But let me -- let me just offer some perspective as somebody who's been at this a long time. Every other government in the world knows the United States government leaks like a sieve, and it has for a long time. And I dragged this up the other day when I was looking at some of these prospective releases. And this is a quote from John Adams: "How can a government go on, publishing all of their negotiations with foreign nations, I know not."

To me, it appears as dangerous and pernicious as it is novel."

When we went to real congressional oversight of intelligence in the mid-'70s, there was a broad view that no other foreign intelligence service would ever share information with us again if we were going to share it all with the Congress. Those fears all proved unfounded.

Now, I've heard the impact of these releases on our foreign policy described as a meltdown, as a game-changer, and so on. I think -- I think those descriptions are fairly significantly overwrought. The fact is, governments deal with the United States because it's in their interest, not because they like us, not because they trust us, and not because they believe we can keep secrets. Many governments -- some governments deal with us because they fear us, some because they respect us, most because they need us. We are still essentially, as has been said before, the indispensable nation.

So other nations will continue to deal with us. They will continue to work with us. We will continue to share sensitive information with one another.

Is this embarrassing? Yes. Is it awkward? Yes. Consequences for U.S. foreign policy? I think fairly modest.

Q: And on that same subject. On that same subject. Did either of you reach out to any of your counterparts in advance of this leak and warn them, or even apologize in advance for what might come out?

SEC. GATES: I didn't.

ADM. MULLEN: I did.

Q: Who was it?

ADM. MULLEN: To General Kayani in Pakistan.

SEC. GATES: Yeah?

Q: Sir, you've said that -- you know, on "don't ask, don't tell" -- you've said that now is the time to do this, largely because of the threat of legal action. I'm just wondering, if that legal action wasn't looming, how much do you think that this would -- this is the right thing to do now?

And I'm wondering just how hard you intend to lobby those on the Hill to get them to sway to the other side.

SEC. GATES: Well, you know, I don't spend much time thinking about the world as I wish it were. The reality is the court issue is out there, and, in my view, does lend urgency to this.

You know, the question was -- has been raised, well, maybe the courts would give us time, to which my answer is, maybe, maybe not. We just don't know. But the one path we know gives us the time and the flexibility to do this is the legislative path. And I don't know how fast the courts are going to move on this, but what we've seen seems to be more and more action in the courts in the last year or two. And that's what gives me a sense of urgency about. My greatest fear is what almost happened to us in October, and that is being told to implement a change of policy overnight.

Q: Yeah. Mr. Secretary, Senator McCain is now arguing that this report is the wrong report, and that it won't get to the bottom of how this could -- the repeal could affect unit cohesion or morale. I'm wondering if you or Admiral Mullen have any reaction to that response to the report.

SEC. GATES: Well, I think -- I think that, in this respect -- and I obviously have a lot of admiration and respect for Senator McCain -- but in this respect, I think that he's mistaken. I think this report does provide a sound basis for making decisions on this law.

Now, people can draw different conclusions out of this report; the comments, for example, in the -- in the evaluation in the report of the higher levels of concern for -- among the combat arms units and in the Marine Corps and so on.

So people can read this and potentially come to different conclusions, but in terms of the data and in terms of the views of the force, it's hard for me to imagine that you could come up with a more comprehensive approach.

We had -- we had something on the order of 145,000 people in uniform answer the questionnaire, the survey. We had something on the order of 40,000 to 45,000 spouses respond to the -- to that survey. Tens of thousands of people reached in other ways. So I think there is no comparable source of information or data on attitudes in the force than this report, and it's hard for me to imagine another effort taking a much different approach than this report did.

ADM. MULLEN: And its main thrust was on combat effectiveness, mission effectiveness, readiness, unit cohesion, et cetera. And that data -- again, I agree with the Secretary, you can certainly pick parts of it that read -- you might want to read differently. But the data's very compelling, in particular with respect to those issues. I mean, that was the main reason for the report.

Q: I wonder if you could talk a little bit more about how you would see this implemented and what you mean by giving time. For example, would you, say, not have openly gay -- if the law is changed, would you not put openly gay servicemembers into units that are about to deploy to Afghanistan in 2011 or so? Would you -- would you take -- would you integrate the non-combat arms units first? I mean, what -- could you describe a little bit more of what your implementation plan would be?

SEC. GATES: Well, first of all, the repeal of the law would not, as I understand it -- now I'm not a lawyer -- but as I understand it -- and maybe Jeh Johnson can address this question for you more authoritatively when he comes up here.

But as I understand it, until we certify, until the president, the secretary of Defense and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs certify that we -- that the U.S. military is ready to implement the law, the repeal, the existing -- the currently existing rules would continue to apply. And so you would have a period of preparation, if you will, that, as I indicated earlier, I don't know necessarily how long that would take.

ADM. MULLEN: And, Julian -- and from my perspective, we are one military. We are one military.

SEC. GATES: Two more questions. Yeah.

Q: Mr. Secretary, you have spoken quite clearly about how you support the president's position on this, and how you're urging the Senate to act, and how this needs to be done in an orderly and measured way.

But you haven't said so much over time about your personal beliefs on "don't ask, don't tell." Do you feel personally that it's been unjust or wrong for gays and lesbians not to be able to serve their country openly? Or are you comfortable with the idea of openly integrating the military?

SEC. GATES: I think that -- in my view -- one of the things that is most important to me is personal integrity. And a policy or a law that in effect requires people to lie gives me -- gives me a problem. And so I think it's -- I mean, we spend a lot of time in the military talking about integrity and honor and values.

Telling the truth is a pretty important value in that scale. It's a very important value. And so for me, and I thought the admiral was -- that Admiral Mullen was eloquent on this last February -- a policy that requires people to lie about themselves somehow seems to me fundamentally flawed.

Last question.

Q: Earlier in the process, General Conway, when raising concerns about this, floated the idea of separate barracks and said that, you know, Marines might not be comfortable sharing barracks with openly gay troops. Is that even on the table, or is that -- would the idea of separate barracks, separate housing, separate showers just be off the table?

SEC. GATES: We can get into the details of that -- or you can with Jeh and General Ham. But the bottom line of the report is no separate facilities.

Thank you.





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Kazakh Foreign Minister Saudabayev After Their Meeting

## Remarks With Kazakh Foreign Minister Saudabayev After Their Meeting

### Remarks

**Hillary Rodham Clinton**

Secretary of State

**Palace of Independence**

**Astana, Kazakhstan**

**December 1, 2010**

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**MODERATOR:** (Via translator) Welcome to (inaudible) Chairman of the OSCE, State Secretary and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan Saudabayev and U.S. Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton.

**FOREIGN MINISTER SAUDABAYEV:** (Via translator) (Inaudible), first of all, to thank you for your great interest in the work of this Astana summit, and wish you fruitful work in the capital of Kazakhstan.

A meeting of the head of our state, Nazarbayev, and the head of the U.S. delegation at this summit, Mrs. Hillary Clinton, has just finished. And, as President Nazarbayev stressed, the participation of State Secretary Clinton in this (inaudible) summit is one more testimony to the fact that our strategic partnership between our two countries has been further developed.

At the meeting there was a deep and detailed exchange of opinions on the most topical issues of this Astana summit, which was (inaudible) important political results. The two sides have agreed that Kazakhstan's effective chairmanship, including this first summit, OSCE Summit in the 21st century, is giving an impetus to the further development of cooperation in the OSCE space.

Another part of this summit is the response to transnational threats, especially from outside the OSCE area; above all, from Afghanistan. Situations in Kyrgyzstan and Central Asian countries has been discussed.

It was stressed that, in order to achieve stability and sustainable development of the region's countries -- thought through policies important and the rule of law, as well as implementation of human rights. The two parties agreed that development is only achieved through the rule of law with strong democratic institutions. As far as the humanitarian dimension is concerned, it was noted that Kazakhstan chairmanship was trying to achieve interaction with civil society, and through the participation of NGOs in OSCE work, also at this summit.

It was also stressed how important it was to normalize relations of the Islamic world with the West, and to achieve an effective dialogue between civilizations and to increase tolerance. These are issues that are always in the central focus of the Presidents Nazarbayev and Barack Obama. And Kazakhstan will continue to promote those issues.

As the chairman of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, we have paid a lot of attention to further development of the strategic partnership between our two countries, including in such areas like security, political independence, economic and trade relations, as well as promotion of democracy. We have reconfirmed our determination to continue our cooperation in the area of nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament, including the celebration of a Nuclear Security Summit.

At the meeting in Washington in April this year, at the meeting of the two presidents it was also stressed to take Kazakhstan in the economic area is contributing to the implementation of the joint initiative of the United Nations and the United States on global food security. And this connection of two countries has recently started to implement major projects for agriculture that would profit from the most up-to-date U.S. technologies. Nazarbayev also established a university that established good cooperation with the leading U.S. universities. And this opens up better prospects for technological cooperation.

Kazakhstan has highly appreciated the support provided for security in Afghanistan in -- the two sides also stressed an important contribution of Kazakhstan to assistance to Afghanistan.

Our country also hosts 1,000 Afghani students to complete their university studies at a cost of 50 million U.S. dollars. Fifty-five Afghans have already started their studies.

And Kazakhstan has now -- has joined the security forces, international security forces, in Afghanistan.

I am quite convinced that today's meeting between President Nazarbayev and State Secretary Clinton has given a new impetus to the entire development of the -- in the entire area of our bilateral relations.

Distinguished State Secretary, let me welcome you once again, from the bottom of my heart, in this capital of Astana. You, being an international personality and a great friend of Kazakhstan, we are very thankful to you for your consistent support and help that we have noticed in very specific ways during our chairmanship at the OSCE. And I would like to express my hope that we continue our fruitful and effective cooperation for the good of our peoples and countries. And I give you the floor. Thank you. (Applause.)

This applause is a sign of your support of our cooperation.

**SECRETARY CLINTON:** Well, let me begin by expressing what a pleasure it is for me to be here in Astana. And I want to thank the president, the foreign minister, and the people of Kazakhstan for their hospitality and warm welcome. I fondly remember my first visit here in the 1990s, when Kazakhs were just beginning to chart their new course as an independent nation. I was proud that the United States was the first country to recognize Kazakhstan, and to welcome you into the community of nations. And today Kazakhs can be proud of all you have accomplished, and our two nations can be confident in the strength of our strategic partnership.

The relationship between the United States and Kazakhstan is rooted in mutual respect and mutual interest. Kazakhstan may be a young nation, but it is home to an ancient and rich culture, which I saw for myself at the museum in Almaty 13 years ago. America is still a relatively young country, yet we deeply respect the hopes of the people of Kazakhstan, and your aspirations for a better future, and we seek to broaden our partnership and to work with you to continue making progress toward developing into a stable, secure, democratic, and prosperous nation that is a leader in the region and beyond.

We also look forward to cooperating with the Kazakh private sector and NGOs that are working for free markets, the rule of law, and a vibrant civil society in which citizens can exercise their full range of human rights. These goals will take continued hard work. But America believes in Kazakhstan's promise, and we are committed to your future.

Today's OSCE Summit is a testament to both Kazakhstan's valued role in the international community, and the strong ties between our two countries. As the first former Soviet Republic to lead the OSCE as an independent nation, Kazakhstan has helped to focus attention on Central Asia's challenges, as well as its many opportunities.

As the foreign minister said, we have discussed security, the economy, the environment, democracy, human rights, and tolerance. The United States is committed to the OSCE, and we and our partners are working to empower it to take an even more effective role, including the encouragement of more transparency and cooperation between and among militaries, helping resolve long-standing conflicts, and standing up against attacks on civil society and journalists. Our discussions here in Astana have been constructive and substantive.

Last night, I met with many of the participants who took part in the independent conference of non-governmental organizations that ran parallel with the summit. I was impressed by their effort and energy on crucial challenges, including protecting fundamental freedoms. They know what we all know, that a thriving civil society is a vital building block of democracy, and that disparate, diverse voices must be heard and supported.

In the discussion that I had with both the president and the foreign minister, I thanked Kazakhstan for your support of the international mission in Afghanistan, and for all you are doing to help the Afghan people, particularly the very kind invitation for 1,000 students to continue their education here, in Kazakhstan. This will enable these young people to contribute to Afghanistan's development. I also thanked Kazakhstan for the recently concluded air transit agreement that will help ensure the delivery of critical resources to Afghanistan, and I welcomed Kazakhstan as the newest member of the International Security Assistance Force, which now includes 49 countries.

We discussed our shared interest in curbing nuclear proliferation, and safeguarding vulnerable nuclear material. Kazakhstan has long been a leader on this issue, and the United States deeply values our partnership. Along with the United Kingdom, our nations recently secured more than 10 metric tons of highly-enriched uranium, and 3 metric tons of weapons-grade plutonium here in Kazakhstan. That is enough material to have made 775 nuclear weapons. And now we are confident it will never fall into the wrong hands. This is a milestone of our cooperation, and a major step forward in meeting the goals set at this year's Nuclear Security Summit of securing all nuclear material within four years.

I also shared with the minister and the president the discussions that I have had with civil society leaders. I expressed our continued interest in Kazakhstan's national human rights action plan, and reforms to electoral, political, and libel laws. I assured him that America's commitment to working with Kazakhstan and the other nations of Central Asia to advance democracy and human rights will not end when the summit is over.

On all of these and other fronts, Kazakhstan and the United States are making progress together. The bonds we are forging between our governments and our peoples are making both of our countries -- and, indeed, the region and the world -- more secure and prosperous. And surrounded by the energy and optimism that one feels in this new dynamic city, I look forward with confidence to a positive future for Kazakhstan and its people.

So again, Minister, let me thank you for your leadership and your hospitality. (Applause.)

**FOREIGN MINISTER SAUDABAYEV:** (Via translator) Thank you very much. Please ask questions. According to the law of hospitality, first I give the floor to our guests.

**MODERATOR:** (Via translator) Mr. Burns, please.

**QUESTION:** A question for Secretary Clinton. Thank you. On Iran, now that the date has been set for talks in Geneva -- although it's not clear that the agenda itself has been agreed -- can you say what exactly it is that the United States hopes and expects to achieve? And also, given the outcome a year ago, when an apparent agreement unraveled rather quickly, is this really Iran's last chance? Thank you.

**SECRETARY CLINTON:** Well, Bob, first, we are encouraged that Iran has agreed to meet in Geneva next week with representatives of the P-5+1. This is an opportunity for Iran to come to the table and discuss the matters that are of concern to the international community: first and foremost, their nuclear program.

The agreement you referred to that was a result of the negotiations of last fall, the so-called Tehran Research Reactor agreement, will certainly be discussed, but would have to be modified in order to take into account what is known through the IAEA and other sources of the developments in Iran's nuclear program since that agreement was first reached and then not implemented.

The international community has been very clear. Iran is entitled to the use of civil nuclear power for peaceful purposes. It is not, however, entitled to a nuclear weapons program. And the purpose of the negotiations will be to underscore the concern of the entire international community in Iran's actions and intentions. We hope that Iran will enter into these negotiations in the spirit that they are offered. We want to see Iran take a position as a responsible member of the international community. But in order to do that, it must cease violating international obligations, cease any efforts it is making and has made in the past toward achieving nuclear weapons.

So, that is what we will be focused on. And the agenda can be more comprehensive than that, but that is the principal purpose of the meeting in Geneva.

**QUESTION:** (Via translator) I have a question for Mr. Saudabayev. It is known that Kazakhstan is going to be succeeded as chairmanship, but will remain a member of the troika, of the threesome of the OSCE. Could you please tell us in which areas are you going to work next year?

**FOREIGN MINISTER SAUDABAYEV:** (Via translator) Kazakhstan is going to continue being active as a member of the OSCE, and to contribute towards the search for solutions of problems, and the implementation of the decisions to be taken at this summit. For one year we will remain a troika member. And the processes that we hope to have been given an impetus will be continued further by our successors, and we will continue to work together in close contact with them.

And as to the internal life of our country, the processes have become (inaudible) as part of our further development of our country and the economic and social area, as well as the democratic development. As part of the implementation of the national program "The Way to Europe," this is also going to be continued.

**MODERATOR:** (Via translator) Mr. Andy Quinn is an American press member.

**QUESTION:** Madam Secretary, this trip has given you your first chance to meet personally with foreign leaders following the Wikileaks release over the weekend. I am wondering if you could tell us how much of a topic it's been in your discussions, what sort of responses you may have heard. And has anyone expressed any worry about U.S. trustworthiness, going forward?

And, for the minister, your government saw some embarrassing details also come to light in the Wikileaks release. What is your reaction to this? And do you feel that this type of release will change the way the U.S. is perceived as a diplomatic partner, going forward?

**SECRETARY CLINTON:** Well, Andy, I have had the opportunity to meet with many leaders here at the summit in Astana. We have talked about many important issues, and the work that we are doing together to solve global problems. I have certainly raised the issue of the leaks in order to assure our colleagues that it will not in any way interfere with American diplomacy or our commitment to continuing important work that is ongoing. I have not had any concerns expressed about whether any nation will not continue to work with and discuss matters of importance to us both, going forward.

As I have said, I am proud of the work that American diplomats do, and the role that America plays in the world. Both President Obama and I are committed to a robust and comprehensive agenda of engagement. It's one of the reasons that I am here in Astana at the OSCE Summit. And I am confident that the work that our diplomats do every single day will go forward. And I anticipate that there will be a lot of questions that people have every right and reason to ask, and we stand ready to discuss them at any time with our counterparts around the world.

**FOREIGN MINISTER SAUDABAYEV:** (Via translator) I believe that what has happened is part of a normal cost, or a normal price, that one has occasionally to pay while we lead our work. That is why we will be able to live through this incident, as we have through others. And, as head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in my country, now declare that this will have no effect for our strategic partnership between the United States and Kazakhstan. Thank you.

**MODERATOR:** (Via translator) One question from the Kazakhstan members of the press.

**QUESTION:** (Via translator) I have a question to both the Secretary of State and Mr. Saudabayev. It has been mentioned that right after the meeting between the two presidents, Nazarbayev and Obama (inaudible). I still would like to know what is going to happen next, apart from the operation on the Nazarbayev's university and the plans for agricultural cooperation. Are there any other agreements or projects to be implemented between our two countries? And what could prevent them from happening? Any -- is there anything subjective that -- or personal -- that might affect those plans?

And one more question to State Secretary Clinton. It is known that some amendments to the act on cyber space have been adopted in the United States that would entitle the U.S. President to regulate the exchange of information in the Internet. I would like to know more about this concerning the amendments to the act on cyber space. Thank you.

**FOREIGN MINISTER SAUDABAYEV:** (Via translator) At this briefing, we don't have the opportunity to discuss prospects for general cooperation and specific areas of cooperation in our bilateral relations, because this is a huge area that has several dimensions. I can only take note that we have, once again, reconfirmed that we both have a very optimistic outlook, as far as our bilateral relations are concerned, and we have a lot of potential in this area. Thank you.

**SECRETARY CLINTON:** And I would add we discuss not only the importance of our strategic partnership between our two countries, but how the United States and Kazakhstan can work together in the region and beyond. We value Kazakhstan's role and influence in the region. It was critical, after the events of last spring affecting Kyrgyzstan, to have Kazakhstan play a leadership role. The United States worked closely with Kazakhstan. The Minister and I talked several times about what Kazakhstan was doing to assist Kyrgyzstan, and we are continuing to work together and supporting Kazakhstan's influential position in trying to help stabilize Kyrgyzstan.

We discussed further what additional regional steps might be considered to better integrate the Central Asian nations. I believe that this is an important area of the world. Kazakhstan has done well, economically, and with its development. Now we need to see how to work together to assist the other nations in the region to develop more successfully and inclusively.

With regard to cyber security and cyber space, the United States is, like many nations, addressing the opportunities and the challenges and the threats that are posed in cyber space. We want the Internet to be a vehicle for the free exchange of information, yet we are well aware of the dangers that can be posed to the misuse of the Internet to all kinds of institutions

and networks. And so this is not only a matter of concern for the United States; we think this deserves attention at the highest international levels, and that is beginning to occur.

**MODERATOR:** (Via translator) Thank you very much. That will be it. We don't have any time left. Thank you.

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