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Barack Obama

Statement on the Explosions in New York and New Jersey

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Good morning, everybody. I want to say a few words about the explosions that occurred here in New York City and New Jersey and the other devices that have been found in New Jersey. I've been monitoring the situation closely and receiving frequent updates from my team. And I've just been briefed again by FBI Director Comey. In addition, I've had a chance to speak with Governors Cuomo and Christie, as well as Mayor de Blasio.

We've seen what was apparently a pipe bomb go off in New Jersey, in Seaside Park, where it could have seriously injured our U.S. Marines and spectators who were there for a race. The bombing in the Chelsea neighborhood, here in New York, injured more than two dozen people. We are extremely fortunate and grateful that nobody was killed. And our prayers go out to all those who have been injured. We want to wish them a speedy recovery.

I especially want to commend all the outstanding police and first responders in both New York City and New Jersey for their extraordinary professionalism and their quick response, which surely prevented even more people from being hurt, and ensured that people got assistance quickly.

The investigation is moving rapidly, and as is my practice, I'm going to leave it to the FBI and law enforcement to provide details. I think everybody is aware at this point that there is a person of interest who is the focus of the investigation. And the FBI can give you further details in terms of how that is proceeding.

I told Governors Cuomo and Christie and Mayor de Blasio that they and their teams will continue to have all federal support as they move ahead with their investigations, and tracking down every lead, and working to keep the people of this city and of this region safe. Law enforcement is asking for the help of the community. And so to everybody in this region, I want to repeat what we've said before: If you see something suspicious, then you need to say something -- contact local law enforcement.

In the meantime, I would ask that the press try to refrain from getting out ahead of the investigation. I am extraordinarily happy with the cooperation that's been taking place between the FBI and state and local law enforcement officials. They are moving smartly on this investigation. It does not help if false reports or incomplete information is out there. So try to, as much as possible, stick to what our investigators say, because they actually know what they're talking about.

Meanwhile, I know that the United Nations meetings here every year already create an additional workload for New York. But given the U.N. meetings, we also have a particularly high level of federal resources here to help as needed. We're going to make sure that everybody is working together seamlessly, as one team, to get to the bottom of what happened, to find those responsible, and to make sure that justice is done.

Meanwhile, while all this is going on in New York and New Jersey, we're also focused on the stabbing attack at the shopping mall in Minnesota. At this point, we see no connection between that incident and what happened here in New York and New Jersey. Our attention there is on the people who were injured. And again, we are very grateful that no one lost their life. Thanks to the quick action of a brave off-duty police officer, the suspect was killed and we avoided more people being hurt.

I had a chance also to speak with Governor Dayton this morning. I assured him that we will provide all the assistance that he needs in the investigation. The FBI is investigating the Minnesota incident as a potential act of terrorism. We will direct the full resources of the federal government to make sure that the investigation goes forward aggressively.

And finally, I want to take this opportunity to reassure the people in this city, in this region, and Americans across our country that our counterterrorism and law enforcement professionals at every level -- federal, state and local -- are working together, around the clock, to prevent attacks and to keep us safe. They are the best of the best. Over the years, they have thwarted many plots and saved many lives. And we are incredibly grateful for their service, today and every single day.

We will continue to lead the global coalition in the fight to destroy ISIL, which is instigating a lot of people over the Internet to carry out attacks. We are going to continue to go after them. We're going to take out their leaders. We're going to take out their infrastructure. They are continuing to lose ground in Iraq and in Syria. And later today, I'll be meeting with Prime Minister Abadi of Iraq to discuss the need to sustain that momentum. As we take away more of their territory, it exposes ISIL as the failed cause that it is. And it helps to undermine their ideology, which over time will make it harder for them to recruit and inspire people to violence. And we're going to continue to enlist tech companies and community and religious leaders to push back against online extremist content and all messages of hate.

At moments like this, I think it's important to remember what terrorists and violent extremists are trying to do. They are trying to hurt innocent people, but they also want to inspire fear in all of us, and disrupt the way we live, to undermine our values. And so, even as we have to be vigilant and aggressive, both in preventing senseless acts of violence but also making sure that we find those who carry out such acts and bring them to justice, we all have a role to play as citizens in making sure that we don't succumb to that fear. And there's no better example of that than the people of New York and New Jersey.

When I was speaking to Governor Cuomo and Governor Christie and Mayor De Blasio, one point that they all made is, folks around here, they don't get scared. They're tough, they're resilient, they go about their business every single day.

And that kind of toughness and resoluteness, and a recognition that neither individuals nor organizations like ISIL can ultimately undermine our way of life, that's the kind of strength that makes me so proud to be an American. And that's the kind of strength that is going to be absolutely critical not just in the days to come but in the years to come.

By showing those who want to do us harm that they will never beat us, by showing the entire world that as Americans we do not, and never will, give in to fear, that's going to be the most important ingredient in us defeating those who would carry our terrorist acts against us.

Thank you very much, everybody. And as I said, you will be receiving, I'm sure, ongoing briefings from both the FBI and local law enforcement in terms of the details of the investigation.