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**The White House**

Office of the Press Secretary

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**Remarks by President Obama and President Sarkozy of France after Bilateral Meeting**

**Oval Office**

1:22 P.M. EST

PRESIDENT OBAMA: We'll, I'm very grateful to have my dear friend, Nicolas Sarkozy, here. And I think Nicolas has agreed that at the top I want to just make a few comments about the situation in Tucson, Arizona.

Obviously all of us are still grieving and in shock from the tragedy that took place. Gabby Giffords and others are still fighting to recover. Families are still absorbing the enormity of their losses. We have a criminal investigation that is ongoing and charges that no doubt will be brought against the perpetrator of this heinous crime.

I think it's important for us to also focus, though, on the extraordinary courage that was shown during the course of these events: a 20-year-old college student who ran into the line of fire to rescue his boss; a wounded woman who helped secure the ammunition that might have caused even more damage; the citizens who wrestled down the gunman. Part of what I think that speaks to is the best of America, even in the face of such mindless violence.

And so, in the coming days we're going to have a lot of time to reflect. Right now, the main thing we're doing is to offer our thoughts and prayers to those who've been impacted, making sure that we're joining together and pulling together as a country. And as President of the United States, but also as a father, obviously I'm spending a lot of time just thinking about the families and reaching out to them.

Now, I want to say to Nicolas that I want to offer my condolences to his countrymen as well. They just recently had two French citizens who were kidnapped in Niger. It points to the challenge of terrorism that we jointly share, and this is just one more area in which cooperation between France and the United States is so critical.

We don't have a stronger friend and a stronger ally than Nicolas Sarkozy and the French people. We have cooperated over the last several years on dealing with a global economic crisis, dealing with the challenges of terrorism, dealing with a range of geopolitical issues from the Middle East to Iran to Afghanistan. And I've always found Nicolas to be an outstanding partner and an outstanding friend to the American people, as well as a leader on the world stage.

We spent the initial part of this meeting discussing the G8 and G20 agenda, because both in France and the

United States and around the world, although we are in the process of healing and recovery from the disastrous recession that we went through, we're not yet where we want to be. Too many people are still out of work. Too many businesses are still having problems getting financing. There's still too many imbalances in the world economy that are inhibiting the prospects of growth.

And so in our discussions, with the French in the lead both at the G8 and the G20 this year, we discussed how we can coordinate our agendas to make sure that we are as productive as possible in delivering the kinds of reforms and follow-through that will result in prosperity for peoples around the globe.

After this brief press appearance we're going to be having lunch, and during that time we'll be discussing issues in which there has been extraordinarily close collaboration. Obviously the French are one of our strongest allies -- a NATO ally; they are key members of ISAF. French troops have been sacrificing alongside Americans in uniform in Afghanistan. And we are very grateful for those sacrifices. So we will be discussing our strategies there, building off of the discussions we had in Lisbon.

We're also going to be discussing issues like Iran and the impact that sanctions are currently having on their nuclear program, and our hope that we can resolve this issue diplomatically. But we will be building on our shared resolve to assure that we're not seeing nuclear weapons in Iran.

We'll discuss the Middle East, where Nicolas and I share a deep and abiding belief in the need for two states standing side by side in peace and security.

We'll be discussing issues like Cote d'Ivoire, where democracy is being threatened at this moment and where France has extraordinary historical ties and has shown great leadership; Sudan, where a referendum is taking place this weekend in which so much is at stake in preventing outbreaks of violence that could end up devastating the lives of hundreds of thousands of people, but also where there's a prospect of a peaceful transition that could result in a better life for people in both the north and the south of Sudan.

We'll also finally be discussing Lebanon where I think we are all deeply concerned with the special tribunal there and making sure that justice is appropriately served.

So I just want to say how much I appreciate not only Nicolas's friendship but also his leadership. And I also want to point out that the last time that Nicolas and his lovely wife Carla were here we sent them to Ben's Chili Bowl. I can't say that half-smokes will be on the menu here at the White House -- the First Lady is having lunch with Carla while Nicolas and I have a working lunch -- but I hope you find the hospitality outstanding nevertheless.

And on behalf of the American people, we want to again express our friendship to the French people and wish everybody in your country a happy new year.

PRESIDENT SARKOZY: (As translated.) I, first of all, want to say to the American people how deeply moved and upset the French people have been at your loss and tragedy.

And I also want to thank President Obama for his expression of solidarity to the French people in light of the loss that we have felt at the cowardly killing of two young Frenchmen who were killed in a barbaric fashion by terrorists.

Both the U.S. and France are determined to stand firm as allies on this issue of terrorism. Both of us believe that any show of weakness would be culpable. We have no choice but to go after these terrorists wherever they may be. When values as fundamental as those we cherish are being challenged, democracies cannot afford to give in.

They must -- they must -- combat.

With the American President, we talked about the future of the G20, and I said to him in very clear terms that we wish to work hand in glove, France and the United States, on these issues.

We are in the 21st century, and we need new ideas for this new century. And with President Obama, we are determined to forge ahead, come up with these new ideas for the greater benefit of the peoples of the world, for their prosperity and for the stability of this world of ours.

I've always been a great friend, a tremendous friend of the United States, and I know how important a role the U.S. plays in the world, how important the U.S. dollar is as the world's number one currency. And with Barack Obama, we are determined to propose new ideas to get things moving, both within the framework of the G8 and the G20.

And our teams are going to be working very hard together to come up with common papers and common positions on the issues which are of interest and which come within the agreement of the G20, such as the matter of currencies, of commodity prices, and all that needs to be done in order to reduce the current and present imbalances.

Lastly, I want to thank Barack Obama, my host, for his show of leadership, and also point out that something that has always struck me about him, is his ability to get to the fundamentals, the root of issues, the root causes of things. I appreciate his openness, the way he speaks very frankly about things with me. And I am convinced, ladies and gentlemen, that in 2011, we will be able to come up with the structural solutions that will enable us to settle or at least to tackle the world's imbalances and problems.

PRESIDENT OBAMA: Thank you, everybody.

Q Will you go to Tucson, Mr. President?

PRESIDENT OBAMA: We're in close consultations with the families who have suffered these losses, as well as Governor Brewer, congressional leadership. There is no doubt that we will establish some mechanism, memorial, during the course of the next several days. And when we have that, we will announce it.

But I think it's going to be important, I think, for the country as a whole, as well as the people of Arizona, to feel as if we are speaking directly to our sense of loss, but also speaking to our hopes for the future and how out of this tragedy we can come together as a stronger nation.

END 1:36 P.M. EST

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