

Republic of Marshall Islands Nuclear Remembrance Day

Remarks

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As Delivered

I am so honored to be in the Marshall Islands, a nation that the United States sees as our strategic partner, our ally and our friend. Mr. President, I am honored to be here with such a distinguished group of government, community and faith leaders, members of the diplomatic corps, and honored guests.

Today, here in this beautiful place, we gather to remember and honor the past, but we also gather in the spirit of community and hope. I would like to second Ambassador Armbruster's message of bromich (condolences); it is the right word for today. The American people remember what took place here and honor the historical and current contributions that the Marshallese people make to help promote peace and stability around the world. For many of you, that means remembering lost family members and loved ones – they are in our thoughts and prayers, as well. Today we honor their memory and I know that words can only go so far in healing wounds, but this nation has played an outsized role in the fight for a safer world and for that the United States, and the world, thanks you.

Our commitment to you, solidified by the 1986 Compact and the 2003 Amended Compact, is borne out by our obligation to defend the Marshall Islands and its people, as the United States and its citizens are defended. Of course, the mutual security of our nations is an underlying element of the special relationship between our nations. Marshallese citizens serve with distinction in our armed forces, sharing our commitment to democracy and freedom. I know that the Marshallese rate of enlistment is higher than in most U.S. states. For the Marshallese citizens that have served in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere in the world, we are so grateful.

On this day – the 60th anniversary of Castle Bravo – and on each and every day, the United States recognizes the effects of its nuclear explosive testing and has accepted and acted on its responsibility. The Department of Energy continues to provide critical medical and environmental programs in the RMI, in addition to improving the provision of such services. In particular, we will continue to work with the local leadership of the four nuclear-affected atolls to assist them in realizing their environmental goals. In this regard, the Department of Energy will be employing the world's best technologies to aid in this endeavor. This, I can assure you, is a promise from the people of the United States.

Since 2004, the United States has provided over \$600 million to the Marshall Islands, in the form of direct assistance and subsidies, as well as financial support for rehabilitation of affected atolls, site monitoring, and ongoing health care programs. This year, the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) initiated a remarkable sponsorship program to increase the science capacity in the Marshall Islands. Two Marshallese students will live and study in the San Francisco Bay Area, including at Lawrence Livermore National Labs (LLNL) itself. The

sponsorship pays tuition, room and board, travel and a living stipend. It also includes a summer internship with LLNL.

As I said at the outset, we are here to remember and honor the past today, but I also want to look to the future with purpose and with hope. In 1962, the Cuban Missile Crisis opened the eyes of the world to the terror of nuclear war, but there were people across the globe who were already all too familiar with nuclear dangers. People in Japan and the Marshall Islands, those downwind from the nuclear test site in Nevada, the mothers who found radioactive material in their children's milk: all understood in first person the health effects of nuclear explosions in the atmosphere. In 1963, about a decade after Castle Bravo, President John F. Kennedy called for a complete ban on nuclear explosive testing.

"The conclusion of such a treaty," he said, "so near and yet so far -- would check the spiraling arms race in one of its most dangerous areas. It would place the nuclear powers in a position to deal more effectively with one of the greatest hazards which man faces in 1963 -- the further spread of nuclear arms. It would increase our security -- it would decrease the prospects of war."

We are still so near and yet so far from this goal. We were able to achieve part of this objective through the Limited Test Ban Treaty – banning tests in the water, in space and in the atmosphere. However, 51 years later, the hazard of the further spread of nuclear weapons remains and we still lack a total ban on nuclear explosive testing. Here again, we should heed President Kennedy's words. "Surely this goal," he said, "is sufficiently important to require our steady pursuit, yielding neither to the temptation to give up the whole effort nor the temptation to give up our insistence on vital and responsible safeguards."

In 2009, President Obama took up the mantle of the Presidents who came before him, and laid out his own long-term vision of the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons. While the United States will and must maintain a safe, secure and effective nuclear deterrent for as long as nuclear weapons exist, we have properly refocused our nuclear policy for the 21st century. As outlined in the 2010 Nuclear Posture Review (NPR), we are now on a path that confronts the threats we face today and those on the near horizon. This allows us to work with allies and partners to pursue arms control and disarmament measures that can lead us down the path towards a nuclear-free world.

Mindful of the devastating human consequences of nuclear war, the United States has also clearly stated that it is in our interest, and that of all other nations, that the nearly 70-year record of non-use of nuclear weapons be extended forever. We also concluded that the time for a complete and total ban on nuclear explosive testing is long overdue. U.S. ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is a pivotal part of this effort.

Ratification of the CTBT is central to leading other nuclear weapons states toward a world of diminished reliance on nuclear weapons, reduced nuclear competition, and eventual nuclear disarmament. The United States now maintains a safe, secure and effective nuclear arsenal through our science-based Stockpile Stewardship program without nuclear explosive testing, which the United States halted in 1992.

The United States will be patient in our pursuit of ratification, but we will also be persistent. It has been a long time since the CTBT was on the front pages of newspapers, so we will need time to make the case for this Treaty. Together, we can work through questions and

concerns about the Treaty and explosive nuclear testing. Our answers to those questions continue to grow stronger with the proven and increasing capabilities of the Stockpile Stewardship program and the verification system of the Treaty, including the International Monitoring System.

I cannot emphasize strongly enough that it is precisely our deep understanding of the consequences of nuclear weapons – including the dangerous health effects of nuclear explosive testing – that has guided and motivated our efforts to reduce and ultimately eliminate these most dangerous and awe-inspiring weapons. Entry into force of the CTBT is one such essential part of our pragmatic, step by step approach to eliminating nuclear dangers. The Treaty will make the world a safer place for the Marshall Islands, the United States, for every nation around the globe.

This is not just a security issue; this is an issue of humanity, of health, of morality. We are the stewards of this Earth and we owe it to those who have fallen – to those who suffer still – to work together, one step at a time, until nuclear explosive testing is banned worldwide, getting us one step closer to our goal of the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons. In closing, I want to reiterate that the United States and the world owe the Marshallese a debt of gratitude. The RMI has been a leader in countering climate change, a contributor to international security, and our partner on global issues. Together, we can and should continue to work for what President Kennedy called “a genuine peace, the kind of peace that makes life on earth worth living.”

Finally, I can only say kommol tata! Thank you!