



Remarks to the French-American Foundation

John Negroponte, Deputy Secretary of State

Paris, France

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DEPUTY SECRETARY NEGROPONTE: Merci beaucoup, Michel Garcin, Chairman, the French-American Foundation, Paris.

I also want to thank the distinguished guests and ladies and gentlemen who are here today and my friends and colleagues. I'm delighted to be back in Paris, a city which has long been a special place for me. I was a student here in the late 1950s and more recently, of course, as I mentioned, I had the pleasure and honor of being the Chairman of the French-American Foundation from 1997 to 2001 -- the only four years of my adult life that I worked in the private sector.

American diplomacy began in this beautiful city personified by our first and perhaps most uniquely creative diplomat, Benjamin Franklin. If Franklin's career in France teaches us anything, it is that France and the United States are instinctively sympathetic to one another -- each full of admiration for the other's strength and vitality.

As a result, we are able to take the measure of the world as it is, while combining forces to transform it step by step into what we would hope for all people -- a stable, prosperous and peaceful existence.

Today I'd like to spend some time discussing three broad themes with you: the United States-France partnership, a historical perspective on the partnership between the United States and Europe, and the modern transatlantic partnership.

First, the United States-France partnership. My visit comes at a pivotal time because France has just elected a new President. The first, in fact, to be born after World War II. The free and extensive debate that preceded the election, the heavy participation of French citizens, and the peaceful transfer of power to a new generation embody the core values we share as nations and that we hope will one day be enjoyed by all people throughout the world.

What are these values? Liberty, an abiding commitment to democracy, pluralism, freedom of speech, the equality of our citizens, and economic opportunity for all. In France, we see a country that respects the freedoms of the individual and we know that this fierce commitment will continue to inspire France to use its capacities and influence in defending freedom everywhere.

Our bilateral relationship with France remains that of two nations bound through time by shared values and great resources and actively committed to addressing common problems -- regionally and globally. We intend to work closely with France's new leadership in a spirit of candor, respect, and cooperation.

There have been times when France has helped the United States and times when the United States has helped France. Now is the time for us to join forces ever more closely in helping others. And we already are.

In Afghanistan, France joined with us at the outset to address the scourge represented by the Taliban. Lebanon, still recovering from last summer's destructive war relies on Franco-American support directly and multilaterally. Haiti is another country where the leadership role of France, the United States, and the European Union has helped put a fragile society back on course towards economic and political viability. We work together there to ensure the success of last year's elections and to provide a robust mandate for the United Nations stabilization mission in Haiti. These are but a few examples of our joint efforts around the world.

I will turn now to the partnership between the United States and Europe. The model and measure of what we can do together lies in our not too distant past. Next month we celebrate the 60th Anniversary of the Marshall Plan, a plan which was crafted here in Paris. At the end of World War II, the United States understood it could enjoy neither peace nor prosperity if it did not forge a partnership with Europe that restored the continent's economic vitality. This seminal idea of leveraging all elements of national power to help us achieve our political, security and economic objectives remains valid today.

Another feature of the Marshall Plan remains valid as well: productive economic engagement must be a two-way street. As General Marshall said, and I quote, "It would be neither fitting nor efficacious for this government to undertake to draw up, unilaterally, a program designed to place Europe on its feet economically. This is the business of the Europeans. The initiative must come from Europe."

More than from dollars, the triumph of General Marshall's vision came from his understanding that partnership must underpin transatlantic relations. The transatlantic relationship has been a triumph and it is now our joint responsibility to extend it as we, the European Union, the G8 and rising economic powers enjoy an era which Martin Wolf recently described in the Financial Times, and again I quote, as a "golden period of broadly shared growth, high profits, modest real and nominal interest rates, and low prices for risk."

No doubt there is a lot of truth in what Wolf writes. We live in dynamic, exciting times, but not everyone and not all countries are participating in this golden period with equal satisfaction or prospects. There are great economic divides between countries and within a great number of countries that lead to tension, extremism, violence, and unconscionable misery. Many states are fragile, under siege or collapsed, ill equipped to contain their problems and more likely to export them. Just like the battered European states after World War II, these states need partners. In fact they often need to develop the basic capability to become partners so that they are able to foster the welfare of their people and contribute to, not detract from, international stability and the rule of law.

I am here in Paris to participate in the ministerial meetings of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, an institution which grew from the Marshall Plan. Like several other bodies that sprang from George Marshall's vision, the OECD was transatlantic in origin. Today, however, it is actively engaging beyond just Europe and the United States to bring prosperity, democratic governance and stability to many corners of the world.

How can we best partner with the rest of the world to bring it the kind of stability that the Marshall Plan brought to Western Europe?

Turning to the current transatlantic partnership, our close partnership with the nations of Europe through the OECD, the World Trade Organization, NATO, and the US-EU Summits, to name just a few of the avenues for our interaction, has grown stronger and deeper during this half century. Since encouraging the brave people of Poland to break the yoke of communism and the courageous German people to tear down the Berlin Wall, we have helped the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe build strong, free societies. That was an historic effort. We cannot forget, however, that much remains to be done.

Resolving the status of Kosovo soon is essential to the peaceful development of the Western Balkans. Jointly, we support the efforts of the United Nations Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari in the belief that his comprehensive plan presents the best chance for peace and stability. The European and transatlantic perspective on Kosovo's status is more than just a view. It is a commitment to preventing the Balkans from sliding back into a cycle of violence and ethnic divisions.

Further east, we are pressing the government of Uzbekistan to enter into a meaningful dialogue on human rights. In Afghanistan we have partnered with our NATO allies to help the Afghan people realize their goals of peace and security.

Many of our European Union partners have made strong commitments to NATO efforts in Afghanistan. Small countries like Estonia, for example, have long term troop and assistance commitments and are actively engaged in some of the most dangerous areas of Afghanistan. It is important that all of our allies, including France, recognize the importance of remaining together in Afghanistan as one unit. Each country contributes decisively to our ability to succeed and our success will be greatly enhanced by freeing commanders in the field of the national caveats that limit the use of forces.

Together the United States and European countries are advancing political, economic and social reforms in the Middle East through a variety of forums. The G8, NATO and many European countries are partners with the United States, the United Nations, and many others in helping realize the vision of a unified, democratic and federal Iraq that can govern itself, defend itself, and sustain itself. Iraq is at a critical juncture and continues to need the support of the broad international community. We call upon France and the rest of Europe to follow up on the progress reflected at the recent meeting on the International Compact with Iraq and the Expanded Neighbors Meeting -- both which were recently held in Sharm el-Sheik in Egypt.

Turning to Africa, the United States, the European Union and others have helped the people of the Democratic Republic of Congo conduct successful presidential and legislative elections -- the first in 40 years. And Europe and the United States agree that the time has come to stop the fighting and human suffering in Darfur. We strongly support the joint efforts by the African Union and the United Nations to end the violence, address the critical security problems, and re-launch the political process. We further support efforts to deploy a hybrid African Union-United Nations peacekeeping force to Darfur that conforms to common United Nations standards and practices.

Ending the atrocities in Darfur is a humanitarian, political and security imperative. States that fail, states whose regions become ungovernable, and states that ignore the impact their internal crises have on their neighbors and the world demand our immediate attention. Lethal terrorist networks around the world -- networks that have struck fatal blows in the United States and Europe -- remind us of the urgent need to intensify transatlantic cooperation to combat terrorism and transnational crime.

Nothing magnifies the threat of terrorism more than the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Hence we have a shared commitment to the objectives and obligations of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and we agree that North Korea and Iran must forswear their nuclear weapons programs and comply with the will of the international community.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is our hope that, working together with France and the rest of Europe, we can make a positive impact on the world. France's commitment to liberty and its support for humanity's inalienable human and political rights have long inspired the American people. The French are always ready to reason with a fervor informed by their ideals, and to back their beliefs with sacrifice. These are virtues that we admire. A challenging, vigorous friendship is a friendship of the best kind, and that is the kind of friendship that we enjoy and look forward to continuing to enjoy with the country of France.

Thank you very much.

MODERATOR: John Negroponte is ready to take a few questions.

QUESTION: In his first speech, we heard President-elect Sarkozy's promise of [inaudible] friendship, but he also called on the United States not to put obstacles in the way of the fight on global warming. I'd like to know whether you assess any movement possible on this issue in the G8, and second question, whether you are expecting [inaudible] cooperation between France and the United States on Iran.

DEPUTY SECRETARY NEGROPONTE: On Iran did you say?

On your first question, I think that's an issue we certainly look forward to discussing at length with the new government of France, and I would also point out that I think it's also an area, despite the fact that we are not signatories to the Kyoto Protocol, where we have done a lot of other work. Whether it's in the area of energy technologies, promoting alternative fuels -- a recent example being President Bush's trip to Brazil where a bio-fuels initiative was launched, and initiatives of that nature.

So I think there's ample space and room for cooperation with France and other countries of the world on this very important issue. I certainly want to say here that the United States recognizes the importance of discussing and dealing with the issue of global warming.

On the question of Iran, we have had a close partnership with France, particularly at the United Nations. The European group that has been negotiating with Iran to try to get them to suspend the enrichment of nuclear fuel, and we would fully expect that cooperation to continue. In light of Iran's apparent unwillingness thus far to suspend its enrichment programs, I think that we are going to be called upon to collaborate even more closely in the weeks and months ahead.

QUESTION: [In French] On this day when power is being transferred from President Chirac to President Sarkozy, isn't this a good time to admit that France was right on Iraq?

DEPUTY SECRETARY NEGROPONTE: I'm a professional diplomat. [Laughter]. My job is to, I've always felt that my job is to play the cards that I'm dealt so I was, if you let me finish --

Both at the United Nations and in Iraq, I think that I played a role of trying to do the best to implement the policies of my government.

My answer to your question would be that whatever differences might have existed in the past on the question of Iraq, we must work together going forward. The position of Iraq in the Middle East, the delicacy of that situation there is such that whatever differences of view might have existed in the past, we must work together to help ensure that Iraq is a more stable and prosperous place in the future. That is in the interest, in our view, of the world at large and of the Middle East. We look forward, as I said in my remarks, to working with the government of France on finding ways to be supportive of Iraq in the future.

QUESTION: I would like to ask a question to both the Deputy Secretary of State and to the former Director of National Intelligence, to ask you: five years and seven months after 9/11, what is your assessment of the so-called war on terror? Are you not pessimistic when you see the growth, incredible growth, of radical Islamic terrorist sympathizers, including a country like UK that has been mentioned recently by the former head of MI5 and also the fact that there is a new sanctuary for al-Qaeda leadership at the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan, and that marginally we don't see any significant progress in the last two or three years in the war against radical Islamic terrorists?

DEPUTY SECRETARY NEGROPONTE: I guess the first point I would make is that I think that the al-Qaeda and the Taliban lost an important sanctuary when Afghanistan -- when the Taliban were overthrown in 2001. So I think that's an important point. One has to think about what the world might have looked like if al-Qaeda had continued to have a sanctuary in Afghanistan.

Speaking from the point of view of the United States, and as former Director of National Intelligence, I think we are probably better organized in the United States to deal with the issue of terrorism, better coordinated, I think, with better information sharing between our intelligence services and a better capacity to act in a coordinated way than we were previously.

I think in the rest of the world the picture may be mixed. This is a situation that I don't think is going to be resolved from one day to the next. I think clearly the area you mentioned, the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan, is a cause for concern. There are other parts of the world that are a cause for concern. I think the situation in

North Africa at the moment, is one in which I think the United States and France and the countries of Europe share a common concern with respect to what is happening there.

One thing is absolutely clear. It is only by working together -- the United States, the European countries, the rest of the world -- that we're going to be able to deal with this threat. It's international in nature. It cannot be dealt with by any one country on its own. I think this will call for even greater cooperation between us.

I would hasten to add that between ourselves and the government of France there is some very, very good cooperation in this field.

QUESTION: The recent unofficial dialogue on national reconciliation in Iraq doesn't seem to go on that well. I'm wondering if there is any margin of maneuver between the U.S. and EU to help eventually Iraqis to get together again.

Another question concerns the powerful --

DEPUTY SECRETARY NEGROPONTE: The first question is about national reconciliation in Iraq and?

QUESTION: And the powerful call for freedom in the Middle East. It works so well in Europe, but it seems it doesn't work at all in the Middle East. Can you give me some reasons why this call doesn't work well in the Middle East. Thank you.

DEPUTY SECRETARY NEGROPONTE: First of all, I'm not sure. I think the returns aren't in yet. I think one has to wait and see as to how successful this call for freedom will be over time.

I think the problem in Iraq where I spent, as you mentioned, nine months as Ambassador there, is that the political institutions in that country were extremely weak. It had had a dictatorial government for decades previously, and once that dictatorship was overthrown and the military forces of that country dissolved there were very few institutions to take their place, at least in the short term.

Sometimes I point out to people the road that we have traveled since 2003. There now is a constitution. There was an interim government, then a transitional government, now a permanent government. There are some steps being taken towards national reconciliation. Most specifically in the drafting of a new hydrocarbons law that will provide for the sharing of the oil wealth of that country. It has yet to be completed and passed, but I think we'll have to give that process some time.

One of the great problems we have in the United States is that our political timetable and the Iraqi political timetable are not moving -- or they seem to be moving at a somewhat different pace. So we would like to say that sometimes we would like to see the clock in Iraq, the political clock, move a little bit faster so that we could slow down the political clock in the United States where there's a great pressure to see results.

When I left Iraq in March of 2005, and I wrote my sort of "end of tour" report for the Secretary of State, I said that I thought it would take about five years before the situation in Iraq would stabilize. That's five years from 2005. I'm afraid sometimes people look at these events and expect quicker results than might be possible. So I've consistently counseled patience on this subject.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, in your preliminary remarks you said France must recognize the need to stay together in Afghanistan. Should I conclude it's a message you convey to new President Sarkozy, telling him, "don't withdraw the French troops from there," at a time when a lot of people think we might withdraw the 1,000 soldiers we have in Afghanistan?

DEPUTY SECRETARY NEGROPONTE: It was not intended as a message, because my understanding is that we have solidarity between us on the question of Afghanistan.

QUESTION: Mr. Under Secretary, do you think -- well France is thinking of creating a National Security Council. What is your professional advice on this sort of institution? Does it work well? Is it something that evolves? Where should we be taking it in France?

DEPUTY SECRETARY NEGROPONTE: I don't think I would presume to give France or any government advice on whether or not to form a National Security Council.

I used to get that question quite a bit with respect to how countries ought to organize themselves regarding intelligence, since I was in charge of carrying out this new intelligence reform in the United States. My reply to that was that my experience had been that different countries have quite different ways of dealing with the issue of national intelligence, and you'll find all sorts of organizational models. But in my view there were two things that really were important.

One was information sharing across bureaucratic lines. It was very important that information could move rapidly, intelligence information, across the different departments that had to use it. That was the first thing.

The other was in fact the speed with which one responded. The speed with which one dealt with this information. So it's information sharing and the speed with which you can act.

These things have to be ultimately integrated through the use of modern technology. So as far as the intelligence world is concerned I think integration and information sharing are really the watch words.

As far as a national security apparatus is concerned, we've had our experience since the end of World War II. Of course we occasionally refine it, but I think that's really something that the new President himself is going to want to decide if he intends to change things at all. I have no idea.

QUESTION: May I assume that you read the story in the Herald Tribune yesterday about the International Atomic Energy Agency's view of Iran's success in moving toward mass production? On that basis, and assuming again that the United Nations will be looking at a third round of sanctions concerning Iran, where do you think the limits for Russian cooperation are?

I note in all of this that the Russian government has never assumed officially that Iran has intent to produce nuclear weapons. Rather, the opposite. They have said they see no evidence of anything but peaceful operations. When does this end at the United Nations? Six months? A year from now? And does it end with Russia and perhaps China refusing to go ahead with the sanctions that the United States, France and others want to bring?

DEPUTY SECRETARY NEGROPONTE: They've come along so far. They've participated in two resolutions -- Security Council Resolutions -- condemning Iran's enrichment program.

I saw the article yesterday. I haven't had a chance to hear from Washington or to go back myself and analyze that information in greater depth. What I can say to you based on past knowledge is that notwithstanding certain Iranian claims, I believe they've had more difficulty with their enrichment program than they sometimes would have one believe publicly. Our assessment remains, and I don't think that has changed -- and it's based on an assessment we did in 2005, that at the present rate of activity of the Iranian nuclear program, they were not likely to have the capability to produce a nuclear weapon until sometime in the next decade. Sometime between 2010 and 2015.

So I suppose what one would have to analyze based on yesterday's story is whether that's really new information and whether that alters that judgment about whether the timetable for Iran's production of a nuclear weapon has accelerated, but I rather doubt it.

You asked me how long we will continue to cooperate with --

QUESTION: [Inaudible].

DEPUTY SECRETARY NEGROPONTE: Right. And I think they've gone along so far and I think as long as the facts are laid out and as long as Iran continues to disregard the will of the international community, I think that we're going to be able to work together with both Russia and China on this question. We're going to have to work with them in very close consultation, but I think we can do that.

I think they share our concern about the prospect of a nuclear Iran and the destabilizing effect that that could have in the Middle East region.

QUESTION: May I ask you if, and it's a very different question, if the United States is still in favor of seeing, one day or another, Turkey joining the European Union?

DEPUTY SECRETARY NEGROPONTE: The United States has supported Turkish membership of the European Union and that continues to be our position, although of course we are not members of the EU ourselves. But our view is based on the thought that it would be important to integrate this strategically significant country into the European continent.

We know that the government of France and that the President-elect has taken a contrary view to that position, and we would simply hope that in the weeks and months ahead, that the government of France would keep an open mind on this subject and hold open the possibility of discussing this issue with ourselves and others concerned, and to think about what the consequences inside Turkey and for the region might be if the door were closed completely to Turkish membership in the European Union.

QUESTION: About Iran, is the military option still an option on the table today from what you know?

And a second question about Russia. Some people say that we are hearing some Cold War rhetoric. Are we going back to a new kind of Cold War? Or how would you qualify what's going on in Russia? Where is Putin leading Russia and how do you see the relationship between Russia and America and Europe?

DEPUTY SECRETARY NEGROPONTE: On the first question, is the military option on the table? I don't think we would ever rule that kind of an option out completely. Our President has said that a number of times, that he would never take that option entirely off the table.

Having said that, our emphasis for months now has been the diplomatic option, working with the European-3, working through the Security Council. That continues to be our preferred approach and we would like to find a diplomatically-negotiated solution to this question. Frankly, we think that's very much in the interest of Iran. If that issue could be resolved diplomatically we believe it would pave the way for the possibility of improved relations with ourselves and other countries in the world.

On the issue of Russia, no, I don't think we are going back to a Cold War. We do have issues in the U.S.-Russian dialogue that require careful management on both sides, but I think this is only natural in the relationships between states. We look forward to a continued dialogue with Russia on the many, many issues that we have of common concern.

QUESTION: Going back to Afghanistan, you said earlier that you felt you had solidarity and cooperation with France on this issue, but the situation has been deteriorating in Afghanistan. There's more fighting. Stabilization still doesn't appear to be imminent. How certain are you that France will maintain its military presence in Afghanistan? And how worried are you that some European allies might start having doubts about the way NATO operations are being carried out?

My second question is --

DEPUTY SECRETARY NEGROPONTE: How -- I didn't quite understand, how concerned am I that --

QUESTION: That some European countries might be having doubts about the way the NATO operation is being carried out in Afghanistan.

DEPUTY SECRETARY NEGROPONTE: Right.

QUESTION: My second question is about the anti-missile shield in Europe. What is your reading of the French position on this? Thank you.

DEPUTY SECRETARY NEGROPONTE: On the first question, with regard to Afghanistan, and I think you're basically asking how we see the situation going there.

I don't think there's any doubt that there are challenges in Afghanistan and that there is still a concerted effort by the Taliban to resist the government, but our judgment is that the government of Afghanistan is not fundamentally threatened in any kind of way.

There has been some heavy fighting in the South. But we also believe this situation can be brought under control if the NATO countries working together with the government of Afghanistan continue a concerted effort there. We're encouraged by the fact that there has been some increase in the size of NATO forces recently, and we believe that if those NATO forces, working with our Afghan partners persist, that the situation can eventually be brought under control.

Also, our sense is that our NATO partners are very committed to Afghanistan and we would hope and expect that that commitment continues to hold.

Regarding the question about the missile shield. To be frank with you, I do not know the answer to that question. I simply don't know what position the government of France has taken on that issue. But you know our well-stated position on the question of the missile shield.

QUESTION: Coming back to Iran, there will be direct talks between Iran and the USA about Iraq. Could you tell us at which level these talks could be done? Could you tell us which subject would be dealt with during these talks? And since there is no bilateral relationship between Iran and the U.S. since 1979, how would you present this event? Would you say it's a breakthrough in the relationship between the U.S. and Iran? Would you play down this evolution?

DEPUTY SECRETARY NEGROPONTE: If the talks take place, the way they are visualized at the moment would be at the level of our representation in Iraq itself. That is to say between our Ambassador and whichever representation the Iranians would designate.

I wouldn't call this so much a breakthrough as simply a logical consequence of the fact that we have significant presence and activities in the country of Iraq, and obviously as a neighboring country, Iran is also heavily engaged in Iraq. And for quite some time now I think we have felt that it would be desirable for ourselves, as well as neighbors of Iraq, to engage more with each other about what can be done to stabilize that country.

So I would not call it a breakthrough, but I think it's an important development in the context of trying to engage important neighbors of Iraq in exploring what can be done

to stabilize that country.

I would dearly love to give the last question to my colleague, John Gunther Dean. All right, two more questions, then if we could give Ambassador Dean the last question.

QUESTION: My question is about Palestine. There is a civil war going on in the [inaudible] street. So I'm wondering if you don't feel that you have failed in dealing with this crisis, and that if Hamas is today [inaudible] the power in Palestine it's partly because of this failure.

DEPUTY SECRETARY NEGROPONTE: Well, this is an issue that is going to require continued effort. One can't abandon it. I don't think any of us wish to abandon the vision of a creation of a Palestinian state living side by side peacefully with Israel. So that while there have been these difficulties, I think that we must keep working on this issue, both in terms of finding a suitable Palestinian -- encouraging the creation of a suitable Palestinian interlocutor on the one hand, and encouraging the government of Israel to pursue this kind of a diplomatic outcome on the other.

So this is not an issue that's going to go away, and it's not going to be resolved satisfactorily until this vision of a Palestinian state is realized.

Ambassador?

QUESTION: John, I'd like to say I've known John for many many years. He's a very good friend. I'd like to say that first.

Having been American Ambassador in Lebanon, I'm the only American Ambassador alive who has nearly been killed with American weapons shipped to Israel. I served both a Democratic and a Republican President in Lebanon. And that is the question.

I think we have today a proposal on the table by the King of Saudi Arabia which was made in 2002 which would finally give Israel a chance to make peace with the whole region and it would also help us in the United States to reestablish a reputation of being an honest broker. I would like to know whether the administration and the Congress will help now the effort, which is on the table, which is the recognition of Israel by all the Arab states within the '67 borders and also giving security guarantees to Israel. This kind of settlement, putting that first, will also help a great deal all our other problems, John. You know it better than I do. Whether it is in Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon, around the world. Giving us, again in the United States, being an honest broker and trying to help to find a secure solution.

Is the American administration now willing to do what is necessary to convince the Israelis to save themselves so they have a state in the long run? Thank you.

DEPUTY SECRETARY NEGROPONTE: I'm not sure if that's a question or a statement, John. [Laughter].

I think it suffices to say that we remain committed to the vision that we were talking about earlier of a Palestinian state and we want to work with not only Israel but the European Union, the Russians, the Quartet, to try to move this process along. It's difficult, it's complicated, but over time -- exactly when I'm not sure, but I think that over time -- this, like other conflicts ultimately is going to have to have a peaceful resolution.

Michel, I want to thank you very much.

MODERATOR: Philip [inaudible] has a few words to say.

SECOND MODERATOR: I just would like to say how pleased and honored we have been to have you, John Negroponte. This is a role of this organization, the French-American Foundation, to organize meetings and events so that we can know each other a little better on both sides of the Atlantic, and I must say that you have gone beyond all our expectations. You have been extremely clear. Sometimes it has turned into a press conference. I'm not sure that's what you were expecting. But anyway, you have seen that the degree of interest on American policies is extremely high in France and continuing to be high. So, Mr. Secretary, thank you very much for coming.

DEPUTY SECRETARY NEGROPONTE: Thank you.

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