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RELEASE IN
 PART B5, B6

FINAL
GUIDANCES

WEDNESDAY, JULY 27, 2016

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POSTED	Remarks	--	<u>Secretary of State John Kerry And Philippines Foreign Secretary Perfecto Yasay</u>

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Before Their Meeting

THERE WAS A DAILY PRESS BRIEFING TODAY.

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Office of the Spokesperson

For Immediate Release

STATEMENT BY JOHN KIRBY, SPOKESPERSON

July 27, 2016

Recent Israeli Settlement Announcements

We are deeply concerned by reports today that the Government of Israel has published tenders for 323 units in East Jerusalem settlements. This follows Monday's announcement of plans for 770 units in the settlement of Gilo.

We strongly oppose settlement activity, which is corrosive to the cause of peace. These steps by Israeli authorities are the latest examples of what appears to be a steady acceleration of settlement activity that is systematically undermining the prospects for a two-state solution.

In just the past few weeks, we have seen reports of the advancement of plans for 531 units in Ma'ale Adumim, 19 in Har Homa, 120 in Ramot, and 30 in Pisgat Ze'ev; the advancement of a plan to retroactively legalize an outpost near Ramallah; and the issuance of tenders for 42 units in Kiryat Arba.

We are also concerned about recent increased demolitions of Palestinian structures in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, which reportedly have left dozens of Palestinians homeless, including children. More than 650 Palestinian structures have been demolished this year, with more Palestinian structures demolished in the West Bank and East Jerusalem thus far than in all of 2015.

As the recent Quartet Report highlighted, this is part of an ongoing process of land seizures, settlement expansion, legalizations of outposts, and denial of Palestinian development that risk entrenching a one-state reality of perpetual occupation and conflict. We remain troubled that Israel continues this pattern of provocative and counterproductive action, which raises serious questions about Israel's ultimate commitment to a peaceful, negotiated settlement with the Palestinians.

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Approved: Frank Lowenstein

Drafted: Sam Sutton

Cleared by: NSC YLempert
NSC/ Press Tianawatch
NEA KSkillin
EmbTA DShapiro
CG DBlome
PA Kirby
S Finer

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Office of the Spokesperson

For Immediate Release

July 27, 2016

MEDIA NOTE

Visit of Republic of Korea (ROK) Deputy National Security Advisor Cho Tae-yong
Deputy Secretary Antony Blinken will host First Deputy Director of the Republic of Korea (ROK) National Security Office Cho Tae-yong in Washington today, for the third round of U.S.-ROK strategic consultations on North Korea policy. The two will discuss ways to enhance international resolve in holding North Korea accountable for its actions, including its destabilizing violations of UN Security Council resolutions.
For further information, please contact the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs Press Office at EAP-P-Office-DL@state.gov, or visit www.state.gov/p/eap.

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Lead Bureau(s): EAP

Region: EAP

Keywords: ROK, DPRK

Drafter: Andrew Hay, ext. 7-6727; cell:

B6

Cleared by:

EAP/FO: M Lambert	(ok)
EAP/K: D Bischof	(ok)
EAP/K: J Applegate	(ok)
S/NKP: E Shin	(ok)
R: C McCleskey	(ok)
D: W Flens	(ok)
P: R McKean	(ok)
S/P: J Stromseth	(ok)
EAP/P: Katina Adams	(ok)
NSC: M Caggins	(info)

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Office of the Spokesperson

For Immediate Release

July 27, 2016

MEDIA NOTE

The 4th U.S.-Japan Bilateral Cyber Dialogue

The 4th United States-Japan Bilateral Cyber Dialogue was held in Washington D.C. on July 27, 2016. Mr. Christopher Painter, Coordinator for Cyber Issues, U.S. Department of State, led the U.S. delegation, which included representatives from the National Security Council staff, the Department of State, the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Justice, the Department of Defense, the Department of Commerce, and other agencies. Mr. Koichi Mizushima, Japan's Ambassador in charge of Cyber Policy and Deputy Director-General of the Foreign Policy Bureau, led the Japanese delegation which included representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the National Security Secretariat, the National Center of Incident readiness and Strategy for Cybersecurity, the Cabinet Intelligence and Research Office, the National Police Agency, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, and the Ministry of Defense.

The Cyber Dialogue reaffirmed the benefits of a whole-of-government approach between Japan and the United States on cyber policy and reinforced cooperation between the two countries on a wide range of cyber issues, including the cybersecurity of critical infrastructure, capacity building, information sharing, military-to-military cyber cooperation, cybercrime, and international security issues in cyberspace. The United States and Japan also reaffirmed their commitment to support an open, interoperable, secure, and reliable cyberspace.

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Drafted: S/CCI – Olivia Zetter (x-70135)

Approved: S/CCI – Chris Painter

Cleared: D – William Flens (ok)
 D-MR – Alessia Dinkel (info by request)
 P – Gregory May (ok)
 S/P – Daniel Kimmage (ok)
 EAP/J – Heather Dresser (ok)
 EB/CIP – Dan Oates (ok)
 DRL/MLGA – Gigi Alford (ok)
 L/PM – Jonathan Davis (ok)
 L/EAP – Circulated by J.Davis (ok)
 L/EB – Circulated by J. Davis (ok)
 EAP Press – Grace Choi (ok)
 DOD – Thomas Puppi (ok)
 DHS – Jordana Siegel (ok)
 DOJ – Anitha Ibrahim (ok)
 FBI – Jon Chinn (ok)
 NSC – Michael Sellitto (ok)
 Commerce – Gordon Arata (ok)

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Office of the Spokesperson

For Immediate Release

MEDIA NOTE

July 27, 2016

U.S. Special Envoy for Climate Change Travel to Morocco

U.S. Special Envoy for Climate Change Dr. Jonathan Pershing will travel July 27-28 to Rabat, Morocco for meetings with Moroccan officials to discuss climate priorities for the year and plans for the upcoming 22nd Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP-22). Morocco will host COP-22 in Marrakesh, November 7-18, 2016 – the first climate conference since the successful adoption of the 2015 Paris Agreement.

Special Envoy Pershing will meet with counterparts at the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Environment, Energy and Agriculture, as well as members of the COP-22 commission and steering committee responsible for planning and hosting COP-22. In his meetings, Dr. Pershing will discuss next steps to address global climate change, as well as shared priorities for the year, including: rapid entry-into-force of the Paris Agreement, implementation of countries' Nationally Determined Contributions, mobilizing private sector finance for low-carbon climate resilient solutions and clean energy, and climate adaptation and resilience.

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Lead Bureau(s): S/SECC

Region: NEA

Keywords: Climate, Paris Agreement, Clean Energy

Drafter: S/SECC Franz Hochstrasser, 7-9961

Cleared by: J. Pershing, S/E for Climate Change

S/P:	R. Schuler (ok)
D:	Z. Bell (ok)
P:	R. McKean (ok)
NEA/FO:	Desrocher (ok)
NEA/Press:	P. Watzlavick (ok)
NEA/MAG:	M. Ahmed (ok)
NEA/MAG:	J. Fischer (ok)
OES/PPO:	E. Bell (ok)

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Office of the Spokesperson

For Immediate Release

MEDIA NOTE

July 27, 2016

Under Secretary Sewall Travels to Guatemala

Under Secretary of State for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights Sarah Sewall will travel to Guatemala July 27-29.

In Guatemala, Under Secretary Sewall will meet with representatives from government, the United Nations International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala, commonly known by its Spanish acronym, CICIG, and civil society to underscore U.S. support for Guatemalan efforts to ensure justice and accountability, particularly for civil war atrocities and corruption. Under Secretary Sewall will also meet with activists for human rights and women's rights, indigenous leaders, and victims of recent high-profile, wartime atrocity trials. On July 27, Under Secretary Sewall will tour a forensics lab and take questions from the press.

For further information, please contact Vivek Chilukuri at ChilukuriVR@state.gov. To follow the trip and for more information on the State Department's work on civilian security, democracy, and human rights, follow Under Secretary Sewall on Twitter (@CivSecatState) or visit www.state.gov/j.

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CLEARANCE PAGE:

Lead Bureau: J
Drafted: Vivek Chilukuri, x72990
Clearances:

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CSO	TOKeefe, Chelton	(ok)
DRL	DJohnson	(ok)
J/GCJ	DMandel-Anthony	(ok)
INL	SLueders	(ok)
WHA/CEN	TLee	(ok)
WHA/Press	CFogary	(ok)

P:	ARomano	(ok)
D:	CSpradely	(ok)
D/MR:	ADinkel	(info)

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Travel Warning
 United States Department of State
 Bureau of Consular Affairs
 Washington, DC 20520

For travel information, call 888-407-4747.
 Internet Address: <http://travel.state.gov>

SAUDI ARABIA

July 27, 2016

The Department of State recommends that U.S. citizens carefully consider the risks of travel to Saudi Arabia due to continuing ISIL (Da'esh) directed or inspired attacks across the Kingdom. Furthermore, continuing violence in neighboring countries such as Yemen has a high potential to spill over into Saudi Arabia. This replaces the Travel Warning issued April 11, 2016.

Security threats continue. Terrorist groups, some affiliated with ISIL or Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), have targeted both Saudi and Western interests, including the U.S. Consulate General in Jeddah, mosques and significant religious sites (both Sunni and Shia), and places where members of the Shia-Muslim minority gather. Possible targets include mosques, pilgrimage locations, and Saudi government facilities, as well as housing compounds, hotels, restaurants, shopping areas, international schools, Western consulates and embassies, and other facilities where Westerners congregate.

Over the past year, there have been multiple attacks on targets in Saudi Arabia, some resulting in significant loss of life. On July 4, 2016 suicide bombers launched attacks near:

- U.S. Consulate General Jeddah
- the Prophet's Mosque (also known as Al-Masjid an-Nabawi) in Medina
- a mosque in Qatif

On February 8, 2016, ISIL claimed responsibility for an explosion targeting a Saudi citizen in the Al-Azizia district of Riyadh. Media reports indicate that Saudi authorities thwarted plans to attack the Al-Janadriah festival in Riyadh, which took place in February 2016. In January 2016 a Shia mosque in Al-Ahsa in Eastern Province was attacked, as was a Shia mosque in Najran in October 2015. On October 16, 2015, a mass shooting took place at a gathering in Saihat. On August 6, 2015, a mosque in the city of Abha was bombed. Most of the victims in that attack were members of the Saudi security forces.

U.S. government personnel and their families are restricted from travel in the following areas:

- within 50 miles of the Yemeni border
- the city of Jizan
- the city of Najran
- Qatif in the Eastern Province and its suburbs, including Awamiyah
- Hofuf and its suburbs in the Al Hasa Governorate

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Read the Department of State Travel Warning for Yemen before considering travel near the Yemeni frontier. Violence sometimes spills across the border at unpredictable times and locations. The U.S. embassy remains concerned about the possibility of violence and military activity near the border with Yemen. Boundaries in some areas are not clearly defined.

If you travel despite U.S. government concerns, be aware that, in addition to border attacks noted above, terrorist and criminal elements may also be operating, including AQAP.

Select hotels or housing compounds with careful attention to security measures and location. Be aware of your surroundings at all times and keep a low profile. Vary times and routes of travel. Exercise caution while driving, and entering or exiting vehicles. Ensure that travel documents and visas are current and valid.

For further information:

- See the State Department's travel website for the Worldwide Caution, Travel Warnings, Travel Alerts, and Saudi Arabia Country Specific Information.
- Enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) to receive security messages and make it easier to locate you in an emergency.
- Contact the U.S. Embassy in Saudi Arabia located at Abdullah Ibn Huthafah Al-Sahmi Street, Diplomatic Quarter, at +966 11 488 3800, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Sunday through Thursday. After-hours emergency number for U.S. citizens is +966 11 488 3800.
- Call 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States and Canada or 1-202-501-4444 from other countries from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).
- Follow us on Twitter and Facebook.

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Travel Warning

United States Department of State
Bureau of Consular Affairs
Washington, DC 20520

For travel information, call 888-407-4747.
Internet Address: <http://travel.state.gov>

TURKEY

July 26, 2016

The U.S. Department of State continues to warn U.S. citizens of increased threats from terrorist groups throughout Turkey and to avoid travel to southeastern Turkey. The U.S. Department of State is updating this Travel Warning to reflect the July 25, 2016, decision to authorize the voluntary departure of family members of employees posted to the U.S. Embassy in Ankara and U.S. Consulate General in Istanbul, Turkey. The Department of State made this decision following the July 15 attempted coup and subsequent declaration by the Turkish government of a 90-day State of Emergency. The Department continues to monitor the effect of these developments on the overall security situation in the country and advises U.S. citizens to reconsider travel to Turkey at this time. During this period, U.S. citizens in Turkey may see an increase in police or military activities and restrictions on movement.

This replaces the Travel Warning dated July 18, 2016.

Foreign and U.S. tourists have been explicitly targeted by international and indigenous terrorist organizations. As stated in the Worldwide Caution dated March 3, 2016, throughout Europe extremists have targeted large sporting events, theatres, open markets, aviation services, transportation systems, and public venues where people congregate as well as religious sites and high-profile events. U.S. citizens are reminded to review personal security plans and remain vigilant at all times. U.S. government personnel in Turkey remain subject to travel restrictions in the southeastern provinces of Hatay, Kilis, Gaziantep, Sanliurfa, Sirnak, Diyarbakir, Van, Siirt, Mus, Mardin, Batman, Bingol, Tunceli, Hakkari, Bitlis, and Elazig. U.S. citizens should avoid areas in close proximity to the Syrian border.

The Department of State will extend its March 29, 2016 ordered departure of family members of U.S. government personnel posted to the U.S. Consulate in Adana and family members of U.S. government civilians in Izmir province. The U.S. Consulate in Adana remains open and will continue to provide all routine consular services.

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For your safety:

- Avoid travel to southeastern Turkey, particularly near the Syrian border.
- Stay away from large crowds, including at popular tourist destinations.
- Exercise heightened vigilance and caution when visiting public access areas, especially those heavily frequented by tourists.
- Stay away from political gatherings and rallies.
- Follow the instructions of local authorities in an emergency.
- Stay at hotels with identifiable security measures in place.
- Monitor local media.

For further detailed information regarding Turkey and travel:

- See the State Department's travel website for the Worldwide Caution, Travel Warnings, Travel Alerts, and Turkey's Country Specific Information.
- Enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) to receive security messages and help us locate you in an emergency.
- Contact the U.S. Embassy in Ankara, located at 110 Ataturk Boulevard, Kavaklidere, 06100 Ankara, at +90-312-455-5555, 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. The after-hours emergency number for U.S. citizens is +90-312-455-5555 or +90-212-335-9000 (U.S. Consulate General Istanbul).
- Contact the U.S. Consulate General in Istanbul, located at 2 Uçsehitler Sokagi, 34460, Istinye, Sariyer, at +90-212-335-9000.
- Contact the U.S. Consulate in Adana, located at 212 Girne Bulvari, Guzelevler Mahallesi, Yuregir, Adana at +90-322-455-4100.
- Contact the Consular Agency in Izmir at Izmir@state.gov.
- Call 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States and Canada or 1-202-501-4444 from other countries from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).
- Follow us on Twitter and Facebook

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Approved CA/OCS/ACS: PAguilera.

Drafted CA/OCS/ACS/MSteele, 5-6331

Cleared CA/OCS/ACS/EUR: MSteele
CA/OCS/ACS/EUR: PAguilera

CA Web Page: Travel Alerts

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Office of the Spokesperson

For Immediate Release

READOUT

July 27, 2016

Secretary Kerry's Meeting with Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte

The following is attributable to Deputy Spokesperson Mark Toner:

The President of the Philippines hosted U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry for a working lunch at his residence in Manila today.

The luncheon was an opportunity for Secretary Kerry to congratulate President Duterte for his election victory, which he said showed the strength and vibrancy of Filipino democracy.

The two discussed the full range of bilateral and regional issues that underpin U.S.-Philippines relations, including the recent decision by the arbitral tribunal on the South China Sea, security and defense cooperation, law enforcement assistance, human rights, countering violent extremism, economic development and climate change.

Secretary Kerry pledged U.S. willingness to provide continued assistance to the Philippine government as it works to address drug trafficking and violent extremism, and to deepen and strengthen bilateral relations across the board.

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**EUR Press Guidance
July 26, 2016**

Turkey: Embassy Ankara and Consulate General Istanbul Security Posture

On July 26, the Department of State authorized the voluntary departure of family members of U.S. Government personnel posted to the U.S. Embassy in Ankara and U.S. Consulate General in Istanbul, Turkey. The Department of State also extended its March 29, 2016 ordered departure of family members of U.S. Government personnel posted to the U.S. Consulate in Adana and family members of U.S. Government civilians in Izmir province through August 25, 2016.

The Department of State made this decision as a precautionary measure following the July 15 attempted coup and the subsequent declaration by the Turkish government of a 90-day State of Emergency, while we continue to monitor the effect of these developments on the security situation in the country. The July 20, 2016 U.S. Embassy Ankara Security Message informs U.S. citizens that the threat of terrorist activity remains elevated in Turkey. Foreign and U.S. tourists have been explicitly targeted by international and indigenous terrorist organizations.

The safety and security of U.S. citizens living abroad are among our top priorities, and we take very seriously the responsibility for ensuring the security of members of the entire official American community. We will continue to evaluate our security posture in Turkey and worldwide.

Q: Who will be affected by the voluntary authorized departure status?

Family members of U.S. government personnel posted to Embassy Ankara and Consulate General Istanbul will have the option to depart post and return to the United States or an alternate safe haven location.

B5

Q: What is the status of DoD personnel and family members at Incirlik Air Base or elsewhere in Turkey?

On any questions regarding DoD personnel, I would refer you to DoD. I will note, though, that State and DoD continue to consult daily on questions related to security posture.

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Q: What are you telling private U.S. citizens? Is Turkey safe?

The Department's current travel warning for Turkey cautions U.S. citizens of the potential for interruptions to travel and daily life resulting from the July 15 coup attempt and the subsequent declaration of a State of Emergency, as well as the continued threat from terrorist groups operating in the country. We suggest U.S. citizens reconsider travel to Turkey at this time.

We are updating the travel warning to inform the U.S. citizens in Turkey that the Department has authorized the departure of family members of U.S. government personnel at U.S. Embassy Ankara and U.S. Consulate General Istanbul.

It is Department policy to issue, or as in this case update, a Travel Warning when authorized departure or ordered departure is approved for members of the Embassy community.

The July 20, 2016 U.S. Embassy Ankara Security Message informs U.S. citizens that the threat of terrorist activity remains elevated in Turkey. U.S. citizens are reminded to review personal security plans and remain vigilant at all times. U.S. citizens should avoid areas in close proximity to the Syrian border. U.S. government personnel in Turkey remain subject to travel restrictions in the southeastern provinces of Hatay, Kilis, Gaziantep, Sanliurfa, Sirnak, Diyarbakir, Van, Siirt, Mus, Mardin, Batman, Bingol, Tunceli, Hakkari, Bitlis, and Elazig.

We continually update our public information for U.S. citizens in Turkey through our Consular Information Program. We communicate with U.S. citizens and U.S. companies and institutions in country regularly.

Potential visitors seeking specific information on safety and security in Turkey can refer to our Country Specific Information page on the Department of State's website, travel.state.gov.

Q: Did you coordinate with the Turkish government on this decision?

We consult regularly with host governments, including Turkey's, on means of ensuring security for our diplomatic, consular, and military facilities and personnel abroad. In the end, decisions on security measures for U.S. facilities and personnel are U.S. government decisions.

IF PRESSED:

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EUR/FO: MLibby	(ok)
EUR/SE: JMoore	(ok)
EUR/Press: MGolden	(ok)
L: JGresser	(ok)
CA/ACS: MRaugust	(ok)
CA/P: AGarrigus	(ok)
DS/Press: DBates	(ok)
D: GTagg	(ok)
P: ARomano	(ok)
S/P: AMansour	(info by request)

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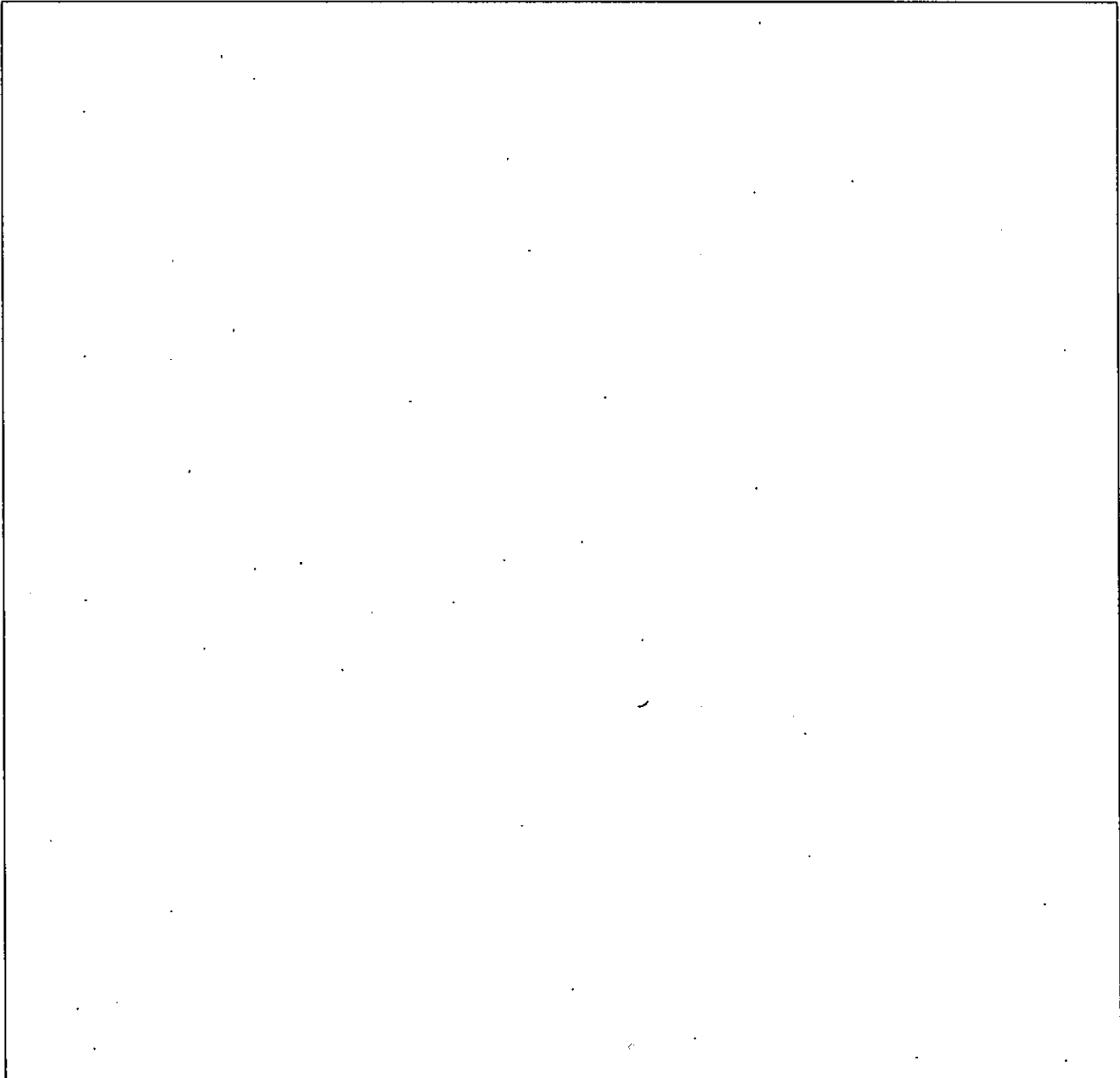
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EAP Press Guidance DRAFT
July 27, 2016

Indonesia: Cabinet Reshuffle/Appointment of Gen. Wiranto

IF ASKED:

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If pressed,

BACKGROUND:**(U) AP report:**

Indonesian president announces new Cabinet line-up (AP)

JAKARTA (AP) - Indonesian President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo announced a new Cabinet line-up on Wednesday that returns a reformist to the Finance Ministry and puts a former head of the military in charge of security.

Jokowi said that Sri Mulyani Indrawati, who was finance minister from 2005-2010, is returning to the role. She is currently a managing director at the World Bank.

Wiranto, a former general who was head of the military when Indonesia's armed forces committed serious human rights abuses in East Timor, was named the minister for security, political and legal affairs.

He replaced Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan, a close ally of Jokowi, who becomes the minister for maritime issues at a time when Southeast Asian nations are at odds with China over its territorial ambitions in the South China Sea.

It is the second reorganization of Jokowi's Cabinet since the maverick politician became president in 2014, after defeating an establishment candidate in a national election.

New appointments were also announced to several economy-related ministries.

(SBU) From 16 Jakarta 1392:

Luhut Replaced by Wiranto

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4. (SBU) In a surprise move, the president transferred Luhut Pandjaitan from his position as the Coordinating Minister of Political, Legal, and Security Affairs appointing him instead as the Coordinating Minister for Maritime Affairs, replacing Rizal Ramli. In his new position, Luhut will oversee the Ministries of Transportation, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Tourism, and Energy and Mineral Resources. Retired military commander, former Coordinating Minister and Hanura Party Chair Wiranto was appointed to replace Luhut as Coordinating Minister of Political, Legal, and Security Affairs.

[...]

(SBU) Prior to his appointment, Wiranto was General Chairman of the People's Conscience Party (Hanura) which he founded in 2006 after a failed Presidential bid on the Golkar party ticket. Wiranto and Hanura supported Jokowi's presidential bid and have been part of Jokowi's governing coalition. Wiranto was Jusuf Kalla's Vice-Presidential candidate in the 2009 Presidential election, which they lost to the incumbent President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono.

Wiranto served as Commander-in-Chief of the Indonesian Armed Forces and Minister of Defense under former Presidents Suharto and Habibie in 1998-1999. He served as Chief of Staff of the Army from 1997 to 1998; Commander of the Army Strategic Command (KOSTRAD) from 1996-1997; and Jakarta Military Area Commander from 1994 to 1996. He briefly served President Wahid as Coordinating Minister for Politics and Security, but was asked to resign in early 2000 over growing concerns about past human rights abuses, including his alleged involvement in the disappearance of student activists in Jakarta in 1998, and alleged war crimes committed or abetted by the Indonesian military in East Timor in 1999. Wiranto graduated from the National Military Academy (AMN) in 1968, the Army Command and Staff School (SESKOAD) in 1984, and the National Defense Institute (LEMHANAS) in 1995.

Approved:

Drafted: EAP/MTS – Andrew Veprek, x72301

Cleared: EAP/FO – Marie Damour

EAP/MTS – John Barrett

ok

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EAP/P – Anna Richey-Allen	ok
EAP/RSP – Sameer Sheth	ok
DRL – David Guinn	ok
CA– Kevin Brosnahan	ok
L/EAP – Philip Riblett	ok
J – Noah Krystel	info
D – Greg May	ok
P – Greg May	ok
S/P – Johnathan Stromseth	ok
D-MR – Anjoly Ibrahim	info by request
Embassy Jakarta	ok
NSC – Myles Caggins	ok

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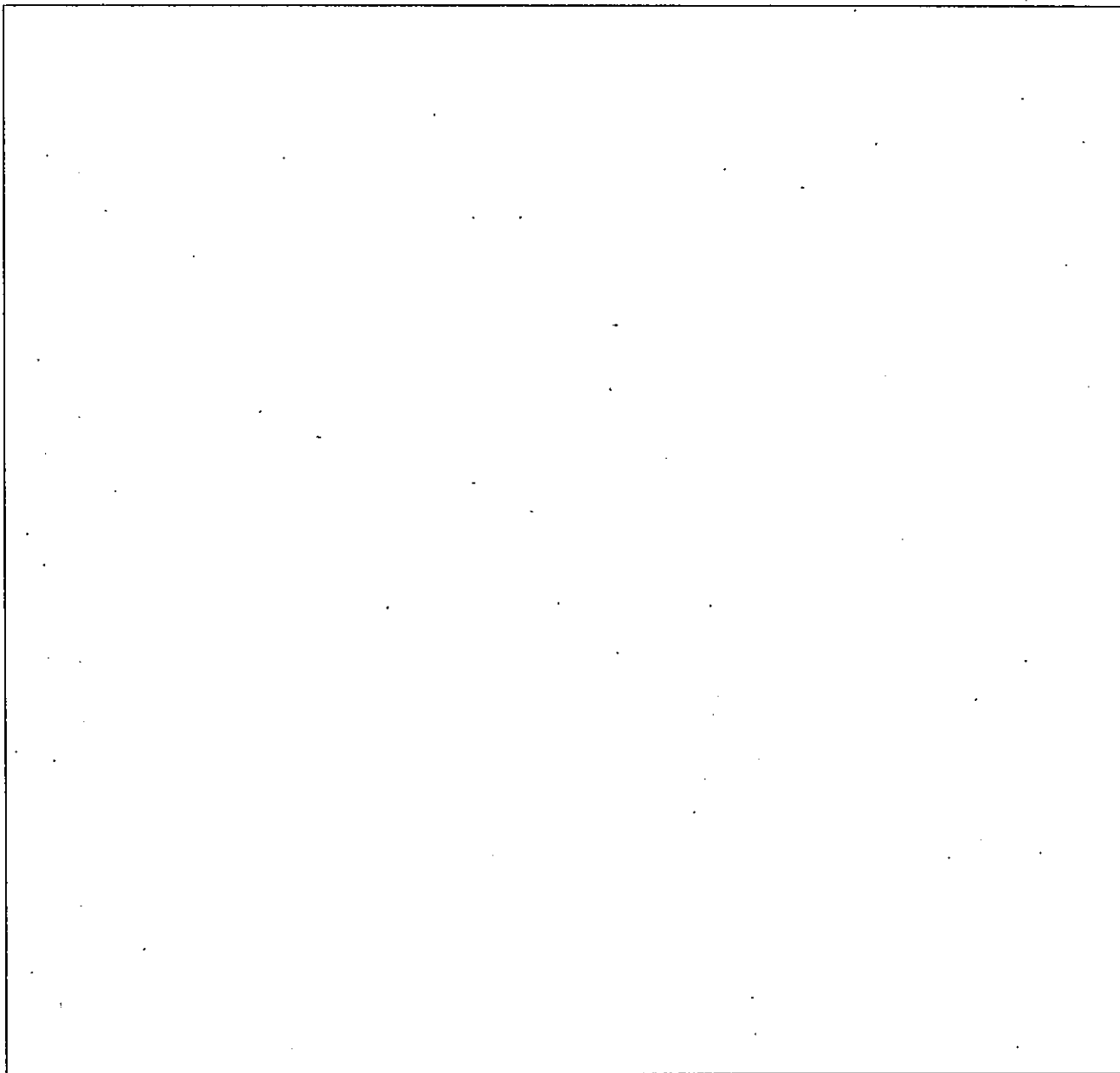
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**EAP Press Guidance
July 27, 2016**

Thailand: Media Talking Points on Hydropower in the Mekong - July 2016

For use on an if-asked basis.

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Background

This contingency press guidance on hydropower development in the Mekong was prepared by USAID Embassy Bangkok following a negative Op-Ed which appeared in the Bangkok Post over the weekend (<http://www.bangkokpost.com/opinion/opinion/1042453/usaidthewolfinsheeps-clothing-in-the-mekong>).

USAID, the wolf in sheep's clothing in the Mekong
Bangkok Post
23 July 2016 at 04:00

In 1994, the then Mekong Committee Secretariat released a report on 12 proposed hydropower projects on the lower Mekong mainstream. The proposed projects, which included the Sambor Dam in Kratie province in Cambodia, were initially criticised for their environmental impact and unfeasible finances.

More than a decade later, lower Mekong countries revived the proposal by approving feasibility studies for the projects which also included those on tributaries. Among them, the Sambor Dam resurfaced as the Ministry of Industry, Mining and Energy of Cambodia commissioned Guangxi Power Grid Company, a subsidiary of China Southern Power Grid, to conduct a feasibility study for this particular 3,300-megawatt dam located 560 km from the delta, and according to its original plan, was to relocate some 5,120 of the most downstream villagers. Nonetheless, neither the Chinese firm nor the Cambodian authorities released the study's results to the public.

In 2012, then US secretary of state Hillary Clinton opened the 2nd US-Lower Mekong Ministerial Meeting in Siem Reap. She admitted the US's mistakes in infrastructure projects on the Mississippi River. To "avoid the same mistakes", Ms Clinton offered contributions for impact assessments on proposed hydropower dams through the so-called Mississippi-Mekong Partnership which was to serve as a mechanism to promote cooperation and development in six pillars: agriculture and food security, connectivity, education, energy security, environment and water, and health.

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Under the new cooperation, studies conducted by the Lower Mekong Initiative (LMI) under the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) were revisited. USAID also created Friends of the Lower Mekong (FLM) which includes Australia, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand, European Union, the Asian Development Bank and World Bank as partners for development projects in the region.

In a bid to show the US's commitment, Secretary of State John Kerry during a visit to Vietnam in December 2013, re-emphasised the importance of the Mekong River, saying: "No one country has a right to deprive another country of a livelihood, an ecosystem and its capacity for life itself that comes from that river. That river is a global asset, a treasure that belongs to the region."

Among the studies conducted by the LMI, the "Climate Resilient Mekong; Maintaining the Flows that Nourish Life", which started in November 2010 and continued for the next three years, focused on the environmental impacts of hydropower dams under its Environment and Water Pillar. The project mainly looked at changes in sediment and nutrient flows in agricultural and fishery areas, and fish migration routes such as wetlands, the Delta and Tonle Sap. In addition, USAID hired the US-based Natural Heritage Institute to conduct the study of the lower Mekong dams.

Between 2012 and 2013, USAID and the NHI presented technical reports on designs with alternative sediment management for Sambor Dam, Lower Sesan 2 Dam and Sekong Dam in Cambodia along with Buon Tua Srah Dam and Buon Kuop Dam in Vietnam, while the study on the influence of sediment loads in the Mekong floodplain and coastal fisheries, and impact of dams on fish resources was conducted by the Cambodia-based World Fish Centre. But instead of supporting the Cambodian government's decision with impact assessments for Sambor Dam, the NHI presented another design for the dam lowering its top level reservoir to 35 metres above sea level and came up with some key improvements including sediment passage with a smaller and shorter reservoir. With the modified design, the dam's capacity is to go down to 1,700 megawatts.

However, the new design was found to be more complex than the original, with a bypass channel that required two dams, a facility to manage flows and electricity generation, and two diversion structures to prevent flooding on the Mekong's largest island, the 45km-long Rongea Island. Besides, no comparative studies on environmental and social impacts of Sambor Dam have been made public.

At the moment, the Sambor Dam is just a proposal. Yet, whether it is the 1994 design or USAID's most recent option, Sambor Dam, if built, would cut the vital ecological linkage between the Delta, Tonle Sap, and the whole river. Endemic riverine species like the Irrawaddy dolphins and Mekongina erythrospila, a commercial fishery species found all the way up to

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northern Thailand and Mekong tributaries would lose their habitats as the dam would transform the essence of their migration routes -- riverine islands, rapids, whirlpools, seasonal wetlands -- into a sluggish pool.

There are concerns about the enormous social impact as at least 24 villages on Mekong islands and riverbanks would have to be resettled. Even the NHI's recent proposal for a smaller reservoir would nonetheless cut up the river by drying up a myriad of islands and rapids. The Mekong Delta in Vietnam would be faced with relentless shifts in unseasonal water levels.

The Mississippi-Mekong Partnership reflects nothing more than profound diplomatic rhetoric for the US to maintain its interests and status quo in the region and to counterbalance other powerful nations in the region. For this, USAID is simply a wolf in sheep's clothing in the lower Mekong region.

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Approved: EAP/FO _ A/DAS Marie Damour (ok)

Drafted: EAP/MLS -- Kira Zaporski, x7-2459,

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Cleared: EAP/MLS -- Jonathan Turley (ok)
D -- Bill Flens (ok)
P -- Greg May (ok)
D/MR -- Anjoly Ibrahim (info by request)
S/P -- Michael Kimmage (ok)
EAP/Press -- Katina Adams (ok)
OES/ECW -- Julien Katchinoff (ok)
OES/PPO -- Michael Chadwick (ok)
USAID -- Heather Ward (info)
EAP/MLA -- Jeff Graham (info)
Embassy Bangkok - USAID (ok)
NSC: Myles Caggins (ok)

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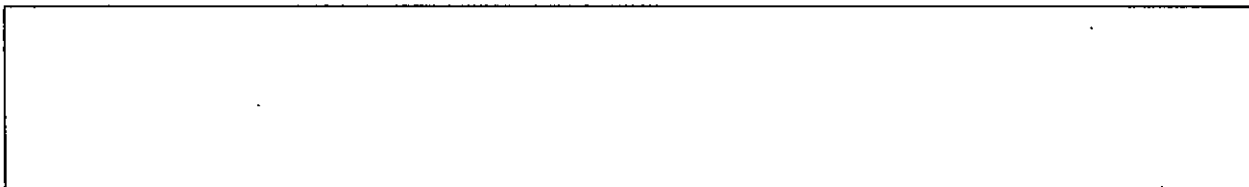
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NEA Press Guidance
July 27, 2016

Syria: ISIL Truck Bomb in Qamishli

- We condemn in the strongest terms today's reprehensible terrorist attack that killed scores of civilians in Qamishli [kuh-MEESH-lee], Syria, and we extend our deepest condolences to the loved ones of those who were killed and injured.
- This attack once again displays the type of horrific atrocities that ISIL has perpetrated against tens of thousands of innocent people across Syria and Iraq. It only affirms international resolve to strengthen those on the ground fighting ISIL. Our determination to degrade and destroy Daesh remains unchanged, wherever they are in the world.
- I don't have any confirmation for you on details.

If Asked



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Background

IS says it's behind attack that killed 44 in northern Syria

By Albert Aji | AP July 27

DAMASCUS, Syria – A twin bombing struck a crowd in a predominantly Kurdish town in northern Syria on Wednesday, killing 44 people and wounding dozens more, Syria's state-run news agency and Kurdish media reported. The Islamic State group claimed responsibility for the attack.

Media reports said a truck loaded with large quantities of explosives blew up on the western edge of the town of Qamishli, followed by an explosives-packed motorcycle a few minutes later in the same area. The blasts caused massive damage in the area and rescue teams were working to recover victims from under the rubble, the SANA news agency said.

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Qamishli, near the Turkish border, is mainly controlled by Kurds but Syrian government forces are present and control the town's airport.

Syrian state TV broadcast footage showing people running away from a mushroom of gray smoke rising over the town and others running amid wrecked or burnt cars.

Qamishli resident Suleiman Youssef, a writer, told The Associated Press by telephone that he heard the first explosion from few miles away. He said the blasts leveled several buildings to the ground and many people were trapped under the rubble.

"Most of the buildings at the scene of the explosion have been heavily damaged because of the strength of the blast," he said.

The Islamic State group, in a statement published by the IS-linked Amaq news agency, said it carried out the attack in Qamishli, describing it as a truck bombing that struck a complex of Kurdish offices. The extremist group has carried out several bombings in Kurdish areas in Syria in the past.

The predominantly Kurdish U.S.-backed Syria Democratic Forces have been the main force fighting IS in northern Syria, capturing significant territory from the extremists over the past two years.

Wednesday's explosion came as U.S.-backed Kurdish forces pressed ahead with their offensive to take the IS-held town of Manbij, also in northern Syria but further to the east of Qamishli.

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Lead Bureau: NEA

Approved: NEA/FO: M Ratney (ok)

Drafted: NEA/PPD: Laura Robinson

Clearances:

NEA/FO: T Grencik, Acting (ok)

NEA/LEV: E White (ok)

SECI: M Lavallee (ok)

CT/RAP: J McClintock (ok)

S/P: S Parker (info)

P: N Swanson (ok)

D: Z Bell (ok)

NSC: C Woog (ok)

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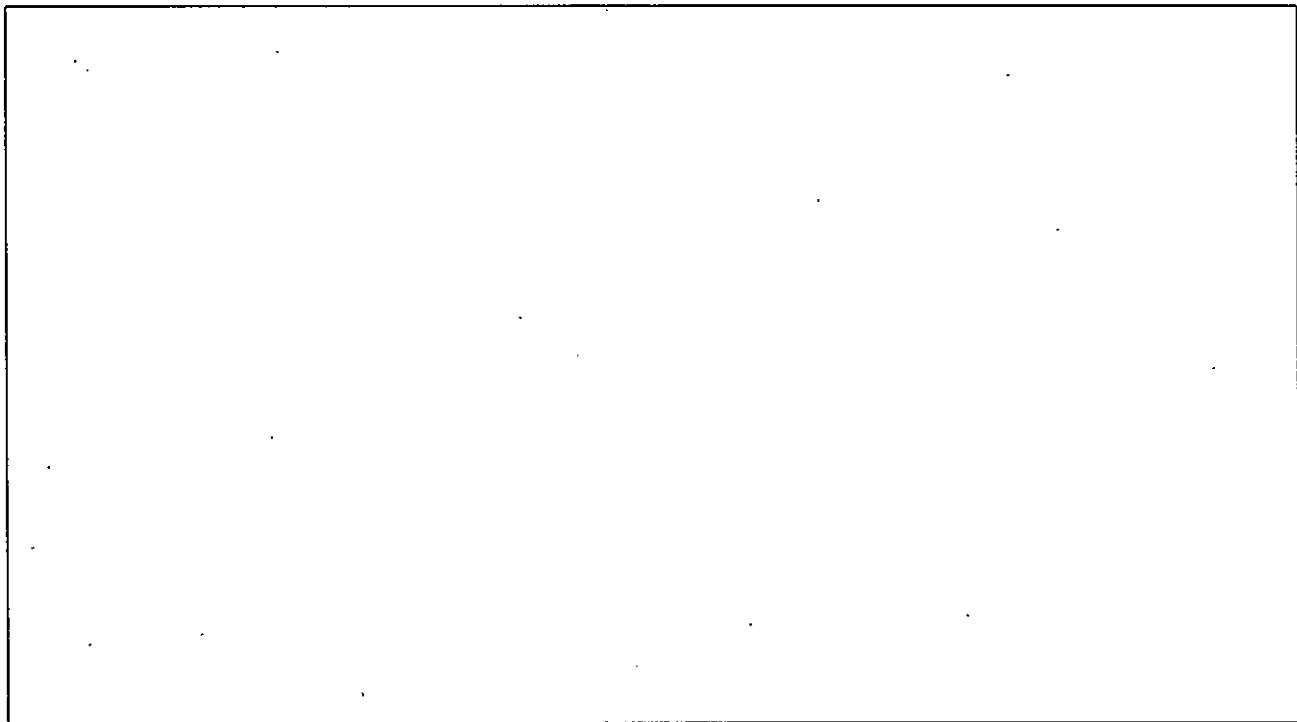
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**NEA Press Guidance
July 27, 2016**

Syria: Humanitarian Situation in Aleppo

- We are gravely concerned about the situation in Aleppo, Syria's second largest city. We understand the regime has cut off Castello Road, a key route for delivering humanitarian assistance to some 300,000 civilians in opposition-held areas of the city.
- The regime has used starvation routinely as a weapon against its own people – and we fear that this may occur again in Aleppo. We demand that the regime abide by its commitments, including allowing full, sustained access for delivery of humanitarian assistance.
- Russia and the regime must uphold this basic, agreed principle – that the UN determines what assistance is necessary to relieve the suffering of civilians in besieged communities, and the UN's full request must be met. There can be no other standard, and all supplies, including food and medical supplies, as determined and requested solely by the UN, must be delivered immediately.

If Asked



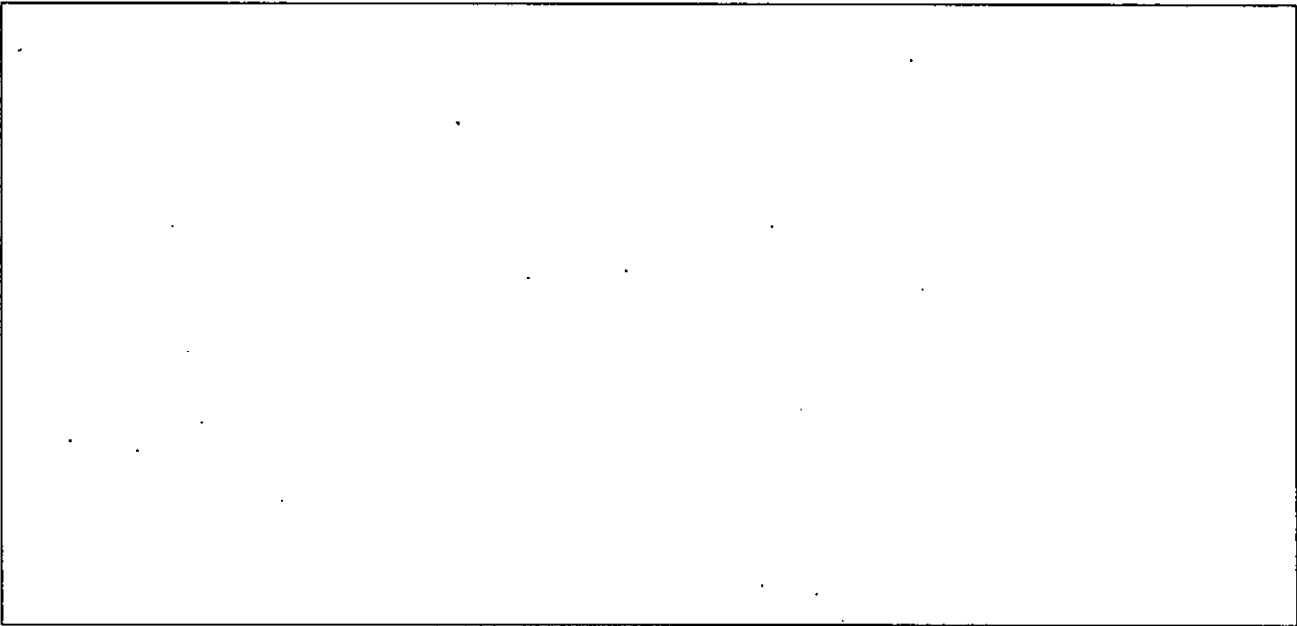
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Background

Syrian army says cuts off all supply routes into east Aleppo

BEIRUT (Reuters) - The Syrian army said it cut off all supply routes into the eastern, rebel-held part of the northern city of Aleppo, state news agency SANA reported on Wednesday.

Statements from the Syrian army said all armed people in eastern Aleppo could put down their weapons and safely leave or stay in the city.

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Lead Bureau: NEA

Approved: NEA/FO: M Ratney (ok)

Drafted: NEA/PPD: Laura Robinson

Clearances:

NEA/FO: T Grencik, Acting (ok)

NEA/LEV: E White (ok)

EUR/Press: J Geraghty (ok)

EUR/RUS: B Mozdzierz (ok)

DRL/Press: C Laprise (ok)

DRL/NEA: A Masloski (ok)

DRL/EUR: D Myers (ok)

PRM: D Houston (ok)

IO/PPC: J Frohnmayer (ok)

IO/HRH: S Garcia (ok)

IO/UNP: F Colvin (ok)

USUN: J Degory (ok)

S/P: S Parker (info)

P: N Swanson (ok)

D: Z Bell (ok)

NSC: C Woog (ok)

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DRL Press Guidance
July 26, 2016

Threats to Religious and Ethnic Minorities under Da'esh Conference July 28-29

- On July 29, the Department of State will convene a conference in Washington, D.C., on "Threats to Religious and Ethnic Minorities under Da'esh."
- Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom David Saperstein, and Special Advisor for Religious Minorities in the Near East and South/Central Asia Knox Thames, will host the July 29 meeting of more than 20 countries, the European Union and several United Nations offices, to discuss ways to protect religious and ethnic minorities in areas controlled by Da'esh. Deputy Secretary of State Antony Blinken will deliver opening remarks.
- In addition, religious and civic leaders from the region will attend a civil society meeting co-sponsored by the State Department on July 28 at Georgetown University. Refer you to the Notice to the Press issued July 26 for more information.

Follow with Q&A most likely to be askedQ: Why hold this conference?

- Secretary Kerry made a historic announcement on March 17 that in his judgment, Da'esh was responsible for genocide, focusing global attention on the plight of religious and ethnic minorities in Iraq and Syria; he said to the international community that we must "find the resources to help those harmed by these atrocities," prompting the Department of State to organize this conference to discuss concrete ways to protect religious and ethnic minorities in areas Da'esh controls.

Q: Why hold this conference now?

- The time for such a meeting is now. With recent successes in Iraq, including the liberation of Fallujah, the planning for the liberation of Mosul and other parts of Ninewa Province is actively underway. Despite Da'esh's attempts to destroy Iraqi solidarity, we should encourage Iraqis of all religious communities to seek a peaceful, mutually respectful means of coexistence.
- This will be especially significant for minorities, as the region is the heartland for many of Iraq's ancient religious communities – Christians, Yazidis, Kakai, Shabak, as well as home to Turkmen Shia and Sunni communities.
- In addition, Da'esh and other violent extremist groups in Iraq and Syria have continued to target members of religious and ethnic minorities with acts of abhorrent violence - committing rape, enslavement, and murder.

Key Quotes

- This past March, Secretary Kerry said that in his judgment, Da'esh is responsible for genocide, and he said that the international community "must find the resources to help those harmed by these atrocities."

Background

The United States will convene an international conference on Threats to Religious and Ethnic Minorities under Da'esh on July 29, 2016, at the U.S. Department of State, in Washington, D.C.

Da'esh and other violent extremist groups in Iraq and Syria continue to target members of religious and ethnic minorities with violence, abduction, rape, enslavement, and murder. On March 17, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry stated that in his judgement, Da'esh is responsible for genocide in the areas it controls against Yazidis, Christians, and Shia Muslims, and crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing directed at those same groups and in some cases also against Sunni Muslims, Kurds, and other minorities. Da'esh also has systematically looted and destroyed religious and cultural sites in the areas it controls. In response, Secretary Kerry challenged the world to "find the resources to help those harmed by these atrocities."

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Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom David Saperstein and Special Advisor for Religious Minorities in the Near East and South/Central Asia Knox Thames will host the July 29 meeting of more than 25 countries, the European Union and several United Nations offices, to discuss ways to protect religious and ethnic minorities under Da'esh. Deputy Secretary of State Antony Blinken will give opening remarks to the attending delegates. His remarks are open to the press.

In addition, religious and civic leaders from the region will attend a civil society meeting cosponsored by the State Department on July 28 at Georgetown University. Government delegations have been invited to attend the meeting to hear directly the concerns and recommendations of civil society. The event is public. More information is available [here](#).

The Washington Conference is a continuation of a series of meetings convened by France in 2015, starting with the UN Security Council in March and a September ministerial in Paris cosponsored by Jordan which led to the issuance of the Paris Action Plan highlighting potential governmental actions to aid religious minorities. A conference hosted by Greece in Athens and the Marrakesh Declaration issued at a conference hosted by Morocco further raised the profile of the plight of religious and ethnic minorities in the region.

The time for such a meeting is now. With recent battlefield success in Iraq, the day of liberation for Mosul and Ninewa Province draws closer than ever before. This will be especially significant for minorities, as the region is the heartland for many of Iraq's ancient religious communities – Christians, Yazidis, Kakai, Shabak, as well as home to Turkmen Shia and Sunni communities. Liberation from Da'esh will bring back questions about disputed internal boundaries. These will not be academic debates for members of minority groups, as in many cases their ancestral homelands lay astride potential fault line between Arab and Kurdish regions.

In addition, violations continue. Da'esh and other violent extremist groups in Iraq and Syria continue to target members of religious and ethnic minorities with violence - committing rape, enslavement, and murder. Sunni Muslims who disagree with the terrorists' warped religious interpretations have also suffered extreme violence. Throughout the areas controlled by Da'esh, religious, cultural, and historical sites have been systematically looted and destroyed.

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Approved: DRL/FO Ambassador Saperstein (ok)

Drafted: DRL/IRF – Chelsea Brint, ext. 7-4329 and cell:

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Cleared:

DRL/IRF:	KThames	(ok)
DRL/NEA:	AMasloski	(ok)
DRL/NEA:	SNotar	(ok)
DRL/NEA:	MWong	(ok)
DRL/PPD:	KSpindler	(ok)
CT Press:	JOlson	(ok)
NEA Press:	PWatzlavick	(ok)
NEA/RMA:	LCatalano	(ok)
S/SEC:	MLavallee	(ok)
NEA/I/POL:	BKoontz	(ok)
S/P:	RSchuler	(ok)
P:	ARomano	(ok)
D:	CSpradley	(ok)
L:	JKretman	(ok)

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WHA Contingency Press Guidance
July 26, 2016

VENEZUELA: National Electoral Council Continues to Delay on Recall Referendum

- The United States is deeply concerned by any unnecessary delays of the recall referendum process.
- The Venezuelan constitution guarantees Venezuelans the right to have their voices heard through the recall referendum process. We urge the Venezuelan government to respect the voices of its people, honor its own constitutional mechanisms, and promptly allow this process to go forward without delay, in accordance with the will of Venezuelan voters.
- We join with the international community in calling upon the Venezuelan government to respect the will of the people, the rule of law, the separation of powers, and the democratic process.
- A remedy to the challenges facing the Venezuelan people can only come about through meaningful dialogue among Venezuelans from across the political spectrum, beginning with respect for human rights and democratic institutions and processes, including the recall referendum.

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Approved: WHA/FO: PPalmieri (ok)

Drafted: WHA/CEN – Karen Huntress, ext. 7-3559 or

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Cleared:

WHA/FO: MFitzpatrick (ok)

WHA/FO: DHodge (ok)

WHA/AND: APforzheimer (ok)

WHA/AND: Roxanna Vigil (ok)

WHA/Press: JPeters (ok)

D: CSpradley
JJeffreys

(ok)

P:

(ok)

S/P: MCamilleri (ok)

DRL: JPiechowski (ok)

L/WHA: VBotet (ok)

Embassy Caracas: (ok)

F: AEisenberg (info)

USOAS: DCento (ok)

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Daily Press Briefing Index
Wednesday, July 27, 2016
1:09 p.m. EDT
Briefer: John Kirby, Spokesperson

~PHILIPPINES~

~HAITI~

~DEPARTMENT~

~RUSSIA/NATO~

~SYRIA~

~IRAN~

~SYRIA~

~TURKEY~

~RUSSIA~

~TURKEY~

~CHINA~

~SOUTH KOREA~

~DEPARTMENT~

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
DAILY PRESS BRIEFING

DPB # 132

WEDNESDAY, JULY 27, 2016
(ON THE RECORD UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED)

1:09 p.m. EDT

MR KIRBY: Hello, everybody.

QUESTION: Hey.

MR KIRBY: A couple things here at the top. As you know, the Secretary has just wrapped up a series of meetings in the Philippines. The president of the Philippines hosted the Secretary for a working lunch at his residence in Manila. The luncheon was an opportunity for the Secretary to congratulate President Duterte for his election victory, which he, the Secretary, said showed the strength and vibrancy of Filipino democracy. The two also discussed the full range of bilateral and regional issues that underpin our relations, including the recent decision by the Arbitral Tribunal on the South China Sea; security and defense cooperation; law enforcement assistance; human rights; countering violent extremism; economic development; and climate change. The Secretary pledged U.S. willingness to provide continued assistance to the Philippine Government as it works to address drug trafficking and violent extremism, and to deepen and strengthen our bilateral relations across the board.

Also today, the Secretary met with Philippine Secretary of Foreign Affairs Perfecto Yasay to follow up on the ASEAN Regional Forum and the East Asia Summit discussions, including the situation, of course, in the South China Sea. They reviewed bilateral cooperative efforts on law enforcement, regional security, violent extremism, and combating transnational crimes like human trafficking. They also discussed the implementation of the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement, which will coordinate our efforts to maintain peace and stability in the region while also allowing the United States to provide rapid assistance to the Philippines in the event of emergencies and natural disasters.

Finally, just today I want to welcome to the briefing a group of Haitian journalists that are participating in a week-long training on broadcast journalism and social media at the Voice of America Creole service. So thanks very much for being here. We appreciate having you. Since 2008, VOA and the United – and the – and our embassy, I'm sorry, in Port-au-Prince collaborate annually to send Haitian print, radio, and broadcast journalists to the United States for training to support the important role that the media play in building democratic societies. This program, as I understand it, includes a visit to the White House, Capitol Hill, and to the Newseum. So it's great to have you guys here; good to see you.

And with that, we'll get right after it. Arshad.

QUESTION: I'd like to start with Russia. As I'm sure you know, the Republican presidential nominee, Donald Trump, has called on Russia to try to find the personal emails of Secretary Clinton. Is there – to your mind, is it appropriate for a candidate to call on another country to try to obtain a former Secretary's emails, whether personal or official?

MR KIRBY: I don't know that it's our place here at the State Department to make a judgment about the appropriateness of comments made by candidates for elected office. I think we would let those candidates speak for themselves and their views. So I think I would just leave it there.

QUESTION: To my understanding, Secretary Clinton said publicly that she, quote, "did not keep," close quote, those emails, and FBI Director Comey when he described the results of the FBI's investigation and its recommendation not to bring charges said that they were deleted. Is it – quote, "deleted." To your understanding, do those emails exist

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anywhere? Did the State Department itself find any of those emails other than occasional ones that may have gone to officials here from the secretary?

MR KIRBY: I don't believe we have any information one way or the other to contradict or otherwise characterize the way former Secretary Clinton did with respect to those personal emails, or the FBI director. Our focus, as you know, was on making available to the public the 55,000 pages of work-related emails that former Secretary Clinton turned over to us, and we did that over the course of many months, as you well know, and that was our focus.

QUESTION: Staying on that, we had been told that the FBI has started -- given the first batch of the documents, emails, and the State Department has not yet started processing. Can you update us on that?

MR KIRBY: I really don't have much of an update. I think we've already told you that we did get some material from the FBI and we are starting to work our way through that, but I don't have an update. And as I think we said at the time, I mean, we're not going to offer a daily blow-by-blow on this.

QUESTION: And it is -- and about the internal process, I think we were updated around two weeks ago, so it's not day to day, but is there any update on the State Department's internal --

MR KIRBY: The internal review?

QUESTION: Yeah.

MR KIRBY: No, I don't have an update for you. It's underway and I think my colleague, Elizabeth, walked you through sort of the parameters of that, and I don't have anything to add.

QUESTION: So you say that it is underway, so it has started?

MR KIRBY: Yes.

QUESTION: Okay.

MR KIRBY: Yes.

QUESTION: Can I follow up on the Russian --

QUESTION: Also on the email -- on the email, we were talking about Trump and Clinton's email, right? I missed that part. I just got here, but --

MR KIRBY: Yeah, you did. Why don't you just go back and check the transcript? I had a good exchange with Arshad right off the bat.

QUESTION: I just wanted to --

MR KIRBY: I was pretty content with it. (Laughter.)

QUESTION: I just wanted to preface this --

MR KIRBY: I mean, it's all right there.

QUESTION: I wanted to preface this by saying I missed that. I was just walking in, although I'm sure Arshad covered it in detail.

MR KIRBY: Wait, so before you ask your question, you should ask Arshad what he asked, right? And that way, it won't be exactly the same.

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QUESTION: Or how you didn't answer would be the better question.

QUESTION: I'll be doing a debriefing later. (Laughter.)

QUESTION: So --

MR KIRBY: He's got all the context. Go ahead.

QUESTION: Look, I mean, one of the questions, seriously, that people are asking about Trump's call essentially for a foreign government or an invitation more or less for a foreign government to hack a presidential candidate, a secretary of state -- one of the questions is: Is this treasonous? Is this a treasonous action to call on such activity? I mean, what -- how would you answer that?

MR KIRBY: I'm not going to -- as I think you know, Justin, I'm not going to respond to campaign rhetoric or to the comments that either candidate for president of the United States are making in their campaigns. It's just not appropriate from this podium. This matter, this specific matter that we're talking about, is under investigation by the FBI. And we're going to respect that process. We're not going to comment on what is an ongoing investigation.

QUESTION: Would you comment more broadly on what it means for a U.S. citizen to call on a foreign government to spy on the U.S.? I mean --

MR KIRBY: I will let the candidates speak for themselves on the campaign trail and let them speak to and answer for their comments as they seek the presidency. That's for them to speak to. What I can tell you is that this department is out of politics and staying out of the politics. That's where the Secretary's head squarely is, and his focus is on pursuing the foreign policy objectives of this Administration. And I just at the top read out his meetings with the president of the Philippines today. And he's on his way back and he had a very full and eventful trip out there, meeting with our ASEAN -- with ASEAN members. There's an awful lot for us to focus on, and what we're not going to focus on is rhetoric by either candidate for the presidency.

QUESTION: And just to be clear, to go back to how this all ended with Clinton -- I know you're still doing your investigation -- there is no --

MR KIRBY: It's not an investigation.

QUESTION: Oh, your --

MR KIRBY: It's an internal review. It's an administrative internal review, and as I said to Tejinder, we're -- while it is underway, we aren't going to be providing frequent or routine updates on the progress of it.

QUESTION: Okay, but you can already -- you've already made the determination that she -- Secretary Clinton's email was never hacked by a foreign government, correct?

MR KIRBY: I'm not going to talk about cybersecurity issues here from the podium, and again, I'm not going to characterize the work of the reviewers that are doing this process. But the process itself is aimed at determining the degree to which information was classified at the time and then -- and therefore transmitted, and examining issues of accountability for any transmission of sensitive or classified information.

QUESTION: And if foreign governments did hack into her email, that would be considered spying, correct?

MR KIRBY: I am not an expert on cyber espionage. I mean -- so look, I would point you back to what the FBI director --

QUESTION: No, but that's a basic question. But the --

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MR KIRBY: But the FBI director addressed this issue.

QUESTION: I'm just asking a basic question: If they were hacking into her email, that would be spying, right?

MR KIRBY: There are attacks on U.S. Government cyber accounts and networks every day. There are – almost every federal agency is under that threat every single day. It's something we take very, very seriously. And people try to gain access to it for a number of reasons, and not all of those reasons are espionage. Are some of the motivations espionage? Well, I certainly couldn't rule that out. But you're asking me a hypothetical situation that I'm – it's impossible for me to answer what the motivation is of a given hacker.

QUESTION: It depends on the motivation.

MR KIRBY: It depends on the motivation; it depends on the organization behind it and the purpose for it. Could it be cyber espionage? Absolutely it could be, but I'm just in no position to judge.

QUESTION: Can I just – one small clarification? Sorry for – Trump a few hours ago at a news conference down south (inaudible) said that he didn't know if it is Russia, if it is China, or it – if it's a hacker with a IQ of 200 who has done this. And the – one of the major media outlet – the U.S. media – has said – quoted intelligence official that they believe that it's Russia. So will you be able to confirm or deny if you have anything on that?

MR KIRBY: No. As I said, this is a matter that the FBI is investigating, and I'm not going to get ahead of the work that investigators have to do. And so I think that's where we absolutely need to leave it.

QUESTION: What is the level of concern with the new comments from the Russian defense minister about their southwestern front, saying there are activities with NATO that has compelled them to boost troop presence, air defenses?

MR KIRBY: So we've seen those comments and seen the reports of those comments. If true, we believe that this would appear to run contrary to ongoing efforts to stop violence and to de-escalate the tensions in eastern Ukraine in line with Russia's commitments under Minsk. We expect Russia to fulfill any relevant commitments under existing arms control and confidence-building agreements, such as the OSCE's Vienna document. Reports indicate that part of this buildup includes Russian troops in Crimea, and on that, our view is also consistent and well-known. Crimea is and always will remain part of Ukraine. We're not going to allow, as we've said many times before, the borders of Europe to be redrawn at the barrel of a gun.

And on Crimea, let me reiterate that we condemn and call for an immediate end to the Russian occupation there. Sanctions related to Crimea will remain in place as long as the occupation continues.

QUESTION: Is there anything, though, that NATO has done that apparently brought forward these comments or these purported Russian moves?

MR KIRBY: Well, the Russians can speak for themselves in terms of what their motivation here is. But let me be clear, as we have in the past, that neither the United States nor NATO is a threat to Russia. NATO is a defensive alliance which has safeguarded European security for more than 60 years now, and countries everywhere have a right to choose their own security arrangements.

Yeah.

QUESTION: Syria? Yesterday, State Department issued a statement saying U.S. and Russia urge the UN to prepare a proposal with respect to the political process in Syria, and the proposal should serve as the starting point for future negotiations. Meanwhile, de Mistura said in order to go forward, he needs details from the Americans and Russians. Is there a disconnect here on next steps between U.S., Russia, and the UN?

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MR KIRBY: No, I don't think there's any disconnect at all. As our statement said, we had good discussions in Geneva, and we all did agree that moving the process forward here with respect to the cessation of hostilities, which is what the proposals are really all about – it's what the Secretary and Foreign Minister Lavrov talked about in Moscow; it's what they talked about just recently on the sidelines of the ASEAN Regional Forum. Getting the cessation of hostilities in a more sustainable, more enforceable way across the nation is a foundation – a starting point, if you will – to making sure that the political talks can move forward. So no, I don't think there's any disconnect at all. Again, we greatly appreciate the leadership of Special Envoy de Mistura and his access to us and to the Russians and ours to him, and the ability to continue to move this forward. I think he has spoken about trying to get the political talks restarted relatively soon. We obviously support that, but we know that – again, as co-chairs of the International Syria Support Group, the U.S. and Russia both realize that it's really important to get the cessation of hostilities in a better place so that the conditions can be created for those talks to actually be successful. And that's really what the talks in Geneva were about, okay?

QUESTION: Do you know what details he's referring to that he's waiting on from America and Russia?

MR KIRBY: I don't think it would be useful to get into a much more detailed discussion of it here from the podium. Again, we are – all three of us are very well connected and communication is frequent and regular, and I can assure you that – at least from the United States perspective – that we're committed to making sure that the special envoy has the information he needs, has the support he needs, more critically, to try to, again, create the conditions for political talks to resume.

QUESTION: Based on the progress, are you confident that they might start in August? There was some expectations set earlier – or hopes set earlier about August.

MR KIRBY: Well, I'd let Special Envoy de Mistura speak to specific timing. I think that's really his purview to do that and I wouldn't want to get ahead of his own decision-making process. I know that he is committed to doing this as soon as possible. We obviously want to see the talks resume as soon as practical as well, but I'd be loath to try to guess or speculate when on the calendar that could happen.

Samir.

QUESTION: The Syrian opposition, in a letter to the Arab League summit this week, described Russia as a force of occupation in Syria. What's your reaction to this?

MR KIRBY: I haven't seen that particular comment, but look, we have been nothing but clear about Russia's military presence and their activity in Syria for many, many months now. They have a historic defense relationship with Syria that goes well – back well before the current conflict. They've had basing there, they've had troops there, they've had a presence there, so it came as a shock to no one here at the State Department that, as the civil war progressed in Syria, that they would have interest in how things were going, which is why, quite frankly, the Secretary and Foreign Minister Lavrov connected so early on to sort of – to begin to form what has now become a quite expansive International Syria Support Group.

We were also very honest at the outset when we saw Russian military activity bolstering the Assad regime and expressing our concerns about that, and we still do. But where the Secretary is – and I believe where Foreign Minister Lavrov is – is that they're both committed to trying to achieve the outcomes of both Vienna communiqués and the UN Security Council resolution, which calls for political transition in Syria. And it's the how-do-you-get-there that they're working so hard on right now, and just as my previous answer, in order to have that outcome, you've got to create the right conditions. In order to create the right conditions for people to have political discussions, you got to have the violence significantly reduced, because one of the reasons why the previous three rounds of talks have not succeeded is because the Assad regime has continued to drop bombs on innocent civilians and moderate opposition groups.

So, again, I haven't seen those comments. We've been, again, nothing but, I think, very clear and candid about our concerns in the past about Russian military activity and, as we've also said, that there can be a role here for Russian

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military forces against groups like Daesh and al-Nusrah in Syria. And to the degree they're willing to commit to that goal – the same goal that the international community has, this coalition of now 67 members – that's a conversation that we're willing to have. And that's the conversation, quite frankly, that Secretary Kerry's been having with Foreign Minister Lavrov in just the last couple of weeks.

QUESTION: Thank you.

QUESTION: Can I follow up on that? You'll recall that back in May, the Secretary said that the target date for a transition in Syria was the 1st of August, and he said at the time, quote, "Either something happens in these next few months or they're asking for a very different track," close quote.

Question one: Is it fair to say you've given up on any hope of a transition in Syria by August 1st?

MR KIRBY: I think – I don't think he said that he expected a transition on August 1st, Arshad. I think what he said was --

QUESTION: He said that was the target date.

MR KIRBY: Target date. He said it was a target date to develop a framework for a transition. I don't think it was – and I can go back and check the quote myself. I don't believe he said that he expects a full transition in Syria even on August 1st. But point taken. And I think the Secretary's talked about this actually on this recent trip, and I think he said publicly that he still expects that we can see – perhaps see some movement here, positive movement, in the month of August. We'll have to see. But we're certainly not giving up on the goal, and as I said earlier, the goal for us is to see progress as soon as possible.

And again, the Secretary believes that if some of the proposals that we discussed with the Russians in Moscow a couple of weeks ago, if they're implemented fully and in good faith, he continues to believe that progress can be made, that we can start to lay down a framework for transition – political transition in Syria, and that there's a possibility that we might be able to see some sort of progress next month. It's possible. But I also want to stress that the Secretary has also been very clear-eyed about this, even as recently as last week when he talked about it – that he's been careful not to be wide-eyed and optimistic about it, that he's looking at this very pragmatically. He's extraordinarily mindful of the challenges that we faced in the past, the commitments that the Assad regime have made and then ignored, the influence that the Russian Government has not exerted as they had said in the past that they would be willing to exert, so he's mindful of the challenges. And I think we're all going to be working on this very, very hard and obviously pushing to see some progress next month, but we'll see.

QUESTION: Are you working on a different track? I mean, he said in that – on that date, he said so either something happens in these next few months or they're asking for a different track. On the other occasions, he's told us, he's warned us, against thinking that there's no Plan B. Are you working on alternatives if his hopes do not materialize next month?

MR KIRBY: There have been over many months now interagency discussions here in the United States Government about options and alternatives to the current path, which is the pursuit of a political transition in Syria. And as the President said himself not long ago, none of those options are great options. None of those are preferred options. That the diplomatic path that we're pursuing, that he, the Secretary, is pursuing is absolutely still the preferred path. And again, I would only point you back to what the Secretary said. He believes that it is possible on that path to make some progress before the end of the summer, so we'll see where it goes.

QUESTION: What is the utility of warning people that you might adopt a different policy if you never adopt a different policy?

MR KIRBY: Well, the question would presume that there isn't going to be an adoption of a different approach --

QUESTION: But there hasn't been so far.

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MR KIRBY: -- and I just don't think we're at a position to say that right now. We're --

QUESTION: There hasn't been so far, and the war's been going for five years.

MR KIRBY: Well, it's a very speculative question that I don't think that it would -- that it's possible to answer, nor would it be useful to try to answer right now. The path that we're on, the Secretary and the President still believes, is the right approach. It's still the right path. And as I said, the Secretary believes that progress can be made -- perhaps some progress before the end of the summer. So the belief here is that it's still worth pursuing this diplomatic approach that we've been pursuing.

And then it would be a great parlor game to try to guess and game out but what if and when, and I just don't think we're at that point right now. But there has been -- and, frankly, there continues to be -- sincere thinking and discussion in the interagency of alternative approaches. But I can assure you that no decisions have been made to stray off of or to change from the diplomatic approach that we're taking right now.

And the other thing I'd like to add; just if I could, is that it's not just the -- an approach that the United States is taking. It's an approach really by I think a very representative body of the international community -- which, oh, by the way, includes Russia. We have a UN Security Council resolution now that codified this ISSG process that the Secretary has led -- he and Foreign Minister Lavrov -- and now that's -- that has a gravitas all its own. And it is representative -- their efforts are representative of a truly international approach to trying to solve the civil war in Syria through a diplomatic track. And so it's not just about us. It really is an approach that the entire international community has signed up to.

QUESTION: Can I go to Iran?

MR KIRBY: Yeah, go ahead. You want to move to what?

QUESTION: Iran. Iran.

MR KIRBY: Okay.

QUESTION: Now that the Iranians are holding three Americans, I'm wondering what the Secretary's contacts have been like with his Iranian counterpart.

MR KIRBY: Look, Michele, I appreciate the question. And while -- again, we've seen reports of the detention of Iran of a person reported to be a U.S. citizen, and I can tell you we're looking into that. I just don't have additional information to provide at this time.

What I can tell you, separate and distinct from that, is that the issue of American citizens detained in Iran is an issue that never fails to come up in his discussions with his counterpart in Iran, Foreign Minister Zarif. It's a constant topic of discussion. But I'm just not able to go into any more detail.

QUESTION: Are you trying, though, to -- I mean, the other Americans in January were released after there was a separate channel -- the McGurk channel -- with the Iranians. Are you trying to revive that channel?

MR KIRBY: I just don't have additional information for you right now. I can tell you that we never lose sight of our concerns over American citizens detained in Iran.

QUESTION: And there are lots of other -- there's Canadians, Brits, others who have been -- seem to be swept up in this right now. Are you working with other governments to come up with a united front to deal with this issue?

MR KIRBY: Again, I really don't have additional information to speak to. We have, obviously, an obligation to look after the safety and security of American citizens abroad. We take that very, very seriously, and we do not miss an

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opportunity to raise with Iran our concerns about American citizens that are unjustly detained there. And I can appreciate that you'd like more detail on that, I really do, but I'm just not at liberty to provide it right now.

Yeah.

QUESTION: Can you even say whether you are seeking consular access to the person most recently reported to the U.S. – to the dual citizen most recently reported as having been detained? I realize they don't typically provide that, but can you at least say whether you're asking for it?

MR KIRBY: Well, you know we – there's a protecting power. We don't have a consul there. I mean, I get the purpose of the question. Again, I'm really not at liberty to provide more information right now.

Yeah.

QUESTION: Thank you. One Syria-related question before transitioning to Turkey. Today, there was a suicide bombing in Qamishli, a Syrian Kurdish city, which killed about 50 and injured over 100. Want to see – I think ISIS already claimed that, if you have any comment.

MR KIRBY: Yes. Thank you. We certainly condemn in the strongest terms today's reprehensible terrorist attack that killed scores of civilians in Qamishli, Syria and we extend, of course, our deepest condolences to all the families of those that were killed, and, of course, our thoughts and prayers for those who have been injured. This attack, once again, displays the type of horrific atrocities that Daesh has perpetrated against tens of thousands of innocent people across Syria and Iraq and only affirms – reaffirms, I should say – international resolve to strengthen our efforts to degrade and defeat Daesh and to support those who are also working to degrade and defeat Daesh. And that resolve remains unchanged, wherever they might be in the world.

Now, on the details of it, I just don't have – I've, again, seen the same reports. We have no reason to doubt the veracity of the claims of responsibility by Daesh, and I – as for further details on it, I'd have to point you to authorities there.

QUESTION: On Turkey, over the weekend there was an arrest warrant issued for 42 journalists, and just today there is another warrant for detainment of 47 journalists. And there are more lists are coming up, obviously. It looks like there will be hundreds more. There are about 15,000 people detained. These are official numbers. Over 60,000 people are sacked, suspended across Turkey. I was wondering, first of all, your comment. And second, you mentioned last week or Monday that Turkey should not take excessive actions after the coup. Do you think these actions are – can be classified as excessive?

MR KIRBY: Well, we also said that we're not going to get into the business of characterizing every decision every moment that it's made. I think I would point you back to what the Secretary has said repeatedly, that we have been nothing but strong in expressing our grave concern about the failed coup. We have been nothing but strong and candid in condemning that failed coup and –condemning the coup attempt, not the fact that it failed, obviously – and expressing our unequivocal support for the democratically elected civilian government of Turkey. The President himself strongly condemned the failed coup attempt and expressed U.S. support for Turkish democratic institutions. He thanked Turkish authorities for their continued support in ensuring the safety and well-being of our diplomatic missions and personnel, American servicemen and women who are there, and civilians – our civilians throughout Turkey. And, of course, we have urged President Erdogan to show restraint, to act within the rule of law, to avoid actions that would lead to further violence and instability. We obviously support bringing the perpetrators of the coup to justice and we also continue to stress the importance of upholding democratic principles and the rule of law through the process.

QUESTION: Okay. So about these journalists – over hundred journalists. From here, do you think this many journalists can be involved with the coup? Do you think this can be realistically happened?

MR KIRBY: Well, look, I – these kinds of actions – and we've talked about this in the past, our concerns over press freedoms. I think we would see this as a continuation of what I've talked about as a troubling trend in Turkey, where

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official bodies – law enforcement and judicial – are being used to discourage legitimate political recourse – I'm sorry, discourse, legitimate political discourse. I mean, we've been I think very consistent about that.

QUESTION: Can I follow up on that? Do you believe that the current Turkish Government is systematically dismantling the institutions of society, including the judiciary and the press, that can serve on – as a check on the powers of the executive?

MR KIRBY: I think I'm going to have to point you back to what I've said here just a few minutes ago. The – we're not going to characterize each and every move as they occur. What we've been – I --

QUESTION: I'm talking about the whole thing.

MR KIRBY: What we've – what we've been very consistent on is condemning the coup attempt, the attempt by military force to overthrow a democratically elected government. I think our position was crystal clear on that since that night. And we've also, in conversations with Turkish authorities at various levels, urged restraint, a dedication to rule of law, and the democratic principles that have upheld the elected government in Turkey already.

But again, I'm not – and we're obviously watching and – developments there and we're staying in touch with Turkish authorities. Our ambassador has been in near constant communication with his counterparts in the Turkish Government. And I just don't know that we're going to be able to characterize it any deeper than that.

Yeah.

QUESTION: John, knowing your vast knowledge about the world affairs and all, most of the dictators in history have been democratically elected. Do you feel you are still saying Turkey is still a democracy when all this purging is going on?

MR KIRBY: Again, Tejinder, it is a democratically elected government, and it was a government that at least some elements of the Turkish military attempted to overthrow. There's obviously an investigation going on by Turkish authorities to figure out exactly what happened here, and how it could happen. We, as I said at the outset, understand the need for them to be able to get their arms around this failed coup and to hold the perpetrators to account. We've said that again from within the first hour or two of it happening. We've also said, and continue to believe, that a measured, deliberate approach to that that is – that observes the rule of law and due process is important. And we continue to make those concerns known.

Okay.

QUESTION: I have another one, back to Russia. It's a little out of left field, but there was also a very public accusation today that President Putin has, in the past year, publicly used an offensive racial slur to refer to black Americans and perhaps the President. It was unclear in the accusation. Is that something that you have any knowledge of, that President Putin has ever used racial slurs publicly to refer to Americans? Have you seen that?

MR KIRBY: I have not seen that, no.

QUESTION: You have not seen that?

MR KIRBY: No.

QUESTION: Yeah.

MR KIRBY: I got time for just a couple more and then I'm going to have to go.

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QUESTION: Today Turkish prime minister said to *Wall Street Journal* that evidence is crystal-clear that Fethullah Gulen, exiled cleric here, is behind the coup. And he ask why the U.S. just can't hand over this individual to us. Do you have a comment on this particular --

MR KIRBY: I haven't seen those comments. But as we've said, we have received some materials from the Turkish Government, and those materials are being reviewed. I don't have an update for you on that process.

QUESTION: Okay. Thank you.

QUESTION: I have two quick on Asia.

MR KIRBY: Okay.

QUESTION: First, I was wondering if you had anything on American citizen James Wang. He was sentenced today by a Chinese court to prison for selling magazines about the Chinese -- Chinese politics.

MR KIRBY: Yeah. We can confirm that U.S. citizen James Wang was arrested in China on the 31st of May, 2014. Since his arrest, we have asked our Chinese counterparts repeatedly for permission to visit him, including permission to attend his trial. Those requests have all been denied. We're going to continue to request access to Mr. Wang so that we may provide the appropriate consular services.

QUESTION: And then also I was wondering if you had a readout of Deputy Secretary Blinken's meeting today with his South Korean counterparts.

MR KIRBY: What I can tell you is that he is meeting with the -- I got it here somewhere, hold on. It's not in ROK. I'm looking. Oh, here it is. I'm sorry. She was yelling at me. I did have it in the right place. Sorry. He's -- the Deputy Secretary is hosting First Deputy Director of the Republic of Korea National Security Office Cho Tae-yong in Washington today for the third round of U.S.-ROK strategic consultations on North Korea policy. Those meetings are ongoing, as I understand it. They're discussing issues of mutual concern, including ways to enhance international resolve in holding North Korea accountable for its actions and its destabilizing violations of UN Security Council resolution -- sorry, resolutions. This meeting reflects our continued engagement with our partners in the region and underscores our commitment to address the pursuit of nuclear and ballistic missile capabilities by the DPRK.

I got time for just one more.

QUESTION: One more on the internal review that the department is conducting into the excising of the portion of the briefing video. Have you made any progress on establishing how that came to happen and who made the request for it?

MR KIRBY: On the -- I'm sorry, on --

QUESTION: This is on the briefing video. You remember the -- yeah.

MR KIRBY: Oh, the video. I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

QUESTION: That's okay.

MR KIRBY: No, for some reason I misunderstood the question. I can tell you that our Office of the Legal Adviser is continuing that work. It's not complete. I don't have an update for you. But they are still working at it. And when we are in a position to speak about their findings and their recommendations going forward, we'll do that.

QUESTION: Thank you.

MR KIRBY: Thanks, everybody.

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(The briefing was concluded at 1:51 p.m.)

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Daily Press Briefing Index
Tuesday, July 26, 2016
2:12 p.m. EDT
Briefers: Elizabeth Trudeau, Press Office Director

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
DAILY PRESS BRIEFING

DPB # 131

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TUESDAY, JULY 26, 2016
(ON THE RECORD UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED)

2:12 p.m. EDT

MS TRUDEAU: Thank you very much. We'll move on to the regular daily press brief.

Today, Secretary Kerry met in Laos with his counterparts from the 27-member ASEAN Regional Forum and the 18-member East Asia Summit. The foreign ministers discussed shared priorities and key challenges facing the Asia Pacific region, including North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile programs as well as the situation in South Sudan – or in the South China Sea, apologies. In addition, the ministers discussed a range of important transnational challenges, including terrorism and violent extremism, climate change, and trafficking in persons. The foreign ministers also discussed specific actions to combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing as well as ongoing concerns regarding the degradation of the marine environment.

At meetings today, several ministers including Secretary Kerry highlighted the significance of the recent decision of the tribunal in the Philippines versus China case, which is binding on both parties. Secretary Kerry also emphasized to his counterparts the importance of the full implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 2270 to curb North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile programs. As the meeting concluded, Secretary Kerry and his party continues on to Manila for meetings with President Duterte and other senior Philippine officials.

Next, on Somalia. We condemn the terrorist attack this morning in Mogadishu, which took place near the international airport. Civilian, UN, AMISOM casualties have been reported, yet we have no final confirmation on numbers yet. We extend our thoughts to the families and friends of the Somali people and United Nations and AMISOM personnel who were killed and injured in this barbarous attack. We remain committed to helping Somalia progress towards a path towards peace and prosperity and the defeat of terrorist groups; including al-Shabaab.

Finally, we would also like to extend our condolences regarding the horrific terrorist attack today at a Catholic church in Normandy, France. We offer our condolences to the family and friends of the murdered priest, Father Jacques Hamel, and our thoughts and prayers with the other victims of the attack as well as the parishioners and community members at the church. The United States and France have a shared commitment to protecting religious liberty for all faiths. Today's attack will not shake that commitment. We stand with the French as they move forward in their investigation.

And with that, we'll go to Abigail.

QUESTION: Do you have any information about reports of a shooting at a shopping mall in Sweden?

MS TRUDEAU: I do not, actually. Is that happening now?

QUESTION: There was a warning put out on the embassy website, an emergency message.

MS TRUDEAU: Okay. So that would make sense that a security message has gone out. As you know, when we do security messages for U.S. citizens overseas, it's often breaking news like that and it instantly goes to U.S. citizens who have registered. So I take the opportunity again for those who travel and work abroad, please do register with the STEP program at travel.state.gov. In terms of this latest incident, I don't have details.

Ros.

QUESTION: Yeah, can we talk about what's happening in South Sudan today?

MS TRUDEAU: Of course.

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QUESTION: Riek Machar has been basically kicked out of the government, and someone who had been the mining minister has been replaced. Is this helpful towards trying to establish unity within the government and across South Sudan writ large?

MS TRUDEAU: So I'll back up and provide a little context for this because these events are taking place rather quickly. So Taban Dang Gai, the former minister of mining, as you noted, in the transitional government was sworn in as the first vice president on July 26th. On July 25th, yesterday, President Kiir did issue a republican decree replacing former Vice President Machar with Taban Dang Gai. Machar has stated that he rejects Taban's selection as his successor and has requested that he be removed from his position in the SPLM-IO, In Opposition, as well as the transitional government.

However, we would note that the peace agreement contains procedures and requirements that govern changes in leadership in the transitional government. Specifically, the agreement provides that, and I quote, "The top leadership body of the armed opposition has the power to nominate a new first vice president if the position is vacant." A number of senior SPLM-IO, In Opposition, members in Juba met on July 23rd and agreed that Taban would take the position of first vice president. However, they also recommitted to implementation of the peace agreement and rebuilding IO unity. Other IO leaders have contested whether the group can act as the top leadership body. They've also contested whether the government can relieve Machar of this position under the agreement.

So what I would say on this is there were provisions within the peace agreement on this. The government writ large, both SPLM-In Government as well as In Opposition, remains in dialogue. We see that the president has issued a decree on this. The United States writ large stands with the people of South Sudan. We will work with the Government of South Sudan. In terms of this and whether it's allowed under the peace agreement is going to be a question for the leadership of South Sudan.

QUESTION: Does the U.S. believe that the government is operating in good faith with the replacement of Machar with Mr. Taban?

MS TRUDEAU: We believe it's up to the leaders of South Sudan to decide on their political leadership. We do expect, however, the transitional government and all parties to take every step possible to avoid the fighting and to reach a peaceful resolution of these differences.

QUESTION: Is there any input or guidance that U.S. officials are providing to all sides in South Sudan right now?

MS TRUDEAU: I wouldn't say guidance. I would say that we remain in discussion with all parties. Our fundamental concern is peace and stability in South Sudan. What we've seen is this recent spate of violence has increased the suffering of the people of South Sudan, I'm told 40 percent of whom face hunger. This latest spate of violence, this political situation now, does not add to the stability which the people of South Sudan so clearly need.

QUESTION: Turkey?

MS TRUDEAU: Yes.

QUESTION: Thank you. My first question is last week U.S. Government stated that it received documents from Turkey regarding extradition process for Fethullah Gulen, and you were going to take a look whether this can be qualified as an extradition request. Are you – have you made that decision yet?

MS TRUDEAU: I have no update on that. As we mentioned last week and I believe we touched on this week too, we have received documents. We continue to review them. So I have no update on that.

QUESTION: The Turkish foreign minister Cavusoglu today stated that they have – even though they already submitted necessary documents to U.S. Government, they have not responded that yet. Do you have any particular response to that comment?

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MS TRUDEAU: I wouldn't. I'd let the foreign minister's comments stand. But I would say that as we've said, the extradition process is a formal process, it's a legal process, it's a technical process, it's governed by the extradition treaty that both our governments signed. So we're going to let that process play out.

QUESTION: Okay, and another question. After the coup -- I haven't been able to ask this question. Yesterday, there is a new arrest warrant for 42 journalists, and there are more. These 42 journalists only just yesterday numbers. And for example, there are 19 journalists, arrest warrants for 19 journalists in Antalya, south city, and there are other cities similar warrants. Are you concerned that after the coup attempt government is moving to basically go after the critical voices and news journalists along with the coup plotters or allegedly coup plotters?

MS TRUDEAU: Well, I'd say what we've said repeatedly: In a democratic society, critical voices need to be encouraged; they don't need to be silenced. We have said many times, not just in relation to Turkey but countries around the world, that democracies become stronger when they let voices from diverse points of view speak.

I'd note, and the President has spoken to this himself, we've conveyed both publicly and in private conversations with our Turkish friends and allies the importance of protecting freedom of the press. We are committed to defend freedom of the press, media freedom, due process, freedom of assembly everywhere in the world.

QUESTION: So in terms of in this context, are you concerned with this ongoing campaign of arrests for Turkish journalists?

MS TRUDEAU: So what I would say is that we have actually spoken to this. The President spoke to this and we'll let his comments stand.

QUESTION: The Travel Warning notes that the voluntary departure of relatives of those working for U.S. embassy and consulate personnel has been authorized.

MS TRUDEAU: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: What has changed in the last several days, since it does seem that, for better or worse, President Erdogan has a firm grip on power? Why is it not safe for the relatives to stay?

MS TRUDEAU: Okay, so it's important to differentiate on this. This is an authorized departure, so this is an authorized departure. I think many of you saw the Travel Warning that went out. It's an authorized departure for our embassy in Ankara as well as our consulate in Istanbul for the family members of U.S. personnel stationed there. This is a precautionary measure. It does follow the July 15th attempted coup. We continue to monitor the security developments there, and as we have information, of course, as we are obligated to do, we will share that with the American public. But again, this is an abundance of caution, and again, this is optional. So this is authorized; this is not ordered.

Yes, ma'am.

QUESTION: On the attack on the Catholic church in France and the --

MS TRUDEAU: Horrific.

QUESTION: -- murder of the elderly priest. Last year, the German news weekly *Der Spiegel* published an analysis of Daesh which was a leak from German intelligence, and it said that Daesh was created in Syria as the regime there began to lose its grip and that Daesh was established by former Iraqi intelligence officers in Syria, and then they took it back into Iraq. And the Kurdish leadership in and out of government has said pretty much the same, like President Barzani's media advisor in 2014, quote, "Most of the people in the region believe that the organization known as ISIL is actually founded and ruled by the Baath." Is that an analysis that you would agree with, or you have a different view?

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MS TRUDEAU: So you're asking me to comment on a leaked German report.

QUESTION: Well, I'm -- okay, let me say -- how do you -- how do you understand the structure of this organization which has murdered this priest --

MS TRUDEAU: So -- sure.

QUESTION: -- ISIS or Daesh or -- how do you understand its structure? Who's ruling it?

MS TRUDEAU: I would say that there's been books written about the -- what Daesh is, the structure of Daesh, how they continue to adapt and change. Certainly, from this building, while the history of Daesh and where they came from -- the rise of Daesh and, in fact, violent extremism writ large in ungoverned spaces -- is something that we talk about a lot. I think where this building is and where our counterparts are in the interagency is how do we fight them as they continue to adapt, and where is the commitment in the international community to combat Daesh.

And so you saw this last week, and we spoke about it earlier this week. You see -- I think we're now at 67 countries and international organizations have joined around the world to combat Daesh. I'm not going to speak about where they started or what their foundation was, but really what we're very focused on is how they're adapting and how we can adapt to mitigate that risk.

QUESTION: Don't you think it's -- Sun Tzu, know the enemy, to understand Daesh -- that to fight Daesh most effectively, one should understand what it is?

MS TRUDEAU: Oh, absolutely, and I agree with you on that, and also taking a look at how they continue to adapt and change. We've spoken many times from this podium too that as the amount of territory that they control in Iraq and Syria shrinks, that we do see these attacks that are -- don't require coordination, they don't require a lot of resources. And also, frankly, we have discussions about what it means for attacks to be inspired by Daesh or maybe directed by Daesh. This is a very fluid, I would say, security situation and a fluid group. So we are very much committed to finding out about them. We have whole departments within the interagency focused on this.

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

MS TRUDEAU: Yeah, I'm sorry. So we're going to stay in Syria and then I'll go to you, Samir. Of course.

QUESTION: Regarding the Secretary's recent talks with Foreign Minister Lavrov about how to proceed militarily inside Syria, has there been a formal agreement reached between the two governments as part of going after Daesh and other terrorist groups inside the country? When might we expect a formal explanation of what this would require from all parties?

MS TRUDEAU: So I think you saw the Secretary had a press conference, actually, in Laos where he spoke to this a little. We're not going to speak to what we're going to do over the next couple weeks until it's done, if it's done. We've been doing our homework; we've been doing a lot of it. We've been talking to our partners in the international community. We do hope that somewhere within the first week or two of August we'll be in a position to tell you what we're able to do, frankly in the hopes that it'll make a difference in the lives of the people of Syria. So no, I'm not in a position now to unpack that. I'd stay where the Secretary stayed today in Laos.

QUESTION: Is there any indication that, whatever the U.S. is expecting Russia to do, Russia will do it?

MS TRUDEAU: So the Secretary also spoke to this. This is not an agreement, as we've said, that's based on trust. Certainly this building, I think, is very pragmatic on this. We have seen, as we've said, that Russia does have an influence in that country, in that arena, with this regime. We continue to have conversations about how to make that influence mean something to the people of Syria.

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QUESTION: Thank you.

MS TRUDEAU: Samir.

QUESTION: There's a press report that Jabhat al-Nusrah is expected to announce soon it's disconnecting its relations with al-Qaida. Is this going to change -- is this going to influence the cooperation with Russia or --

MS TRUDEAU: I've seen that report. I just don't have a comment on it. We believe Nusrah's fundamental nature is that it's al-Qaida in Syria.

Okay.

QUESTION: Even if they announce that --

MS TRUDEAU: This is -- this would be something, one, I'm not going to speculate out, and two, we believe its fundamental nature is well known.

Abbie.

QUESTION: Syria.

MS TRUDEAU: Oh, I'm sorry. Are we staying on Syria?

QUESTION: Yeah.

MS TRUDEAU: Sort of. We're going to Syria, and then I'll come back to you, Abbie.

QUESTION: Just one question on Syria. In northern Syria, in Rojava region, Syrian Kurdish region, some time ago there's reports that the U.S. is building a Rmeilan air base. Do you have any update on that air base?

MS TRUDEAU: Absolutely not. It wouldn't be for the State Department to speak to it. But I've seen no reports of information on that.

Abigail.

QUESTION: Foreign Minister Lavrov this morning denied any association with a hack into the Democratic National Convention emails. Secretary Kerry briefly addressed this, but is there belief from within this building that they accept their denials?

MS TRUDEAU: So Secretary Kerry did address it. The belief within this building is that the FBI is doing an investigation. It's a live investigation. We're going to let that play out.

QUESTION: Can I switch to Estonia?

MS TRUDEAU: You, of course, can switch to Estonia.

QUESTION: There was a message put out that there was a warning of a possible bomb threat at the international airport there, the credibility of which was unknown. Has there been any further information found out? Was it a credible threat?

MS TRUDEAU: I don't have further information for that. I'd direct you to the Estonians to speak to.

Goyal.

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QUESTION: South Asia?

MS TRUDEAU: Of course. You were just at the White House. How'd you get over here so fast?

QUESTION: Oh, I didn't know you were watching me there.

MS TRUDEAU: Of course. (Laughter.) How are you?

QUESTION: Thank you. Madam, I just have two questions on South Asia, one on Pakistan and one on India.

MS TRUDEAU: Of course.

QUESTION: As far as Pakistan is concerned, there's a particular one community in Pakistan, they're called Muhajirs, and it's an ethnic community and which has been under attack by the Pakistani military and by the terrorists there and extremists and all that. Several times they had demonstrated here at the State Department, outside, and – but this week on Saturday, they were at the White House, several hundred of them, and they were asking justice from the President and from the Secretary, that their community is under attack because of their human rights belief and all that, and they don't consider them to be Pakistanis or Muslims even, some of those in the military and their intelligence, ISI, among other things. And they're – even they came from 35 countries and also all over the U.S. to voice their genocide against their community.

My question is here, at the same time, there was a handful of demonstrators also counting them –or countering them, and they were praising the Pakistani military and the military who is taking action against these minorities and ethnic groups, and these group, small group was supporting them, the military of Pakistan. So where does this community stand? And because many times the Secretary meets many Pakistani officials and also we had many officials here. So what is their future? What message do you think Secretary has for these and other minorities under attack in Pakistan?

MS TRUDEAU: So what I would say – not speaking to the protest, of which, frankly, I wasn't tracking, but speaking broadly to the issue of human rights and the issue of minority rights, not only in Pakistan but around the world – is that the United States continues to work hard and in our engagements both bilaterally with countries as well as broad reports, like our Human Rights Report, to detail and express concern and to engage with governments to support the rights of marginalized, disadvantaged minority groups around the world. It's of enormous importance to the U.S. And again, not saying America's perfect, but saying that this is something, I think, that we as an international community can all learn from each other on.

And you had a question on India?

QUESTION: Yes. As far as terrorism is concerned and U.S. India has now agreement and treaty and also meeting and greetings as far as fighting against terrorism inside India or ISIL and others. Now India has been fighting against terrorism, in which many of – are tracking India from outside, across the border and also. So where do we stand today – U.S., India, terrorism-fighting treaties? Or where are we there, as far as fighting against terrorism, which India has been shouting – shout – and also asking the U.S. help – to help India bring those wanted by India from other countries?

MS TRUDEAU: Well, not speaking specifically to any particular case, I would say as two large democracies, the United States and India have a joint commitment to fighting against violent extremism – the kind that impacts the people of India or the kind that impacts anywhere around the world. India, unfortunately, has suffered at the hands of terrorists. They understand this issue and our cooperation – law enforcement, counterterrorism, countering violent extremism – is extremely strong and robust. Okay.

QUESTION: May I have one more quickly on China?

MS TRUDEAU: One more quick and then I'll move over here.

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QUESTION: Okay. Thank you.

MS TRUDEAU: Go ahead.

QUESTION: So according to the Reuters, the North Korean foreign minister who was visiting the Laos said to the reporters that any additional nuclear test depends on the position of the United States. Are you aware of this statement, and are you – is there any reaction on this?

MS TRUDEAU: So I've seen the foreign minister's comments. Our position, I think, would be what it has been continually from this podium and from the U.S., is we call on North Korea to refrain from actions and rhetoric that further destabilize the region. We think that they should focus on taking concrete steps to fulfilling its commitments and international obligations.

Ros?

QUESTION: Yeah. The Israeli-U.S. defense relationship.

MS TRUDEAU: Yeah.

QUESTION: Do you – can you confirm Israeli reports that Jacob Nagel, the acting national security advisor, is coming to the U.S. over this coming weekend to meet with, among others, the National Security Advisor Susan Rice to talk about finalizing a new 10-year military deal?

MS TRUDEAU: I can't. For issues on Ambassador Rice's meeting, I'd refer you to the White House on that.

QUESTION: Do – are you aware of any meetings that may be held with pol-mil folks in this building?

MS TRUDEAU: I am not. I am not. Thanks, guys.

QUESTION: Thank you.

(The briefing was concluded at 2:35 p.m.)

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Office of the Spokesperson

For Immediate Release

July 27, 2016

REMARKS

Secretary of State John Kerry
And Philippines Foreign Secretary Perfecto Yasay

July 27, 2016
Manila, Philippines

MODERATOR: Good morning to everyone, and welcome to the joint press conference of the Philippine secretary of foreign affairs and United States Secretary of State. To begin, Philippines Secretary of Foreign Affairs the Honorable Perfecto R. Yasay, Jr., will give his opening statement.

FOREIGN SECRETARY YASAY: Good morning. I am pleased to welcome Secretary John Kerry and his delegation to the Philippines. The U.S. Secretary of State is the first foreign minister to call on the president later today. We appreciate this gesture of goodwill, which demonstrates the strength of the Philippines-U.S. alliance and the importance of the alliance to the United States. This year marks the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Philippines and the United States, and the 65th anniversary of the Mutual Defense Treaty. Our alliance is part of the web of U.S. security alliances in the region that helped maintain peace, security, and prosperity in Asia Pacific. The Philippine Government remains fully committed to this alliance.

In our meeting today, I had the opportunity to consult with Secretary Kerry on a full range of issues in our bilateral relations. I assured Secretary Kerry that we will help – that we'll pursue our planning process for the full implementation of EDCA. The EDCA will help us prepare for the humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations and contribute to our AFP modernization efforts. We also discussed common challenges, in particular the threat of violent extremism. The Philippines recognizes U.S. leadership to counter violent extremism, and we express our desire to continue working with the U.S., as we have in the past, in our own efforts to fight terrorism.

On the issue of maritime disputes in the South China Sea, we thank the U.S. Government for its statement of support for the arbitration decision and its call for restraint by all parties. The United States is our only treaty ally, and we will continue our consultations and engagements with them on a way forward with our national interests paramount and with full consideration for the award from the Arbitral Tribunal. We work with the United States on many regional and global issues, and I look forward to working with Secretary Kerry on initiatives that will advance our mutual interests.

Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Secretary Yasay. At this point, the United States Secretary of State the Honorable John F. Kerry will give his opening statement.

SECRETARY KERRY: Well, thank you very much. Mr. Foreign Secretary, Jun, thank you very, very much for your welcome here – very, very warm welcome. And I'm really happy to be back in Manila, back in the Philippines, a place that I've traveled to many times through the years, and I'm particularly glad to be here and honored to be the first foreign secretary, foreign minister that you've received. It's a privilege, and I look forward to meeting with the president.

Being here so soon after the election and remembering the journey of many years – I commented to one of my staff people today that it brought back a lot of the memories of the early days when I first came here back in 1986. It's hard

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for me to believe that it is three decades ago. But in 1986, as a young senator, I joined an international effort to monitor the snap election that had been called here by President Marcos, and I traveled all around this beautiful country during those period of time. And everywhere I went, particularly when I went on election day – I flew by helicopter all the way down to Mindanao and stopped in various places in between – and I saw people standing in long lines in the hot sun, very hot day. They were standing by the thousands, waiting long hours to be able to vote, and literally doing their part to make democracy work. I can't tell you how impressed I was. And I went back to the United States Senate and I talked about the courage and the determination of the people of the Philippines to make their democracy work. I still remember the yellow shirts, the pro-democracy banners, and I look wherever at people who vote and I don't think I've ever seen the kind of enthusiasm and hope that people expressed, with men and women participating in an election for the first time – a real election.

The courage of that moment displayed by the people of the Philippines inspired people all across the globe, and it helped to spark an historic movement towards democracy that was felt by those people all around the world. Today, this nation is a model of democracy. The election that was held here in May was open and transparent, it offered a real choice, and the voters flocked to the polls – a turnout of more than 80 percent. That is exactly what democracy is all about, and I congratulate the Filipino people and I very much look forward to congratulating President Duterte on his victory in person later today.

My purpose in coming to Manila today is to underscore the value that the United States places on the alliance and the true friendship and relationship that we have with the people of this country. The U.S.-Filipino relationship has absolutely withstood the test of time and it is clearly one of our most important in the Asia Pacific. Foreign Secretary Yasay was in Vientiane with me this week for the ASEAN Regional Forum and the East Asia Summit, and this morning he and I discussed a few of the key issues that came up during those ministerial meetings, including, obviously, the situation in the South China Sea. Now, I made it clear in Vientiane and I make it clear here, as I have everywhere, that the United States does not – we are not a claimant, and the United States does not take a position on the competing sovereignty claims to the land features of the South China Sea, but we do take a strong position on protecting the rights, the freedoms, and the lawful uses of air and sea space as defined by international law. We take a strong position in support of the rule of law. We have made clear that the decision of the Arbitral Tribunal convened under the UN Law of the Sea Convention is legally binding, and that we expect that the parties should comply with their obligations under law. Now, the rights of all countries under the law should always be respected. That is what international law is about; that is what a rules-based order is about.

At the same time – and I want to be equally clear about this – we urge all the claimants to exercise restraint and to work to reduce tensions. In our meeting today, I told the foreign secretary that we appreciate the very responsible and measured way that the Philippine Government has responded to the decision. That's been important. In all my meetings in Vientiane, including with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, there was a consistent focus expressed by everybody, including the Chinese foreign minister, to turn the page on the past confrontations. And looking ahead, we hope and see a real opportunity for claimants to work together to constructively, peacefully manage and ultimately resolve their differences consistent with international law. We hope to see a process that will narrow the geographic scope of the maritime disputes; set standards for behavior in contested areas; lead to mutually acceptable solutions – perhaps even a series of confidence-building steps. We hope to see a diplomatic process between and among the claimants, without coercion or the use or threat of force. And we look forward to working with all of the parties in order to advance the goals that I have just expressed.

But we have a much broader agenda, my friends, than just the question of the South China Sea. We continue to work together with Philippines and with other countries in the region on law enforcement and on regional security and on combating transnational crimes like human trafficking. I made very clear that civil and human rights need to be protected even as we work to keep our societies safe. We also work together on countering violent extremism. Unfortunately, the Philippines is no stranger to the threat of terrorism. This nation has been managing these threats by groups like Abu Sayyaf for some period of time, and our nations work very, very closely together – excuse me – our nations work very closely together in order to counter those threats.

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In addition, the U.S.-Philippines Mutual Defense Treaty, which Jun referred to, has been a cornerstone of security in the region for decades, and the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement, the EDCA, is exactly what the foreign secretary has defined it as. It not only helps us to coordinate our efforts to maintain peace and stability in the region, but it also allows the United States to provide rapid assistance to the Philippines in the event of an emergency because it enables us to be able to preposition humanitarian relief supplies. I personally saw firsthand the importance of this disaster response when I visited Tacloban very soon after the devastation of Typhoon Haiyan. And I saw the unbelievable destruction that that typhoon wreaked on that community, the buildings that were just wiped away, the water that came up to the airport tower, the mountains that were just completely shredded and these major trees. It underscored the importance not only of disaster response, but it also underscored the importance of our doing things about climate change so that we prevent this increased intensity of storms that are costing all of us so much money.

Moving forward, the EDCA agreement will also expand opportunities for our militaries to train together, and that will help to modernize the armed forces of the Philippines in order to help them to be able to increase their effectiveness in responding to 21st century threats.

Beyond our defense and our military partnership, the United States and the Philippines have expanding economic ties which are very important in order to provide jobs for our people, raise the standard of living, increase the opportunity for health care and education, for people to be able to get better and better jobs. Last year, the economy here was one of the fastest-growing in the world, and we fully support the government's efforts to make the country even more competitive in the global market by promoting free trade, protecting intellectual property rights, fighting corruption, and pursuing sustainable development. And even though the Philippines is not a member of the TPP, definitely the Philippines can benefit from the high standards that this agreement will set for the entire region.

The bottom line is that the friendship between the United States and the Philippines is a deep friendship. It is deeper than just our economic and our defense cooperation. It is rooted in history. It is rooted in our support for democratic institutions and values. It is rooted in our people and the relationship of our people to each other. And as you know, we have a large Filipino American community which contributes so much to the life of our country. Nearly a quarter of a million Americans live here in the Philippines, and roughly 4 million Filipinos live in the United States, which is further binding our two nations together through cultural and familial ties.

To an extent, I think it's fair to say that we see a bit of each other in ourselves, and that's a good thing, and we understand that. Just as our nations have been linked historically, so to our future prosperity and our security will go hand in hand.

So again, I am pleased to be here. I look forward to meeting with President Duterte. I speak for President Obama and the entire Administration in saying that we look forward to working with President Duterte and with all of our friends in the Philippines for the benefit of both of our countries and for all of those countries in the region and in the world that can benefit from the strength of our relationship.

Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Secretary Kerry. The floor is now open for questions. Due to our extremely tight schedule, we can only take two questions, one from each side, and no follow-up question, please. We'll take the first question from the Philippine media. Mr. J. C. Gotinga from CNN Philippines will ask a question.

QUESTION: This question is for Secretary Yasay, but of course, the Secretary is free to answer if he should want to.

Secretary Yasay, how does the Duterte administration plan to implement the EDCA in light of the fact that China is disregarding the ruling from the Arbitral Tribunal?

FOREIGN SECRETARY YASAY: To begin with, let me say that the ruling and EDCA has no bearing or direct bearing whatsoever. Even as China has made its statement not to respect or recognize the decision, it does not automatically on

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that basis kick into play EDCA. It continues. And I'd like to assure you that the president has also committed to make sure that our agreements with the United States will be fully fulfilled and respected.

SECRETARY KERRY: I think the minister answered it very effectively.

MODERATOR: The next question will come from the U.S. media. Ms. Lesley Wroughton of Reuters will ask a question.

QUESTION: Thank you. Mr. Foreign Minister, good morning. The -- I wanted to talk just a little about the South China Sea. Was the joint statement from the ASEAN nations really a victory for ASEAN when it skipped to mention of the arbitration decision and basically stuck to its pro forma comments, as it always did?

And then to the Secretary, only six countries have joined the United States --

SECRETARY KERRY: We're both secretaries.

QUESTION: I'm sorry. It's early morning. (Laughter.)

SECRETARY KERRY: That's okay.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, only six countries have joined the United States calling publicly for it to be respected, and both ASEAN and the EU have also shied away from publicly calling for that. How does one prevent the ruling from becoming irrelevant, and how do you think these diplomatic discussions -- what you heard today, how do you see these diplomatic discussions moving ahead?

FOREIGN SECRETARY YASAY: Let me answer the question first. The merits of the decision of the Arbitral Tribunal is a matter of concern between China and the Philippines, and China and the Philippines hope to engage each other in moving forward to the peaceful implementation of the arbitral award.

Insofar as your -- the other aspect of your question is --

QUESTION: I asked if it wasn't really a victory for the ASEAN countries.

FOREIGN SECRETARY YASAY: Okay, I think it was a triumph for ASEAN. If you will look at the joint communique and the statement, it covers all of the elements and fundamental principles on which ASEAN is based and which justify the existence of ASEAN. They have talked about the respect for legal processes and the democratic processes in resolving this dispute. It has talked about upholding international law and the 1982 UNCLOS. It has also expressed their concerns about the actions that have been taken that destabilize such as the reclamation activities that has been undertaken, and this is very important. And more importantly, it has asked all of the parties concerned to exercise restraint and sobriety towards the peaceful settlement of their disputes.

So this to me is a triumph for ASEAN because it makes ASEAN more credible to the international community and it makes it more efficient, effective, and relevant as a regional group.

SECRETARY KERRY: Thank you, Lesley. I think that Secretary Yasay has given a very good answer. I'll just add a couple things to it. I'd ask you to go read the communique paragraph for paragraph as I did before we approved it. And I was very satisfied that the communique clearly referenced all legal rights, all legal decisions, legal process, legal tribunal, legal decisions, without mentioning the arbitration. And sometimes, frankly, at a meeting like that and diplomacy, you don't always have to -- you don't always have to include every single word that may, in fact, sometimes make it harder to get to the dialogue that you want to get to.

But every single principle, every single value of rule of law, was embraced in that communique. The communique said clearly that everybody supported the Law of the Sea process. Everybody supported the rule of law. Everybody thought

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that there must be a reduction of tension. Everybody thought that people needed to abide by what the legal requirements were under the law, and they had to be resolved by rule of law.

Now, I made it clear and I think the foreign secretary made it clear, as has everybody else, that the decision itself is a binding decision. But we're not trying to create a confrontation. We're trying to create a solution mindful of the rights of people that are established under the law. So whatever – as we encourage the Philippines and we encourage the Chinese and we encourage other claimants to engage in negotiations, that's now new. I did that when I went to Beijing and China three years ago, and President Obama has said that. We are consistently, year after year, urging parties to negotiate, to work this through diplomatically, bilaterally, multilaterally, build up confidence-building measures. And when we say that we urge a negotiation, we do so obviously understanding that our friend and ally, the Philippines, can only do so on terms that are acceptable to the Government of the Philippines.

So my judgment is hopefully you shouldn't be looking for the confrontation; you should be looking for the solution. And I believe that was a communique that helps perhaps to move people towards the kind of discussion that could bring about a conclusion. But it still is mindful of what we believe is the impact and judgment of that decision itself.

QUESTION: But Mr. Secretary, if you don't mention the ruling publicly, if nobody admits it, then are you not afraid that it could become irrelevant?

SECRETARY KERRY: It's impossible for it to be irrelevant. It's legally binding and it's obviously a decision of the court that is recognized under international law and it has to be part of the calculation. And I am confident our friends in the Philippines will make their judgments about what their negotiating position is and how they intend to proceed forward. What we want to do is urge people to not try to build up the tensions, don't take provocative actions, leave a space here for people to be able to find a way forward that meets the needs of the region, of the nations, and also respects people's rights and obligations.

Thank you all very much.

FOREIGN SECRETARY YASAY: Thank you.

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Office of the Spokesperson

For Immediate Release

July 27, 2016

REMARKS

Secretary of State John Kerry
With YSEALI Alumni on Marine Conservation

July 27, 2016
Manila, Philippines

MS OPOSA: According to the Secretary John Kerry, the ocean is sort of in his DNA. He grew up with an affinity for the sea, first as a young boy in Massachusetts fishing and clamming, and then as an officer in the U.S. Navy. This passion for the blue world was evident when he was a U.S. senator. As chairman of the Senate Oceans and Fisheries Subcommittee, he oversaw the rewriting of fishery laws, the creation of the Stellwagen Bank Sanctuary, the passing of the Coastal Zone Management Act, and more.

Since becoming Secretary of State in 2013, Secretary Kerry has elevated ocean conservation, climate change, energy, and other environmental issues into core matters of U.S. foreign policy. As a result, the U.S. Department of State and the United States Agency of International Development have increased support for ocean conservation and environmental projects all over the world, including the Sea and Earth Advocates Camp, or SEA Camps, here in the Philippines. Since 2015, six SEA Camps have empowered 127 young Filipino emerging leaders to make sustainable waves of change in their communities, showing the Philippines and the world that we are never too young to lead.

Secretary Kerry, all the SEA Campers are here today because we recognize that our ocean faces enormous challenges. But because of you, we have a cause for optimism and inspiration. The YSEALI SEA Camp experience has led us to believe that our solutions, idealism and our hope can turn the tide towards a better ocean future, and for that we thank you.

Ladies, gentlemen, and SEA-tizens, the 68th U.S. Secretary of State, Secretary John Kerry. (Applause.)

SECRETARY KERRY: Thank you. Anna, thank you very much. (In Filipino.) (Laughter.) Happy to see you all. You look so comfortable in those chairs, I got to tell you. (Laughter.) You better not fall asleep on me. Is that a deal? Okay. We'll wake you up and shake you and throw you in the ocean, that's what we'll do. (Laughter.) I am really happy to be here with all of you. I want you to relax. Oh, are you planning to do something? Is he calling on people? Okay, later, we'll --

MS OPOSA: (Off-mike.)

SECRETARY KERRY: Give me a couple minutes. Anyway, this is a great pleasure for me. I am really happy to be able to be here to share some thoughts with you, and I don't want to just talk at you, okay? I want you to ask questions. I want you to share your thoughts. And I'm really grateful that you have chosen to be SEA Campers within the YSEALI program, which is one of the best things we do, and it's a great idea President Obama put in place. I think it's going to be one of the great things that he will continue to work on when he finishes being President, is working with you and other young people around the world to try to help make a difference.

But -- and I love your shirt. Look at that: "Never too young to lead." Do you believe that? Okay, you better believe that. (Laughter.) Because it happens to be true. Young people historically have always made amazing differences in the life of countries everywhere. I know in my country when I was in high school is when I actually first became involved in politics, and then in college, many of our friends, my friends, me, others became involved in civil rights efforts in

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America, became involved in the environment movement, in women's effort trying to get an equal rights amendment, other things. And we're still breaking barriers, obviously, in America. I'm not allowed to be involved in partisan politics, but I don't think it's partisan for me to say how significant it is that the United States has nominated a woman to lead one of its major parties to be president of the United States. It's a huge step forward in terms of – whether you're for her or against her, it's a big moment in the United States of America. And I think other countries have been ahead of us in that, obviously. Great Britain has its second woman prime minister, and other countries have been – so – and here, Cory Aquino. I worked very, very closely in the election process here in the Philippines a number of years ago, and during the time when Cory Aquino was running for president, and NAMFREL, the national movement for free elections in the Philippines, was working – excuse me – and I remember working very, very closely with them in an effort to make sure the elections were what everybody in the Philippines expected them to be.

But here this morning, we're here to talk about your ability to lead with respect to a challenge that a lot of people don't tune into and don't understand. A lot of people look out at the ocean and they see this vast expanse of water and everybody says, wow, it's the ocean, and it's bigger than any of us, and there's no way any of us have an ability to be able to hurt the ocean. But you know that's wrong, right? It's very wrong. The oceans are critical to life on the planet, because 50 percent of the oxygen that we breathe comes through the cycling process of the oceans. But people don't treat it that way. Increasingly now, the oceans are threatened. One-third of the fisheries of the world are overfished – significantly overfished. And if you overfish, if you kill any species of anything that is essential to a cycle – food supply cycle or otherwise, the life cycle – because it eats other insects or it is a predator that keeps the population of a particular herd of something at the right level – it's all a cycle. It's all worked for millions of years, been developing – there are changes. But three-quarters of this planet is the ocean. It could be called Ocean rather than Earth, because more of it is ocean.

But the fact is that the oceans, with the fishing that's taking place – fishing has to be done sustainably, and if you don't fish sustainably, if you fish out a stock, particularly during a time of the year in the reproductive time of the year, you are depriving yourself – ourselves – of the future stocks of fish. And then all of a sudden food begins to disappear. Work begins to disappear. Once upon a time in my home state of Massachusetts, while I was still a United States senator, we had to stop all fishing completely for the striped bass because it was being fished so much it was disappearing. For 10 years, people were not allowed to fish striped bass at all. And guess what? The stock came back, and now people are able to fish. There's a limit on the size of the fish you can take and so forth, and the result is that we have a sustainable cycle of fishing taking place.

Well, the same thing is true anywhere out in the ocean. Too many sharks are being killed. Sharks are a critical predator with respect to the cycle of the ocean, but people kill sharks in some – many places just for the fin, just for the shark fin, for the soup. And in many, many parts of the world, two-thirds of the fish that are caught in any particular catch are thrown overboard. It's called bycatch, and the bycatch gets thrown away and not used for one purpose or another.

Now, there have to be ways for us to implement some better rules on fisheries, and that's what we're trying to do right now. I am hosting in Washington, in September, on the 15th and 16th of September, foreign ministers, environment ministers, and people will come from all around the world to Washington to join us in a two-day conference called Our Ocean – the Our Ocean Conference. It's the third one that we've done. We did the first one the year after I came in as Secretary. The next one Chile agreed to do; we went to Chile and did that. This one we're doing, the last one while I'm Secretary. Next year the Europeans, the EU, have accepted to do it. The year after that Indonesia has asked to do it. And I think there's one other country – oh, Norway wants to do it. So we have three years in the future that we will be continuing to focus on what you're working on right now.

Now, fishing is one aspect of what's happening to the oceans that is dangerous. There is illegal, unreported, unregulated fishing taking place in the world. And on the high seas, it's very difficult to be able to enforce because you don't have ships out there, you don't have police out there, you don't have people who are making sure people are living by the rules. And so, regrettably, because it's worth money – a lot of money – people send people out there and they wind up scooping up a lot of fish – a whole lot of fish. And we have these long monofilament lines out fishing,

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driftnet fishing. It's supposed to be not allowed but some people still do it, and the result is that they are just strip-mining the ocean. I mean, literally, it just sweeps it out. There are worse things that happen.

The second really big danger is pollution itself – plastic, all kinds of plastic. Eight million tons of plastic is dumped into the ocean every single year. A year ago or so, we had a group of people who went out and did a cleanup – young people just like yourselves. They did it – maybe some of you were part of that here. Did a huge cleanup along the shoreline and they collected 18 million tons of plastic in one day. That's enough for one hundred – the weight of that would be the equivalent of one hundred 737s, Boeing 737s airplanes. It's incredible. In a few years, if we keep going the way we're going, by 2050, which is not so far away, there'll be more plastic in the ocean than there will be fish. And the fish – what happens is the plastic breaks down and marine mammals ingest it and they die, and birds and so forth. So I mean, it's a serious problem.

The final challenge to the oceans that I'll just talk about today quickly is climate change. Climate change is warming the ocean, changing ocean current patterns, changing the capacity of certain things to live in certain places. The acidification that comes from the carbon dioxide that we put up into the sky, into the atmosphere, from the burning of coal and fossil fuels, that CO2 comes back and dumps into the ocean and it raises the acidity of the ocean. Now, ask anybody who does agriculture and they'll tell you that if you're trying to grow a plant in your garden, you're trying to grow a tree or flowers, it depends on the level of acidity in the earth as to what can prosper and what doesn't prosper. Some things like a lot of acidity; some things don't. But in the ocean, the acidity, the carbon dioxide breaks down and becomes carbonic acid, and that gets into the systems of crustaceans – clams, lobsters, different kinds of hard-shell animals, et cetera, marine mammals. And what happens to them is they break down. And we're beginning to see mutations. We see clams that, depending on the level of acidity, it goes from a big clam with a little acidity to a very, very small clam with lots of acidity, and that's going to affect the food cycle.

So I'm going to end and get you involved in this conversation. I just want to tell every one of you, you see, it's much more complicated than people think. It's a great big ocean. It's wonderful to tip your toes in it and swim in it and go to the beach and enjoy it, but it needs to be protected. And that's why all of you at the SEA Camp are really doing – such an important way to spend your time, and I really appreciate what you're up to.

The final thing I'll just mention to you, We are announcing a program called 1000 Actions for our Ocean, which you're aware of, I think. It's ordered to help people choose to do the kind of thing that did that cleanup before, when people got all of that garbage out of the oceans. And I hope every single one of you is going to come up with a really good idea for some kind of action and some way for you to be able to make a difference.

So on that note, I see you're all still awake so let me throw it open. Let's have a discussion, let me answer any questions, or just share with me some observation that you have about what you're learning here at the camp and what we need to be thinking about. Who wants to go first?

Anna, are you going to run this, or are you going to – do you want me to just call on someone?

MS OPOSA: We'll start with recent YSEALI SEA Camp. We granted a few projects --

SECRETARY KERRY: Okay, great.

QUESTION: Good morning, Mr. Secretary. My name (inaudible) and this is my friend (inaudible). Mr. Secretary, sir.

SECRETARY KERRY: That's okay.

QUESTION: Currently, we're working on a project Expo-Sea, exposure and educational --

SECRETARY KERRY: What's it called?

QUESTION: Expo-Sea.

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SECRETARY KERRY: Expo-Sea.

QUESTION: Yes, it's (inaudible.)

MS OPOSA: Yes, it's a blend of the words exposure and sea.

QUESTION: So it's exposure and education activity for school children (inaudible). It's a exposure and education activity for the local school children in (inaudible).

MS OPOSA: So contrary to popular belief, it's not always the locals of such sites who truly benefit from the Thai tourism industry. So what we want to do through project Expo-Sea is we want to hold a snorkeling workshop, games, and basic lectures that aim to develop and (inaudible) the attitude, skills, and knowledge necessary for becoming effective future marine leaders.

SECRETARY KERRY: That's cool, that's great. So you're going to get lots of local folks. Are you going to focus on young people or you're going to focus on everybody?

MS OPOSA: Our target group is 13 to 17 years old.

SECRETARY KERRY: Thirteen to 17.

MS OPOSA: Yes.

SECRETARY KERRY: And how are you going to reach people? Through schools or --

MS OPOSA: Yes, the local public --

SECRETARY KERRY: Schools.

MS OPOSA: -- elementary schools.

SECRETARY KERRY: Will you do this year-round or summertime?

MS OPOSA: We're targeting August 27th, this August 27th.

SECRETARY KERRY: And you'll go through the year?

MS OPOSA: We're going to start with a one-day workshop (inaudible).

SECRETARY KERRY: Okay, and see how you can build out from there. Well, congratulations. That's a great idea. Thank you. That's wonderful. Good for you. (Applause.)

Hi there, how are you?

QUESTION: Hi, good morning, sir. My name is Pan Nibir (ph). I am a YSEALI SEA Camper participant from (inaudible) Manila. And the name of my project is called -- it's called Screen Your Sunscreen.

SECRETARY KERRY: Screen --

QUESTION: -- Your Sunscreen.

SECRETARY KERRY: Oh, Screen your Sunscreen. I love that. I know what's coming here. (Laughter.)

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QUESTION: So Screen Your Sunscreen is a social media-led digital initiative which aims to raise awareness on the negative effects of oxybenzone, the chemical found in most commercial sunscreens, on our coral reefs and marine life. So after the project, what we want to happen is that we want consumers to screen and read the labels first and be more conscious of what they purchase, and hopefully they support our locally made, reef-friendly products.

SECRETARY KERRY: I love it. It's great. And let me tell you something, everybody. The largest organ in your body – largest organ in your body? Skin, correct? And it's porous. And whatever you put on it goes through your system. So a lot of people aren't aware of that, but they've got to think. So your idea of awareness about screening sunscreens is really important. My wife made me do that. I'm telling you. I'm serious. I didn't know anything about it. My wife said, "You're putting poison on yourself," and I finally – so now I only use the right stuff.

QUESTION: Thank you, sir.

SECRETARY KERRY: Thank you. (Applause.)

QUESTION: Hello, Secretary.

SECRETARY KERRY: What did you do, stack the front seat here? Is it only the front seat? (Laughter.) Go ahead.

QUESTION: (Inaudible.)

SECRETARY KERRY: Put the mike really close and talk a little bit slower so everybody can hear you and understand you.

QUESTION: Hello, sir. Yes. So my name is Patrick Guyen (ph), and I'm from (inaudible), and I'm a YSEALI SEA Camp participant. And my project is entitled Junior Coal-laboration. So this project is composed of classroom discussions and workshops that aim to empower and inform young students on the effects of coal dust on the environment, specifically the marine life in Manila. So this community is important because it's the only (inaudible) Manila, and (inaudible) Manila. So (inaudible) inform and empower the children on the effects of coal dust and (inaudible).

SECRETARY KERRY: So how are you – and how are you – this is great. You've got a project to show people the effect of coal dust in Manila Bay, and to educate people about that. How do you do that? What do you – where do you get your data from?

QUESTION: It's from the (inaudible).

SECRETARY KERRY: From where? I'm sorry, I didn't hear that.

QUESTION: From the government.

SECRETARY KERRY: The data of the government service.

QUESTION: There are many studies that show that coal dust has (inaudible). So we (inaudible).

SECRETARY KERRY: That's so great. Good for you. That's a huge service to people, and very important. Is the government taking notice of those levels and are they trying to do something about it?

QUESTION: So far, sir, it's in the process of (inaudible), so there are many NGOs as a part of the (inaudible).

SECRETARY KERRY: NGOs are working on this?

QUESTION: But the focus of the project is young students.

SECRETARY KERRY: Well, keep working for it. Keep working on this thing and make sure you make your voice heard on that because it's really important. Thank you.

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MS OPOSA: Secretary Kerry, we'd like to thank you for the time that you've spent with us this morning.

SECRETARY KERRY: Are you kicking me out of here already? (Laughter.)

MS OPOSA: I've been instructed to --

SECRETARY KERRY: You've been instructed? All right. Well, I'm sorry it's so short. I love being here. I really love being here.

MS OPOSA: We know you have a busy day ahead, so we --

SECRETARY KERRY: Well, I have a good day ahead. I'm going to meet with your foreign minister. I'm going to meet with your president. And unfortunately, it's a slightly tight visit because of schedules -- a little bit crazy now. But can I leave you with just one thought, not more than a minute? You really can make a difference, and everybody needs you. Your country needs you. We need you. We need young people to be part of the political process and make sure it's transparent and accountable and that people hear your voices and that political people respond to the needs of people (inaudible). That's what's so important, and you have a lot of power as young people, and the future is yours.

So thank you all for being here and being part of this.

MS OPOSA: Thank you so much.

SECRETARY KERRY: Thank you. Bye-bye. (Applause.)

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Office of the Spokesperson

For Immediate Release

July 27, 2016

REMARKS

Secretary of State John Kerry
And Philippines Foreign Secretary Perfecto Yasay Before Their Meeting

July 27, 2016
Manila, Philippines

FOREIGN SECRETARY YASAY: Good morning, Mr. Secretary.

SECRETARY KERRY: Good morning to you.

FOREIGN SECRETARY YASAY: Welcome to the Philippines, and good morning to everyone. Ambassador. Welcome to Manila. If I may call you John, as you promised, you can call me Perfecto, and --

SECRETARY KERRY: Oh, I call you Jun, Perfecto, what do you want me call you? You tell me.

FOREIGN SECRETARY YASAY: (Laughter.) Perfecto is probably -- Jun would be good.

SECRETARY KERRY: Jun is good.

FOREIGN SECRETARY YASAY: We appreciate this gesture of goodwill, which demonstrates the strength of the Philippines-U.S. relationship and the importance of the alliance to the United States. The developments of the past years have shown that our alliance indeed rests on common adherence to the principles of democracy, rule of law, and justice. We appreciate the support of the United States Government for advocacies and for the reassurances of your ironclad commitment to the treaty alliance.

Yesterday, we welcomed the new (inaudible) that the Philippine supreme court affirmed with finality its earlier ruling that upheld the constitutionality of the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement, or EDCA. This effectively resolves the last remaining legal hurdle as we recognize potential contribution of EDCA to the preservation of peace and stability in the region, including disaster preparedness and for our national efforts towards defense modernization.

Every day we see the increasing threat of violent extremism in different parts of the world. Our two countries are not spared from this scourge. Our partnership in counterterrorism has been effective, and the Philippine government looks forward to further reinforcing our cooperation.

As we sit down today to chart the course of our relations, I also look forward to discussions on your views on the arbitration cases and actions that the international community can pursue along the lines of the arbitral award. I would also like to hear your assessment of our recent meetings in Vientiane, where I underscored that the Philippines, while continuing to exercise prudence and restraint, will proceed with full respect of the results of the arbitration. As President Duterte mentioned in his remarks before the members of the armed forces yesterday, we will also ensure that we will be prepared to address any challenges.

The Philippines will continue to be responsible and a reliable player in the community of nations, and will honor our international commitments and obligations. At the same time, this administration assured -- or assumed office fully cognizant of the challenges that our country faces and has pledged to pursue an economic agenda that will bring greater good to the rest of our population. We appreciate the United States' sustained support for our development, especially in the countryside. We are currently working on our project development process and are looking forward to the MCC Compact signing in the fall of 2017.

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Today, I am joined by my senior officials who will contribute to what I know will be a truly robust conversation. We hope that this will be a start of more meaningful engagements with the U.S. Thank you.

SECRETARY KERRY: Well, Mr. Secretary, Jun. First of all, congratulations on a successful election, a successful transition. I think the record-setting number of voters is a testimony in and of itself to the vibrant democracy in the Philippines. We admire that and we respect it. We also note that for 70 years – which is not a short span of time – the United States has been in a committed relationship with respect to the security of the Philippines and the region, and we still remember with pride the mutual sacrifices and contributions that were fought for – freedom for your country – and we continue to want to work with you to uphold the longest-standing single mutual defense treaty ally of the United States in Asia. And you're also Asia's oldest democracy, so you are a very special partner to the United States.

Now, I know that relationships are always subject to question, the give-and-take of politics – your politics, our politics. We understand that. But deep underneath that, there are strong values and strong interests that do unite us. And even when there are times of tension and stress, as we've seen over the questions in the South China Sea or otherwise, I know we can count on you and you know you can count on us to always sit down and always try to talk honestly and directly together. We view you as a partner, and I emphasize the partnership – that means an equal voice, an equal discussion, and our relationship obviously is historic in terms of people-to-people ties that form the foundation of the very, very close bilateral relationship. And it's built on strong economic ties, on strong cultural ties, and also on our societal ties.

So I'm really happy to be back here. I came here in 1986 for the first time. I've been involved in the ups and downs of politics through these years. I worked very closely with (inaudible) efforts for the election and Gloria Aquino and the change to move away from difficult years, and I think we can be proud of the journey that the Philippines has made in that course of time.

So it's my privilege to be back here. I certainly look forward to discussing the issues that you just mentioned. And let's get on with that discussion.

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Mr. Dominique NICOLAS

Office of Public Diplomacy
U.S. Mission to the United Nations
Geneva
tel: (41) 022-749-4351

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