

Press Releases: Sri Lanka's Independence Day

Press Statement
Rex W. Tillerson

Secretary of State

Washington, DC
February 4, 2018

On behalf of the Government of the United States of America, I offer congratulations to the people of Sri Lanka on the 70th anniversary of your independence.

This year also marks the 70th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the United States and Sri Lanka. Our nations share common goals as fellow democracies both working to uphold universal principles and freedoms. As we reaffirmed during the second annual U.S.-Sri Lanka Partnership Dialogue last November, we are committed to promoting a free and open Indo-Pacific region.

In 2015, Sri Lankan voters chose a new government that pledged transparency, reconciliation, and accountability. We look forward to even greater progress on these areas in the coming year, along with increased peace, prosperity, and further growth in our bilateral relations.

Best wishes to Sri Lankans of all ethnicities and religions as you celebrate this historic Independence Day.

The Office of Website Management, Bureau of Public Affairs, manages this site as a portal for information from the U.S. State Department. External links to other Internet sites should not be construed as an endorsement of the views or privacy policies contained therein.

[Press Releases: Protests and Arrests in Iran](#)

Press Statement
Heather Nauert

Department Spokesperson

Washington, DC
February 2, 2018

The United States supports the Iranian people who are protesting against women being forced to wear the hijab. We condemn the reported arrests of at least 29 individuals for exercising their human rights and fundamental freedoms by standing up against the compulsory hijab. The United States remains steadfast in our support for the rights to freedom of religion, freedom of expression, and peaceful assembly. People should be free to choose the clothes they wear, and practice their faith as they desire. Depriving individuals of this choice undermines their autonomy and dignity.

The Office of Website Management, Bureau of Public Affairs, manages this site as a portal for information from the U.S. State Department. External links to other Internet sites should not be construed as an endorsement of the views or privacy policies contained therein.

[Press Releases: Joint Press Availability With Mexican Foreign Secretary Luis Videgaray and Canadian Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland](#)

Remarks

Rex W. Tillerson

Secretary of State

Mexico City, Mexico

February 2, 2018

MODERATOR: (In progress) (Via interpreter) everybody and welcome to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. We thank you for being here for the meeting of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of North America: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Canada, Chrystia Freeland, the Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, and the Secretary of Foreign Affairs of Mexico Luis Videgaray Caso.

We would like to ask the ministers to get to the podium.

Now we are going to listen to Mr. Chancellor Luis Videgaray Caso.

FOREIGN SECRETARY VIDEGARAY: (Via interpreter) Thank you very much. Good afternoon. I'm going to speak in Spanish, so I'm going to wait for you to have the correct translation. Good afternoon for all the media. I am very glad to give – and welcome the Secretary of the United States Mr. Rex Tillerson and the Minister of Foreign Affairs Chrystia Freeland from Canada. It's not the first time they are here in Mexico. We are very glad to welcome them again.

And we are happy to have the opportunity to work in different topics that are important for our North American region. North America – we are convinced

that it can be the most competitive region of the world in the next decades, and that's why we are working. We are working in a framework not only of neighborhood, but of friendship, of collaboration, and the sovereignty of the countries, knowing that together we can do more.

In the conversations that we've had today, of course, competitiveness is the core topic. How are we going to work together to generate more economic activities, more jobs for the inhabitants of this region? One of the topics of competitiveness where we can have an opportunity, an important opportunity, is the topic of energy.

The North American region has the capabilities in human and the natural resources to be a very clean energy and cheap energy to be able to transform our societies and our economies. We have agreed to keep on working with the works of our secretaries, and we are also having the objective of getting to the regulations to generate the – and create the synergies where we can have a mutual construction of infrastructure, and of course, to enable the private sector, which is going to be able to create projects not only from hydrocarbons but also from the energy sector in clean energies.

In the commercial area, we see an important opportunity in the modernization of the Free Trade Agreement of North America, which is NAFTA. And this is going to be led by the corresponding areas of the government. We are making progress in a professional way, and from the Mexican Government we see a great opportunity to have a win-win-win situation – where Mexico wins, when Canada wins, and where the United States wins. We don't see it as a game where someone loses and someone wins. We want a modern agreement to be up to the situation of the 21st century. The North American Free Trade Agreement was agreed 25 years ago; it was a different world then. And now we have the opportunity to adapt it to the new reality, to have an agreement that is fair and that is reciprocal, to have trade based on rules, these rules that are going to allow this region to be – prosper and to keep generating jobs and welfare for the three parts.

An important part of the welfare of our region is the empowerment of women, entrepreneur women. And we agreed on working with them according to the mechanisms that are already established to have an agreement between the three countries. We had a meeting a few days ago of the empowerment of women in Mexico, and we are going to keep working on these important topics.

Another important topic of the region is the – that is, the interest of the three countries is the safety. We identified as an important tool in the matter of drugs, and we have celebrated three meetings. We are going to hold the fourth meeting this year in Canada, and we agreed on having a special emphasis on the combat that we are having against the epidemic of opioids and fentanyl and heroin. This is generating a great damage of our citizens. In Mexico, it's taking the lives of lots of youngsters, and also in the United States and Canada due to the use of these substances.

So we are going to continue working like last year with our United States Department to have a cooperation which is much more effective, knowing that we have a shared responsibility, and using the trilateral platform to

exchange information and have the operational cooperation as well. We also talked about the efforts that we are doing jointly in the illegal human trafficking, which is a priority for the three parts, and we agreed on working on this topic.

In the meeting that we held trilaterally, we talked about important topics of our region, and I mean we are talking about three topics – the cooperation in Central America region. The initiative of Secretary Tillerson and John Kelly held a summit in Miami last year about the cooperation for Central America. Minister Freeland was there too, and we are working on knowing how are we going to work beyond the security issues, how are we going to contribute for the development, the economic development and the stability and the security of this place, especially from Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. We agreed on working on what we are left to do, and we are going to take it as an important matter of our trilateral cooperation.

We also agreed on working with the cooperation initiatives in the Caribbean. This Caribbean region is strategic area which is going to face specific challenges. We are talking about the increase of the cooperation, our shared cooperation, to have a better resilience on the Caribbean islands against the natural phenomena which are derived from the climate change, and also strengthen the energy security in the Caribbean. We can do a lot of things. And each one of our governments have direct relationships with the Caribbean, but we need an effort between the United States, Canada, and Mexico in this matter, and it can be very effective.

And on third place, the situation of Venezuela. This is a very painful situation for our region and for our continent. We are facing the vision – one of the most important things that are at stake are the democratic system, and as part of this Inter-American Democratic Act, which is an instrument that is mandatory for the people of North America since 2001, while we cannot stay and do nothing with the situation of Venezuela. We have already confirmed our concern and our will to keep using the diplomatic tools that are at our hand to keep re-establishing the situation in Venezuela.

I have shared with both ministers the role that Mexico played on the dialogue on the Venezuelan Government in Dominican Republic, and we decided to withdraw because there were no serious decisions made. But that does not mean that Mexico is going to keep having to stop having an active participation in Venezuela. The Venezuelan people are going to find the peaceful path, and Mexico is going to keep working with the rest of the countries of the region, of course, with the United States and Canada, to keep looking for a solution to this serious situation.

These are one of the topics that we mentioned with Mexico, Canada, and the United States. This is a rich cooperation. It's a very diverse cooperation. And I would like to say that Mr. Tillerson and Mrs. Freeland my gratefulness to be here. It's very important for me and for Mexico to be here. It's not just an opportunity; it's a shared commitment. Thank you very much for being here.

MODERATOR: Now we are going to listen to Mrs. Chrystia Freeland, the ministry

of Canada.

FOREIGN MINISTER FREELAND: (Via interpreter) Good afternoon. To start, I would like to thank Secretary Videgaray and the rest of our hosts here in Mexico.

(Interpreter speaks in Spanish.)

(Via interpreter, in progress) ...Mexico, the United States, and Canada is going to face a lot of challenges. The representatives of our countries are going to be having different meetings, and we should remember that we are working together.

(In English) Mexico, the United States, and Canada have long been partners, allies, neighbors, and most importantly friends. We are brought together not only by the physical fact of our shared geography, but by the equally important fact of our shared values.

The discussions we had today were very productive. Of course, we did touch on the NAFTA negotiations. From the very beginning, we in Canada have said that NAFTA must be updated and modernized to provide broader opportunity for the middle class and those working hard to join the middle class in all of our three countries. We are working hard for a deal that is innovative, forward-looking, and mutually beneficial for all three NAFTA partners. And here I will echo Secretary Videgaray and say we believe in a win-win-win outcome, and I am very hopeful that we can get there.

As part of our discussion of North American competitiveness, we had an excellent conversation about energy collaboration, and I am hopeful that's something that we can carry forward from this meeting.

We also spoke about the importance of advancing democracy in the hemisphere, most notably in Venezuela, where the political and economic crisis continues to worsen. The Maduro regime is systematically violating the human rights and fundamental freedoms of its people. We three agreed that we must do everything we can to restore democracy and relieve the unacceptable suffering of the people of Venezuela.

We also spoke about how we can cooperate to fight transnational crime, in particular the opioid crisis, which is causing such devastating harm to the people of Canada, the United States, and Mexico.

Finally, we spoke about our shared commitment to the empowerment of women and girls and discussed ways we can advance that agenda together.

It's always a pleasure for Canada to work with our continental partners and neighbors with whom we share so many values and interests on issues of mutual trilateral and also global concern. It's great to spend time with you, Rex, Secretary Tillerson, and thank you again, Luis, Secretary Videgaray, for hosting this great conversation. *Muchas gracias, amigos.*

MODERATOR: And now we're going to thank Mr. Rex Tillerson for his message.

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Well, first let me thank Foreign Secretary Videgaray for hosting today's trilateral, and thank Foreign Minister Freeland for making the trip down to Mexico City. In 2017, my very first bilateral visit as Secretary of State was to Mexico City, and about this time a year ago we were standing here holding a press conference. As it turns out, my very last trip of 2017 as Secretary of State was to Ottawa. So it's right that we should meet at this time in the trilateral relationship. And we meet – even when we're not meeting, I would share with you that the three of us are in very frequent contact on all issues that are of importance to our countries, on security, as well as economic prosperity, because our three countries are connected. When we can work together, and when we are unified in our positions and our voice, we have significant influence on the events not just in our hemisphere, but elsewhere.

So today we discussed a range of trilateral, regional, and global issues, and I cannot emphasize enough the importance of our economic relationships. Canada and Mexico rank as the first or second-largest export market for 42 U.S. states and support nearly 3 million U.S. jobs. North America is also a major player, as Secretary Videgaray highlighted, in the energy markets. And we discussed what we believe are really unique opportunities to promote market-based energy development and to further energy integration throughout North America and the hemisphere.

We also talked and discussed following through on the 2016 trilateral MOU to economically empower women that Foreign Minister Freeland mentioned.

Beyond our trade and economic relationships, we also discussed mutual areas of serious concern, in particular the most immediate threat to our hemisphere from transnational criminal organizations. We continue to employ a coordinated and multilateral approach to diminish the influence of these groups and rid our hemisphere of the violence and devastation they promote. In June of last year, Canada joined the United States and Mexico for a conference on prosperity and security in Central America. At that meeting, we secured commitments from international partners and in the private sector to address a range of issues facing the Northern Triangle governments, including economic, energy, security, and governance challenges. Today, we discussed on how we can follow up on those commitments from that conference. Success there will better protect all of our countries and provide opportunities for the citizens of Central America.

Given the deadly nature of the opioid crisis, we must do more to attack the business models of those who traffic drugs and guns. That was a major theme of the second strategic dialogue that I cohosted with Foreign Secretary Videgaray last December in Washington, D.C. Through our targeted dialogues like this and the North American Drug Dialogue, we are developing and deploying new strategies to disrupt and dismantle these deadly networks that smuggle drugs, that participate in human trafficking and other illicit activities.

Turning elsewhere in the hemisphere, we shared our concerns for the humanitarian crisis that has unfolded in Venezuela. We all urge the Maduro regime to return to free, open, credible, democratic elections and to allow

the Venezuelans a voice in their government. Our three countries will work with all members of the Lima Group to assist the Venezuelan people during this time of crisis.

I also expressed to Foreign Minister Freeland and Foreign Secretary Videgaray how I – how strongly I support Peru’s ambitious anticorruption agenda for the Summit of the Americas later this spring. We hope leaders throughout the hemisphere will make concrete commitments to combat corruption, strengthen the rule of law, and support economic growth and job creation.

As challenges become more complex, North America and our three countries will continue to work together to find solutions. That makes meetings like we’ve had today extremely valuable, and it was certainly useful to me and I appreciated the opportunity to meet with my counterparts. And thank you again for hosting, Luis.

MODERATOR: (Via interpreter) Thank you very much, Secretary Tillerson. Now we’re going to have a question and answer session. We’re going to have one question per each one of the participant countries. We’re going to start with Mexico. Jorge Ramos from Grupo Imagen.

QUESTION: (Via interpreter) Thank you very much. I’m on your right, and my partners and I would like to know about the bilateral relationship between Mexico and the United States and the Chancellor Videgaray and Mr. Tillerson, because they talked about the agreement for the Dreamers and the immigrants. Do you have the DACA agreement for the United States for the construction of the border wall? And have you talked about the agreement to fight against the criminal groups that are in both sides of the border, and also to stop the flow of weapons from the United States to Mexico? This is the first part.

The second part is we would also like to know that – if in the agreement to try to go back to the normality in Venezuela, is there a military offensive from the United States to combat Maduro’s situation, and is it going to be supported by Mexico and Canada?

And just a question for Mr. Tillerson: Is there evidence that there is going to be an interference in the Russian Government in Mexico as there was in the United States? I mean the elections of your country. And are you going to reiterate the situation that Canada and Mexico should not have a close relationship to Russia and China?

And finally, I would like to know if there is an agreement between Mexico and the United States about the possibility of deploying guards in the transborder flights to answer to any issue that might arise.

FOREIGN SECRETARY VIDEGARAY: (Via interpreter) We’re going to establish a rule: If you’re going to ask more than three, I’m just going to answer three, all right?

We didn’t talk about the DACA agreement. We have talked about it before, but in the migration situation, it is a matter of the United States to agree on this, and it’s the same thing in Mexico and Canada. And in the case of the

DACA, of course we have shared information with members of the American Congress and – congressmen of the United States, but if the DACA people are coming back, it would be a win situation for Mexico and a lose situation for the United States. It would be one of the most important losses in humanity, because this is a situation of people who came as children and they have a clean record, most of them, and are engineers. They work in programming, they are doctors, lawyers, and of course, Mexico would be having an important win situation and lose situation for the United States. But finally, that is the decision from the United States and we are going to try to find a situation in the Congress for the future of these young people. But at the end, it's what they decide.

I've talked to most of them, and most of them want to stay in the United States. Most of them want to stay there and some of them want to come back to Mexico, but it – this is not a matter of the bilateral situation. We also talked widely about this situation in this meeting, and Mr. Rex Tillerson was talking about it in – a few moments ago about the combat of the criminal groups is one of our priorities. And we want these efforts to have a more strategic planning so that we can dismantle the plans of these organizations.

We mentioned it last year and we hope that we can have measurable results. One of the topics that we're going to mention in the dismantling of these criminal groups is going to be weapons. Of course, the illegal weapons that come from the United States to Mexico is something that should be dismantled. And we have an agreement of what the paradigm is. This paradigm should be cooperation. We should not take the guilt into someone else. The criminal groups that – and the illegal weapons from the United States, Mexico, and the cash that comes is to be able to dismantle the production and the creation of these groups. If we don't have a joint effort, we are giving a strategic opportunity to these criminal groups, and we're not going to be able to dismantle them.

Secretary Tillerson is going to talk about the specific question about Venezuela, and I would like to say that Mexico is not going to support the decision that involves violence, either internal or external, for the case of Venezuela. And about the question of the special agents in the United – for the United States in trans-border flights, well, it is a proposal that has not been done.

And there are lots of proposals in terms of security. We are analyzing all these proposals and the operative proposals, but there is not an agreement yet. There is a conversation that is going to be taken seriously.

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Okay. So there were several questions in there. We'll see if I can remember them all. First, with respect to DACA, President Trump has put forward a proposal to the Congress that I think addresses in a very, very important way how people should be treated and the value of those people. And his proposal would remove the uncertainty for more than a million people that find themselves in this situation. And the President's been quite clear that he wants to see this solved, and he's called upon the Congress to solve it. So I think it is certainly his commitment to see this issue resolved once and for all, and provide clarity, which is so important, so

that people know how to plan their lives going forward.

With respect to the commitment to disrupt the transcriminal organizations, as I mentioned in my remarks, we created early last year – in fact, it was in this first trip that I made to Mexico City, the first bilat – a different approach as to how we cooperate to attack the entire supply chain of this devastating impact of drugs – cocaine, heroin, fentanyl, opioids. This is having a horrible effect on American citizens, Mexican citizens, Canadian citizens. And so throughout the year we have had two major follow-up meetings in Washington, D.C. We had a very important working dinner last night with the Mexican military counterparts and the navy and the Mexican army and Mexican intelligence service to discuss how we feel about the progress and what are the areas that need more attention. So this is a joint effort that is very, very active, it is very robust, and we intend to maintain this effort well in until we have resolved this problem.

You asked about Russian interference in Mexican elections. All I could say to you is we know that Russia has fingerprints in a number of elections around the world. We hear this from our European counterparts as well. My advice would be – to Mexico would be: Pay attention. Pay attention to what's happening.

In terms of air marshals on flights, we have air marshals on a number of flights in the United States. It's about creating security for both the arrivals and the destinations. And any action that would be taken regarding flights with Mexico will be done in full cooperation and coordination with Mexican authorities as well, all with a view that we want to provide greater security for all of our passengers that are traveling back and forth.

With respect to Venezuela and what we would like to see happen there is a peaceful transition, if – if President Maduro would return to the Venezuelan constitution, restore the duly elected assembly, dismantle the illegitimate constituent assembly, and return to free, fair elections, then he's happy to stay and run in a free and fair election. If he wants to step aside and let someone else follow through on that, that's fine, but our view is you must return to the constitution, and that's what we hope Venezuela ultimately will do. That's what we all are working hard to see them do.

I don't know if I hit all your questions. Those are the ones I could remember.

FOREIGN SECRETARY VIDEGARAY: Good enough.

MODERATOR: Now our next question, Pilar.

QUESTION: (Via interpreter) Good afternoon. My question is to Minister Freeland. According to the free trade agreement, the negotiation with the United States had several agreements on the United States. Would you give us an opinion about this? What is going to happen with Mexico and the United States?

And we also like to know about the renegotiation period. What are the risks

that we are going to have in Mexico in the change of governments for Canada and for the United States? And we also like to know about their recent topics of the situation and told with the Minister Luis Videgaray.

FOREIGN MINISTER FREELAND: As far as NAFTA goes, as actually all three of us said, all three countries are strong believers in North American competitiveness, and we really believe that this agreement, which has now been in place for almost a quarter century, has made our continent more competitive. It has created jobs and growth in Canada, the United States, and Mexico. The world has changed a lot, though, since we first negotiated NAFTA, and to give you an example, on the trading list for cars in NAFTA today, we have cassette decks – which my children don't even know what a cassette deck is – but we don't have rear view cameras.

So it is time to update this agreement, to modernize it, to make it fit for the 21st century, to make it more effective for all three countries, and that is what Canada is 100 percent committed to doing. We believe that that is absolutely possible, and we are working hard with a lot of goodwill.

In terms of timelines, we would love to get this deal done as quickly as possible. Uncertainty is never good for business confidence. Having said that, it's a really complicated agreement, and we believe in taking the time it takes to get it right. So I think all of us are going to be working really, really hard to get it done as quickly as possible to get a good outcome for all three of our countries.

MODERATOR: Tracy Wilkinson from the *Los Angeles Times*.

QUESTION: For Secretary Tillerson, you spoke yesterday in Austin quite eloquently, really, about the shared values of the United States with Latin America, the need to strengthen those partnerships, to build the rule of law and democratic institutions, and you also spoke, really, of the benefits of immigration. Our – all the passports of different colors that we have.

Does it undercut your message here and your efforts or mission to build on those relationships when a very different message comes from your own President, who, for example, in his State of the Union, described – painted a picture of immigration from Mexico as a cause of crime, or even today was attacking this morning the FBI and some of the very pillars of rule of law and democracy? Does that make your mission more difficult? Which – and which version should Americans believe, which version should Mexicans believe?

And finally, for the Ministers Videgaray and Freeland, how difficult is it for you to negotiate with a government that speaks in such different voices? Thank you.

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Well, I think with respect to U.S. immigration policy, what the President, I think, has observed is that over the years, our immigration system has grown so many arms and legs, if you just look at the number of different programs by which people come to the United States, that oftentimes we don't have real good discipline around how those programs are enforced consistent with the laws. And in fact, as the President requested

early in his term that a full review be undertaken of all the immigration policies, what we found is there were a lot of exceptions to the intent of Congress – had been put into place.

So the first thing the President has done is said, “Look, we’re going to enforce the laws.” The Congress passed the laws, the executive is required to enforce the laws, and we intend to enforce them to the letter of the law. And so that’s really where this whole process begins. So what we want is legal immigration, legal immigration where we understand who is entering the country, and why are they entering the country and are they coming to enjoy a nice vacation; are they coming to work here for some time; are they coming here for education or are they coming here to work; are they coming here to one day hoping to become citizens?

And so we really – what the President has asked is: Let’s put in place systems. And that’s where a lot of the new, in particular, immigration from countries that are very unstable today, that don’t have strong governments themselves in parts of the world. Let’s make sure we have systems in place where we understand who is coming to the United States of America, and as he indicated, we are a nation built by immigrants. All of us can trace our ancestry, or most of us can, back to someone in the family that immigrated to the United States. And we still value immigrants, and they bring enormous value to our continent. And that’s what the President, though, is asking is, I want to know how this person who wants to come and live in our country is going to bring value to our country. And I think that’s – fundamentally, that’s what he is pursuing.

And it is very complicated, because we have over the years put so many different mechanisms in place, I think well-intended, to deal with situations around the world, many of which – those situations no longer exist. And we’ve never gone back and kind of cleaned this up, and gotten back to where – what was the original intent. So I know it’s painful, the process is, for a lot of people, and that’s why, as we move forward in implementing the President’s directives, we’re trying to do that in a way that accommodates the fact that this is hard for some people. How can we give them time to adjust? What can we do to fix a lot of this back in Congress?

And that’s why the President has been pressing Congress for a number of actions to make changes to the immigration law, to fix these defects that have risen over the years and crept into the immigration system. He wants this to be a country that’s – that follows the law, and he wants us to enforce the law, and when it’s not working, we should go to the Congress and say, “Look, we need you to fix this part of the immigration law, whether it’s on a particular program to deal with refugees or whether it’s other issues like DACA, let’s fix it.” And instead, we’ve had a long period of time where people have kind of issued a directive here and an order there, and things have kind of gotten out of – have gotten out of the normal order.

So my message – that would be my message to people trying to understand what the President’s doing with immigration is let’s have it very clear what the rules are. Let’s enforce those rules, and then people that desire to come to the United States know exactly what the pathway is to get here, and they will

have certainty when they arrive. Because we have so many people living in the country today that immigrated, and they're living under a huge cloud of uncertainty. And the President would like to remove that uncertainty for a lot of people.

FOREIGN SECRETARY VIDEGARAY: Since the question was in English, I'll answer in English. Mexico will always be prepared to deal with, to work with any administration in the U.S. or in any other country around the world. And we do so because we are a sovereign nation, and we have clarity about our principles, about our objectives and the things we are willing to do and the things we are not willing to do. With the Trump administration, we've committed to have a very close communication, and that has proven to be a tremendous benefit for the relationship. I think that in many ways, the relationship today is more fluid, it's closer than it was with previous administrations, which might be surprising to some people, but that's a fact of life.

And I want to highlight the role that – and leadership of Secretary Tillerson, who has been instrumental to achieving this, and to bring our countries closer. Yes, we do have some differences, as every other country does, but we've been working very closely, we've achieved substantial things, and we're looking into the future. This is a relationship about opportunities and about the things that we can do together, and we're working well, we're working close, and we are about results.

FOREIGN MINISTER FREELAND: Yeah, and so – I think the Canadian view is very similar. Canada has been negotiating with the United States for as long as we have been a country. We feel we know you guys pretty well. In fact, we probably spend a lot more time thinking about you than you spend thinking about us. We're okay with that. When it comes to the current administration, the President's counterpart is of course my prime minister, and I've been with my prime minister at a number of bilateral meetings. And I know that the two leaders have a very strong mutual respect for one another, and I would say, they also really get along. As for my U.S. counterparts, Luis and I are going to embarrass you, Rex, but it is a true pleasure working with Secretary Tillerson.

He is a tremendous friend and partner for Canada, and an incredibly important voice in maintaining the rules-based international order, and it's been a real privilege for me to work with him on issues ranging from peace and security on the North Korean Peninsula – we recently cohosted a summit in Vancouver on this issue. He was brave enough to come to Ottawa in December; that shows true friendship. And I am grateful both to Secretary Tillerson and to Secretary Videgaray that we three continental partners were able to have a really good meeting here today.

FOREIGN SECRETARY VIDEGARAY: *Muchas gracias a todo.*

The Office of Website Management, Bureau of Public Affairs, manages this site as a portal for information from the U.S. State Department. External links to other Internet sites should not be construed as an endorsement of the views or privacy policies contained therein.

Press Releases: Maldives Court Ruling to Free Opposition Politicians

Press Statement
Heather Nauert

Department Spokesperson

Washington, DC
February 2, 2018

The United States welcomes the decision by the Supreme Court to order the release of political prisoners and to reinstate elected members of parliament. The United States urges the Maldivian government to respect and abide by the Supreme Court ruling. It is imperative that the Maldivian President, government, and security services uphold the constitution and rule of law and implement the court's ruling in full. The United States also strongly supports freedom of expression for all Maldivians and calls upon the government to uphold this fundamental freedom.

The Office of Website Management, Bureau of Public Affairs, manages this site as a portal for information from the U.S. State Department. External links to other Internet sites should not be construed as an endorsement of the views or privacy policies contained therein.

Press Releases: U.S. Arms Restrictions on South Sudan

Press Statement
Heather Nauert

Department Spokesperson

Washington, DC
February 2, 2018

The Department of State today announces that it is implementing restrictions on the export of defense articles and defense services into South Sudan.

The United States is appalled by the continuing violence in South Sudan that has created one of Africa's worst humanitarian crises. The government and armed opposition, despite signing the December 21 Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities and ongoing efforts by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) to advance peace – and despite the suffering of their own people – have continued the use of military force to seek political advantage.

As a result of the conflict, 1.5 million people are now on the brink of famine, despite enormous efforts by the United States and other donors since the conflict began in 2013 to stave off famine and save lives. Approximately 2.4 million South Sudanese have fled as refugees to neighboring countries and 1.9 million South Sudanese are internally displaced. The government and armed opposition have continued offensive military actions, and the government obstructs the UN peacekeeping mission from fulfilling its mandate. Aid workers – at least 95 since the current conflict started in December 2013 – continue to be killed trying to help the victims of the warring parties' actions. In response to this continued violence and brutality against civilians and humanitarian workers, the United States is enacting restrictions on arms transfers with South Sudan.

Specifically, the Department of State will amend the International Traffic in Arms Regulations to update the defense trade policy toward South Sudan by application of a policy of denial, with limited exceptions, on the export of defense articles and defense services to South Sudan, including all parties involved in the conflict.

We urge all countries, including South Sudan's neighbors, to promote peace and save innocent lives by cutting off the flow of defense articles and

defense services to South Sudan and to halt support to actors who are working to destabilize the country. We encourage IGAD and the African Union to consider sanctions measures against those who undermine the peace process.

Additionally, the United States is seeking support for a UN Security Council embargo on all arms flows into South Sudan and we urge all UNSC members to join us in supporting this action. The message must be clear – the United States, the region, and the international community will not stand idly by as innocent South Sudanese civilians are murdered. We will continue to take actions against those who foment violence and obstruct the peace process.

The Office of Website Management, Bureau of Public Affairs, manages this site as a portal for information from the U.S. State Department. External links to other Internet sites should not be construed as an endorsement of the views or privacy policies contained therein.