

Press Releases: On the Occasion of Independence Day in Malta

Press Statement
Rex W. Tillerson

Secretary of State

Washington, DC
September 20, 2017

On behalf of the Government of the United States of America, we send our best wishes to the people of Malta as you celebrate Independence Day.

The United States and Malta are longstanding partners. We look forward to deepening our cooperation in support of peace, security, and economic prosperity for our two peoples in the Mediterranean region and beyond.

As you celebrate today, know that the United States values our enduring friendship.

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Press Releases: Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government's Planned Referendum

Press Statement
Heather Nauert

Department Spokesperson

Washington, DC
September 20, 2017

The United States strongly opposes the Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government's referendum on independence, planned for September 25. All of Iraq's neighbors, and virtually the entire international community, also oppose this referendum. The United States urges Iraqi Kurdish leaders to accept the alternative, which is a serious and sustained dialogue with the central government, facilitated by the United States and United Nations, and other partners, on all matters of concern, including the future of the Baghdad-Erbil relationship.

If this referendum is conducted, it is highly unlikely that there will be negotiations with Baghdad, and the above international offer of support for negotiations will be foreclosed.

The costs of proceeding with the referendum are high for all Iraqis, including Kurds. Already the referendum has negatively affected Defeat-ISIS coordination to dislodge ISIS from its remaining areas of control in Iraq. The decision to hold the referendum in disputed areas is especially destabilizing, raising tensions which ISIS and other extremist groups are now seeking to exploit. The status of disputed areas and their boundaries must be resolved through dialogue, in accordance with Iraq's constitution, not by unilateral action or force.

Finally, the referendum may jeopardize Iraqi Kurdistan's regional trade relations, and international assistance of all kinds, even though none of Iraq's partners wish this to be the case. This is simply the reality of this very serious situation. In contrast, genuine dialogue, the alternative, which we urge Kurdish leaders to embrace, holds the promise of resolving a great many of Iraqi Kurds' legitimate grievances, and establishing a new and constructive course for Baghdad-Erbil relations that benefit all the people of Iraq.

The Kurds can be proud already of what the referendum process has produced, including more Kurdish unity, reviving the Kurdish parliament for the first time in nearly two years, and placing important issues on the international stage, with partners and friends prepared to build on the spirit of cooperation seen between Iraqi Security Forces and Kurdish Peshmerga in the campaign against ISIS to help resolve outstanding issues. Unfortunately, the referendum next week will jeopardize all of this momentum and more.

The referendum itself is now all the more unnecessary given the alternative path that has been prepared and endorsed by the United States and the international community.

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Press Releases: Belize's Independence Day

Press Statement
Rex W. Tillerson

Secretary of State

Washington, DC
September 20, 2017

On behalf of the Government of the United States, we send our best wishes to the people of Belize on your Independence Day, September 21st.

Our countries enjoy a long-standing and strong friendship, rooted in shared values and commitment to keeping our citizens safe, supporting democratic institutions, defending human rights, and promoting economic prosperity.

On this 36th anniversary of your nation's independence, we wish all Belizeans a peaceful and prosperous year.

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[Press Releases: Regarding the Earthquake in Mexico](#)

Press Statement
Heather Nauert

Department Spokesperson

Washington, DC
September 19, 2017

Our thoughts and prayers are with the people of Mexico affected by today's 7.1-magnitude earthquake and other recent natural disasters. We stand ready to provide assistance should our neighbors request our help. Our embassy in Mexico City has sent out public messages to U.S. citizens in Mexico, and the embassy stands ready to provide consular assistance to any U.S. citizens who may have been affected. We offer our condolences to any who were injured or lost loved ones.

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[Press Releases: United States and Cuba Hold Sixth Bilateral Commission Meeting in Washington, D.C.](#)

Media Note
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
September 20, 2017

The United States and Cuba held the sixth Bilateral Commission meeting in Washington, D.C. on Tuesday, September 19. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs John Creamer led the U.S. delegation. The Cuban delegation was led by Josefina Vidal, the Foreign Ministry's Director General for U.S. Affairs.

The meeting provided an opportunity to discuss the incidents affecting diplomatic personnel at the U.S. Embassy in Havana. The United States reiterated its deep concern for the safety and security of the U.S. Embassy community in Havana and the urgent need to identify the cause of these incidents and to ensure they cease. The delegations also reviewed the Administration's priorities and areas for engagement in the interests of the United States and the Cuban people, including human rights; implementation of the Migration Accords; and protecting the national security and public health and safety of the United States.

The Bilateral Commission last met in December 2016.

For further information, please contact WHA Press at WHAPress@state.gov.

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