

Press Releases: FY 2018 State Department Budget Request

Testimony
Rex W. Tillerson

Secretary of State

Opening Remarks Before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Washington, DC
June 13, 2017

CHAIRMAN CORKER: Thank you, sir. Mr. Secretary, since I know you just made an announcement, before you begin your opening comments, would you like to go ahead and share with us what has just occurred and then do your opening statement?

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Well, some of you may have seen a press release that was put out just before I arrived announcing that at the President's direction, the Department of State has secured the release of Otto Warmbier from North Korea. He is on his way, en route home, to be reunited with his family. We continue our discussions with the North Korean regime regarding the release of the three other American citizens that have been detained. We have no comment on Mr. Warmbier's condition, out of respect to him and the family, and that is the statement that was released.

CHAIRMAN CORKER: Very good. Well, listen, we look forward to your opening comment and questions. Thank you again for being here, and you can begin with that, if you would. Thank you.

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Well, thank you, Chairman Corker, Ranking Member Cardin, distinguished members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this administration's State Department and USAID request for Fiscal Year 2018.

As we all know, America's global competitive advantages and standing as a leader are under constant challenge. The dedicated men and women of the State Department and USAID carry out the important and often perilous work of advancing America's interest every day, 24/7, 365 days a year. That mission is unchanged.

However, the State Department and USAID, like many other institutions here and around the world, have not evolved in their responsiveness as quickly as new challenges and threats to our national security have changed and are

changing. We are challenged to respond to a post-Cold War world that set in motion new global dynamics, and a post-9/11 world characterized by historic new threats that present themselves in ways never seen before, enabled by technological tools that we have been ill-prepared to engage.

The 21st century has already presented many evolving challenges to U.S. national security and economic prosperity. We must develop proactive responses to protect and advance the interest of the American people.

With such a broad array of threats facing the United States, the Fiscal Year 2018 budget request of \$37.6 billion aligns with the administration's objective of making America's security our top priority. The first responsibility of government is the security of its own citizens, and we will orient our diplomatic efforts toward fulfilling that commitment.

While our mission will also be focused on advancing the economic interest of the American people, the State Department's primary focus will be to protect our citizens at home and abroad. Our mission is at all times guided by our longstanding values of freedom, democracy, individual liberty, and human dignity. The conviction of our country's founders is enduring: that all men are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights. As a nation, we hold high the aspiration that all will one day experience the freedoms we have known.

In our young administration's foreign policy, we are motivated by the conviction that the more we engage with other nations on issues of security and prosperity, the more we will have opportunities to shape the human rights conditions in those nations. History has shown that the United States leaves a footprint of freedom wherever it goes. Ensuring the security and prosperity of the American people and advancing our values has necessitated difficult decisions in other areas of our budget.

The Fiscal Year 2018 budget request includes substantial funding for many foreign assistance programs under the auspices of USAID and the State Department, but we have made hard choices to reduce funding for other initiatives. Even with reductions in funding, we will continue to be the leader in international development, global health, democracy and good governance initiatives, as well as humanitarian efforts. If natural disasters or epidemics strike overseas, America will respond with the care and support it always has. And I'm convinced we can maximize the effectiveness of these programs and continue to offer America's helping hand to the world.

This budget request also reflects a commitment to ensure every tax dollar spent is aligned with the department's and USAID's mission critical objectives. The request focused the State Department and USAID's efforts on missions which deliver the greatest value and opportunity of success for the American people. The State Department and USAID budget increased over 60 percent from Fiscal Year 2007, reaching a record-high \$55.6 billion in Fiscal Year 2017. Recognizing this rate of increase in funding is not sustainable, the Fiscal Year 2018 budget request seeks to align the core missions of the State Department with historic funding levels. We believe this budget also represents the interests of the American people, including responsible

stewardship of the public's money.

I know there is intense interest in prospective State Department and USAID redesign efforts. We have just completed collecting information on our organizational processes and culture through a survey that was made available to every one of our State and USAID colleagues. Over 35,000 surveys were completed, and we also have held in-person listening sessions with approximately 300 individuals to obtain their perspective on what we do and how we do it. I met personally with dozens of team members who spoke candidly about their experiences. From this feedback, we have been able to get a clearer overall view of our organization.

We have no preconceived outcomes, and our discussions of the goals, priorities, and direction of the State Department and USAID are not token exercises. The principles for our listening sessions and subsequent evaluation of our organization are the same as those which I stated in my confirmation hearing: for our foreign policy. We will see the world for what it is, be honest with ourselves and the American people, follow the facts where they lead us, and hold ourselves and others accountable. We are still analyzing the feedback we have received, and we expect to release the final findings of the survey soon.

From all of this, one thing is certain: I'm listening to what my people tell me are the challenges facing them, and how we can produce a more efficient, effective State Department and USAID. And we will work as a team and with the Congress to improve both organizations.

Throughout my career, I have never believed, nor have I ever experienced, that the level of funding devoted to a goal is the most important factor in achieving it. Our budget will never determine our ability to be effective – our people will. My colleagues at the State Department and USAID are a deep source of inspiration, and their patriotism, professionalism, and willingness to make sacrifices for our country are our greatest resource.

I am confident that the U.S. State Department and USAID will continue to deliver results for the American people. I thank you for your time and am happy now to answer your questions.

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We are challenged to respond to a post-Cold War world that's set in motion new global dynamics and a post-9/11 world characterized by historic threats that present themselves in ways never seen before, enabled by technological tools that we have been ill-prepared to engage. The 21st century has already presented many evolving challenges to the U.S. national security and economic prosperity. We must develop proactive responses to protect and advance the interests of the American people.

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[Press Releases: State Department Terrorist Designations of Marwan Ibrahim Hussayn Tah al-Azawi and Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia](#)

Media Note
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
June 12, 2017

The Department of State has designated Marwan Ibrahim Hussayn Tah al-Azawi

and Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI) as Specially Designated Global Terrorists (SDGTs) under Section 1(b) of Executive Order (E.O.) 13224, which imposes sanctions on foreign persons determined to have committed, or pose a significant risk of committing, acts of terrorism that threaten the security of U.S. nationals or the national security, foreign policy, or economy of the United States. As a consequence of these designations, U.S. persons are generally prohibited from engaging in transactions or dealings with Azawi and MMI, and all of their property and interests in property subject to United States jurisdiction are frozen. In addition to the State Department designations, the Department of the Treasury also designated Attallah Salman 'Abd Kafi al-Jaburi, an Iraq-based, Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) senior leader in charge of factories producing improvised explosive devices, vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices, and explosives, and involved in the development of chemical weapons, as an SDGT under E.O. 13224.

Marwan Ibrahim Hussayn Tah al-Azawi is an Iraqi ISIS leader connected to ISIS's development of chemical weapons for use in ongoing combat against Iraqi Security Forces. ISIS has repeatedly used sulfur mustard in chemical weapons attacks in Syria as well as in Iraq.

Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI) is an Indonesia-based terrorist group formed in 2000 by Abu Bakar Bashir, leader of the designated Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) and SDGT group, Jemaah Islamiya (JI). The group has conducted attacks in Indonesia, including claiming responsibility for a May 2012 attack at the book launch of Canadian author Irshad Manji; the attack left three attendees hospitalized. MMI also has links to al-Qa'ida's affiliate in Syria, the FTO and SDGT group al-Nusrah Front.

Today's action notifies the U.S. public and the international community that Azawi and MMI have committed or pose a significant risk of committing acts of terrorism. Designations expose and isolate organizations and individuals, and result in denial of access to the U.S. financial system. Moreover, designations can assist or complement the law enforcement actions of other U.S. agencies and other governments.

A list of State Department-designated FTOs and SDGTs is available here: <http://www.state.gov/j/ct/list/index.htm>.

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Press Releases: Global Peace Operations Initiative Promotes International Peacekeeping

Media Note
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
June 12, 2017

The Department of State's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs and the Department of Defense's Office of the Secretary of Defense are co-hosting the 11th annual [Global Peace Operations Initiative \(GPOI\)](#) Worldwide Consultations at the State Department on June 12-16, 2017. Participants from the Department of State, Department of Defense, other key U.S. government organizations, and the United Nations are discussing the evolving nature of peacekeeping; ways to strengthen performance and operational readiness of peacekeeping units; and efforts to address sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers. Participants will also review ongoing GPOI activities, share implementers' best practices, and discuss program priorities for the years ahead.

GPOI represents the U.S.'s primary global investment for strengthening international capacity and capabilities to execute peace operations around the world. The GPOI program accomplishes this goal by enhancing partner-country capabilities to train and sustain peacekeeping proficiencies and by building the capacity of the UN and regional organizations to conduct such missions.

GPOI has created a tangible return on investment by helping to expand the base of capable peacekeepers. For example, GPOI partners have increased their military deployment rates to UN and African Union (AU) peace operations by 161 percent since becoming GPOI partners. Additionally, GPOI is helping the majority of its partner countries develop critical enabling capabilities which are in short supply in UN and regional peace operations, such as aviation, engineering, logistics, and medical support. GPOI is also helping partner countries recognize the important role women play in peace operations. For example, over the past five years, active GPOI partners have increased the number of female military peacekeepers deployed by 62 percent. GPOI's positive impact can be seen in virtually every UN or regional organizations' peace operation around the world today.

For more information, please contact the Bureau of Political-Military

Affairs, Office of Congressional and Public Affairs at PM-CPA@state.gov and follow us on Twitter @StateDeptPM.

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[Press Releases: Previewing Secretary Tillerson's Participation in the Conference on Prosperity and Security in Central America](#)

Special Briefing
William R. Brownfield

Assistant Secretary, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs

John S. Creamer, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Cuba, Mexico, Central America, and Western Hemisphere Regional Economic Policy and Summit Issues
Via Teleconference
June 12, 2017

MS NAUERT: All right. Good morning, everyone. Thanks for joining us for today's background call on Secretary Tillerson's upcoming travel to Miami. He'll be participating in the Conference on Prosperity and Security in Central America. The conference is hosted by the United States and Mexico. It will take place on June 15th and 16th, and bring together a diverse group of government and business leaders from the United States, Mexico, Central America, and other countries to address the economic, security, and governance challenges, and also opportunities, in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras.

The Secretary will attend the first day of the conference, which will focus on prosperity and economic growth. For a deeper dive into the objectives of the conference, we have two senior State Department officials with us. We're joined by John Creamer, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Cuba, Mexico, Central America, and Western Hemisphere Regional Economic Policy and Summit issues. We're also joined by William Brownfield, Assistant Secretary for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs.

Today's call will be on the record, but we're going to ask to embargo the call until just after the conclusion of that call.

And with that, I'll turn it over to our speakers, who first have some comments, and then we will take your questions.

MR CREAMER: Good morning. This is John Creamer, and I'd just like to provide a little bit more detail on the two days of the conference, then discuss our objectives, and then pass it over to my colleague, Assistant Secretary Brownfield.

As mentioned, day one of the conference will focus on discussing ways to improve the business climate and economic conditions to promote prosperity and job growth in the Northern Triangle countries. Day two will focus on regional security cooperation and improving citizen security and the rule of law.

Vice President Pence will deliver the keynote address on June 15th, and has stated that he looks forward to affirming the administration's support for the Northern Triangle countries, and to calling on our partners, governments, businesses, and development organizations to redouble their efforts towards achieving this common goal. Vice President Pence will also participate in bilateral meetings with President Salvador Sanchez Ceren of El Salvador, President Juan Orlando Hernandez of Honduras, and President Jimmy Morales of Guatemala.

As mentioned, Secretary Tillerson will attend the first day of the conference on June 15th. Secretary of Homeland Security John Kelly will participate in both days of the conference, and deliver remarks on day two, which focus on the security challenges facing the region. Secretary of Treasury Steven Mnuchin will also join for the first day of the conference, where he and Mexican Secretary of Finance Jose Antonio Meade will lead an economic discussion focused on the Northern Triangle countries. Their discussion will focus on tax reform, infrastructure financing, and the role of the private sector.

And in this regard, the cohosting of the conference by Mexico is crucial, since Mexico is an invaluable partner with a shared interest in improving conditions in Central America. Mexico cohosting is reflective of our close cooperation on a broad array of political, economic, and security issues.

In terms of the goals of the conference, there are four primary goals. The first is to underscore our commitment to the Northern Triangle and recognize that it will take strong leadership from the United States, Mexico, and other

partners to tackle the economic, security, and governance challenges facing the region. The conference is also an opportunity for our Northern Triangle partners – Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras – to demonstrate their commitment to creating conditions that promote sustainable economic growth and improving security and governance. Through their plan of the Alliance for Prosperity, our Northern Triangle partners have made important strides on this path, and we encourage them to take further concrete action in support of these efforts.

The third goal is to identify policies to jumpstart investment in the region, promote economic growth, and improve conditions for U.S. companies operating in the Northern Triangle. This includes solutions to improve infrastructure, integrate regional energy markets, simplify and reform taxation and customs processes, and facilitate business development. The U.S., Mexican, and Central American private sector will be an important part of these discussions, and business leaders from throughout the region will be key as we seek to identify and overcome the obstacles to economic growth.

Finally, we want to mobilize the international community to demonstrate its commitment to confronting the shared challenges we face in the region. We've invited participants from Belize, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the European Union, Nicaragua, Panama, and Spain. The Inter-American Development Bank, International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank will also attend. Together, we are combating the root causes of instability, which has tangible benefits for U.S. security and economic interest.

I'd now like to turn it over to my colleague, Assistant Secretary Brownfield, who can address the security component of the conference in greater detail.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BROWNFIELD: Thank you, Dr. Creamer. And to be brief, so as to let you all put your questions more emphatically and robustly to us, may I note that on the security day, which is Friday, we expect to have representatives at presidential and ministerial level of the three Northern Triangle governments – Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador – representatives, obviously, of the two hosts – the United States and Mexico – ministerial representatives from the other four Central American nations, as well as representatives from Canada, Chile, Colombia, the European Union, and Spain, in alphabetical order.

The agenda for the discussions focuses on three basic areas: transnational organized crime and regional cooperation; citizen security; and rule of law and justice institutions. Our starting point, ladies and gentlemen, is actually not a bad one. We have had a robust program called CARSI, the Central America Regional Security Initiative, since the year 2009, which has provided in excess of \$1.5 billion to the Central American region to address security and law enforcement issues. The United States and Colombia have, since the year 2012, cooperated in training and capacity-building through most of Central America, where Colombian national police, navy, and in some cases air force trainers provide, with U.S. support, capacity-building and training through the region. The rates of homicide, violence, and aerial – we call them air tracks for airborne drug trafficking are down in Central America and particularly the Northern Triangle over the past 12 to 24 months.

And we find that our programs for place-based strategy, whereby my part of the State Department, INL, and USAID work together to attack in a holistic manner, community by community, the problems that create the root causes for out-migration from Central America are beginning to produce realities on the ground in the Northern Triangle.

What are our hopes from the security day and discussions on the 15th? First, I would say a broader partnership. It is not surprising that the European Union and Spain are participating in this conference. We have statistics that suggest that much of the product that is flowing through Central America today in trafficking routes makes a right turn and heads to Western Europe rather than proceeding north into North America.

Second, we would hope to see greater integration within Central America on security-related issues. The three Northern Triangle governments have made a good start. They cooperate and coordinate between their attorneys general, their security forces. There are other areas where we would hope to see greater coordination and integration.

Third, we hope to see stronger and better integration of security and economic and social development issues in the Northern Triangle in the years ahead.

And fourth and finally, you can't have a conference without allowing people to offer up ideas for new or better strategies to attack the problems that have, in fact, been tormenting Central America for years and years, and we obviously are open to any suggestions that would improve what we are doing and how we are doing it.

That's my summary for day two, and with that, I turn it back to Dr. N.

MS NAUERT: (Laughter.) Okay, thank you. Thank you, gentlemen. We'll start with Matt Lee from the Associated Press. Matt, go ahead.

QUESTION: Hi, thanks a lot, guys. I have a question about the elephant in the room here, which is Cuba, particularly given the speculation about changes in policy towards that. If, Assistant Secretary Brownfield, you're right that the product that comes out of Central America turns right and goes – heads to Europe, that would put it – make it go right through Cuba. Can I ask why – recognizing this is a Central American and not a Caribbean thing, but why not invite them as an observer?

And secondly, I just want to make sure – Secretary Tillerson will only be there for the Thursday portion, is that correct?

MS NAUERT: Matt, let me get back to you on the Secretary's schedule.

QUESTION: Okay.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BROWNFIELD: And Matt, I'll take the drug-related question that you have posed, which is the only basis upon which I will express a view on Cuba. The – at the end of the day, Cuba, along with most of the other nations in the Caribbean – in fact, all of them, I believe – is not

participating in this Central America conference, I presume for the same reason that the other 14 or 15 Caribbean nations are not participating and the other 12 South American nations are not participating. It's not a Western Hemisphere conference. It is a Central America conference and specifically a Northern Triangle conference.

MR CREAMER: No, I mean, that's exactly right. The focus is on the three Northern Triangle countries and supporting them in their efforts. And in that sense, it's key players who have been engaged in Central America or who are likely to be engaged. Mexico certainly faces their shared challenge both in terms of trans-shipment of drugs as well as the issues with irregular and illegal migration from the region. They've been engaged with the Northern Triangle countries. Colombia has been engaged in terms of supporting their security efforts. Canada has been engaged, Spain, the European Union, and then obviously the other countries in Central America beyond the Northern Triangle. So that is what basically guided the participation list in terms of the event.

MS NAUERT: Okay. CBS, Kylie Atwood, please.

QUESTION: Hey there. Thanks for doing this. I have a follow-up question on – Secretary Tillerson and Secretary Kelly made an announcement at the State Department a few weeks back regarding a comprehensive drug reduction program in the U.S. I'm wondering if we'll get any more details on what they were thinking specifically on that and talking to partners in Central America about that.

And my second question is regarding the rate of homicide, violence, and airborne drug trafficking that you guys referenced has gone down. Do you have any statistics on those rates, just so that we specifically understand how those numbers have changed over the past year or two? Thanks.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BROWNFIELD: Kylie, I'll take a bite at both of those – this is Bill Brownfield, INL – since they both fall in my mission set.

First, several weeks ago – in fact, it was shortly after the meeting between Secretaries Tillerson and Kelly with their Mexican counterparts, Foreign Secretary Videgaray and Secretary of Government of Mexico Osorio Chong – as they offered their summary of the results of the discussion, they did talk about a new cooperation and a more cooperative approach between the governments of the United States and Mexico to the drug trafficking problem that affects both countries. And all four of these cabinet members – two U.S. and two Mexican – announced, reaffirmed, and recommitted to cooperation based upon the assumption, the correct assumption, that this is a shared problem between two countries; and both countries accepted their responsibility for it, and both countries will cooperate to address their shared problem.

At the end of the day, what Secretaries Tillerson and Kelly were talking about from their end was a commitment to address and work cooperatively with the issue of U.S. demand for drug product in the United States of America and its role in producing the drug trafficking that affects both nations.

Good question and a perfectly valid request in terms of statistics on homicide rates, violence rates, and aerial drug trafficking rates in Central America. I do hereby commit to getting you some statistics, I hope before the sun sets over the city of Washington this self-same day.

MS NAUERT: Okay. Thank you. Nick Wadhams from Bloomberg.

QUESTION: Hi, thanks. Just to go back to the elephant in the room, as Matt put it, Cuba. And there are a lot of reports out there that President Trump will announce a new Cuba policy on Friday. And John, Cuba is one of your areas, so can you talk a little bit about State's involvement in the review process on Cuba policy? Do you anticipate a change in U.S. policy toward Cuba, and what's your recommendation on that score? Thank you.

MR CREAMER: I would just note that we have been involved in a policy review since early this year. A policy review continues. Once we have the policy review completed, the President will announce the policy at the time and place of his choosing. But right now, the review is still underway and I don't want to talk about the specifics of the review or try and prejudge its outcome.

MS NAUERT: Okay, thank you. VOA. Nike, please.

QUESTION: Thank you very much for this call briefing. A quick question on the schedule. Do you have anything on Secretary Tillerson's bilateral meetings?

And separately, I understand the 2018 budget proposal has a significant cut on the assistance to the Northern Triangle countries. Given that, how do you expect them to take the U.S. commitment to the region seriously? Thank you.

MR CREAMER: In terms – I mean, I think as a – in terms of U.S. engagement and support in the region, the fact that we have a conference of this magnitude involving the Vice President, three U.S. cabinet members, and numerous other U.S. Government agencies and U.S. officials shows our continued commitment to Central America and working with the Central Americans on the issues of governance, security, and development, which are critical to addressing the issues of illegal migration and criminal activity in the region, all of which adversely impact the United States. If you look at our assistance over the last two years, we've committed \$1.3 billion. In FY '17 there was an additional \$650 million. So we're talking about \$1.9 billion. The request in – for 2018 is 460 million; it's still a substantial sum of money that will be committed to working with the region.

At the same time, I would note that the emphasis, certainly, on day one of the conference is actually heavy emphasis on creating the conditions that will enable the private sector to invest more and play a role in advancing our objectives, and I think that that is critical in the medium to long-term sustainability of the efforts the Central American countries are making to address these issues. And so continued high-level U.S. engagement, continued financial support and assistance, but then also an important private sector role – we continue to take this integrated, holistic approach towards the issues in the region.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BROWNFIELD: And if I could add a bit from the security side – this is now Bill Brownfield again – at the end of the day, the purpose or one of the purposes of this conference is to establish better and broader partnerships, by which I mean other governments and other countries which are, in fact, suffering some of the consequences of the security situation in Central America becoming partners in efforts to address the underlying causes; that is to say, spreading more broadly those who are prepared to contribute support and be donors in these sorts of problems – these sorts of programs.

Secondly, the effort to have a more integrated and regional approach, which, speaking as the head of a program bureau, means finding a way to get a greater and bigger bang for your buck rather than having to support seven different nations in terms of specific programs; to be able to work in a more coherent and comprehensive fashion with all governments together, whether all seven Central American governments or the three principal Northern Triangle governments. From my perspective, this is what programming is all about. From my perspective, you all hold me accountable for getting maximum value for the dollars that are entrusted to my bureau for foreign assistance programs overseas. And your view at this stage I hope would be, “Brownfield, we hope to hear how you’re going to get even greater value from the dollars that are made available to you for these programs.”

MR CREAMER: And actually, just on the Secretary’s bilateral program, he will have some bilateral meetings, but we’re not in a position yet to confirm those meetings.

MS NAUERT: And this is Heather here just to note we can confirm that as of this time, the Secretary is planning on being there one day. That is on Thursday. Matt had asked that earlier.

Okay, let’s go to Reuters. Arshad Mohammed.

QUESTION: Yeah, two quick questions. One, do you have any expectation, even if the Cuba policy review is still ongoing, do you have any expectation that that will be completed by the end of the week?

And secondly, to go back to the question on money, Assistant Secretary Brownfield, who – what, if any, other countries do you expect to provide additional resources to, perhaps, in part compensate for the diminution in the resources that the President’s budget would entrust to you for these purposes? Who else is going to step up to the plate, do you think? Thank you.

MR CREAMER: The Cuba one’s easy. I’m not going to speculate on whence policy review will be completed. It’s already – it’s gone on for a couple of months now, and it will finish when it finishes.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BROWNFIELD: That’s – that puts me in a position not being able to say something that simple in terms of funding, and Arshad, I am not, obviously, here in a public forum going to identify specific governments and suggest that they pony up. Instead, being a trained diplomat who has been in this business for decades – far more decades than I care to contemplate – I

will offer a bit of logic and common sense: Who else might the statistics suggest are suffering from the consequences, particularly of the trafficking of illicit product, through Central America? The northern part of North America is receiving some of that trafficking, and may want to take a look at their own efforts in this regard. As I suggested, much of this product takes a right hand turn after it passes through Central America, crosses the Atlantic, and goes into Western Europe. As Heather noted early on, or maybe it was John, the European Union will participate in this conference as will the Government of Spain.

And finally, just speaking esoterically, other bits of this product tends to take a left hand turn after it has transited through Central America, crosses the Pacific, and reaches countries in East Asia and the Southwest Pacific. And this might suggest, perhaps, an interest among some of those countries in terms of these programs, these strategies, and these efforts to address Central American security and law enforcement issues. I am not suggesting any country specifically; I am just suggesting that as a matter of common sense, there are a number of other countries that should logically have an interest in how successful these strategies and these programs are in the Northern Triangle of Central America.

MS NAUERT: Thank you. Just time for two more questions. *LA Times*, Tracy Wilkinson.

QUESTION: Hi, thank you. My money – my question was also about money. You mentioned, John, the \$460 million requested for 2018. Just to clarify, that's only for Northern Triangle? And is that part of the Alliance for Prosperity or is that program essentially over with the last administration?

And then my other question, I didn't hear any mention of human rights. Will human rights be a part of this conference at all? Thank you.

MR CREAMER: Thanks. The Alliance for Prosperity – and sometimes there is confusing – the Alliance for Prosperity is the initiative launched by the three Northern Triangle countries themselves. It was a recognition on their own part that they needed to do more in terms of institutional development, economic growth, inclusive growth, delivery of social services to their own people in order to respond to the demands of their electorate. So that was developed by them and it is their own initiative largely funded by those countries, as well as multilateral development bank institutions.

U.S. assistance in the region is a – related in some ways, many ways complementary to the Alliance for Prosperity, but it is a separate program. The \$460 million, yes, is – almost all would be for the Northern Triangle countries and will be part of our continuing engagement and commitment to work with them to address and help them meet the challenges on the security side, on the governance side, on the lack of economic opportunity which have led Central Americans to migrate illegally to the north and/or allowed criminal – transnational criminal organizations to operate in their space.

So the program continues and our support continues.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BROWNFIELD: And you asked the human rights question as well. This is an easy one to answer, Tracy. Human rights is a component – and I’m coming at this from the security side – human rights is an inherent component of each and every program that we support in the Northern Triangle of Central America, in fact, throughout all of Central America, all of the Western Hemisphere, and all of the world. First, in terms of our partners, whoever we work with, be it individuals or units, are in fact vetted in accordance with U.S. law to verify that they have not – there is not reasonable grounds to suspect that they have committed human rights abuses in the past.

Second, we will work with human – with the NGOs, including human rights NGOs, in terms of how to make our programs – our community policing and community engagement programs – more successful in connecting with the local communities, which obviously has an inherent connection to human rights and human rights concerns.

Third, we directly support in the case of Guatemala a UN-based organization that is responsible for independent investigations of corruption and other human-rights-related issues – it is called CICIG – a joint OAS and Honduran Government organization that performs the same mission called MACCIH, and the Salvadoran attorney general’s own efforts to perform this same mission. Are human rights an integral part of this entire program in the Northern Triangle of Central America? Yes, they are.

MS NAUERT: Thank you. *El Nuevo Herald*. Are we still on, *El Nuevo Herald*?

QUESTION: Thank you for doing this. I have two questions. One, do you expect that TPS emerge in the conference at all or in the bilaterals?

And also, let’s try to reframe that question about Mr. Tillerson agenda. Is he expected to stay in Miami on Friday, and has he – does he have any scheduled event on Friday?

MS NAUERT: I’ll take the Secretary Tillerson question. Our understanding, or our planning right now is that the Secretary will be down there on Thursday, and that’s all I can get into at this time. I would have to take a look at what the public schedule is for him on Friday, and I could certainly do that and get back with you.

MR CREAMER: And I’m sorry, was the first question – you said TPS?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BROWNFIELD: Yes.

MR CREAMER: Yeah.

QUESTION: Yes, the protection – the temporary protection status for Central America.

MR CREAMER: Right. No, I mean, that is not on the conference agenda. Obviously, it’s important to countries in the Northern Triangle. I would expect it may come up in the bilats. But in terms of the countries in Central America at the moment, we have not made a decision yet on TPS. We just – we

have the process underway. Decisions will be made later this year.

MS NAUERT: Okay. Thank you, everyone, for calling in, and we'd like to thank the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Cuba, Mexico, Central America, and the Western Hemisphere Regional Economic Policy and Summit issues John Creamer – that is quite a title, sir.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BROWNFIELD: What a title.

MS NAUERT: Yeah.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BROWNFIELD: That takes two breaths of air just to get it out.

MS NAUERT: It certainly does. And William Brownfield, Assistant Secretary for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs. The call is now over and the embargo has been lifted. Thank you, everyone, for joining us, and we'll talk to you again real soon.

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