

Press Releases: Department Press Briefing – August 7, 2018

Heather Nauert
Spokesperson

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TRANSCRIPT:

2:45 p.m. EDT

MS NAUERT: Good afternoon, everybody. Hope you're all doing well. I'll start off with a few announcements today, and first I would like to, along with my colleagues, begin today by recognizing the 20th anniversary of the terror bombings that took place at our embassies in Nairobi and – in Kenya and Tanzania.

Deputy Secretary Sullivan met with survivors and their family members of the victims here at the department earlier today, and he delivered remarks alongside Ambassadors Lange and Bushnell, who headed our posts at the time, at a ceremony to honor those affected by the attacks. That is where they spoke. Our embassies in East Africa also participated in events to mark this solemn occasion.

Secretary Pompeo issued a statement earlier today saying we will never forget the legacy of those who perished nor the courage, bravery, and valor of all who survived. As we honor the memory of lost colleagues, family members, and friends, we must remind ourselves that the depravity of terrorists must never out-shadow the bravery and heroism of those on the ground that day and the closer partnerships that we've developed with the people of Kenya and Tanzania. And both of those ambassadors were here at the event earlier today.

As horrific as those attacks were, they only served to increase the bonds between the people of Kenya, Tanzania, and the United States, as we worked together to rebuild our embassies and heal our wounds and bring to justice those perpetrators. So we mark this day thinking of our colleagues and our family members and their family members who died 20 years ago or were injured.

Next, as you all know, the Secretary traveled to Indonesia, Singapore,

and Malaysia last week for bilateral and multilateral meetings to advance the security of the United States and the region, and to underscore our support for a rules-based order, reaffirm our commitment to friends and allies, and demonstrate the robust engagement in the Indo-Pacific. In Singapore the Secretary outlined the security pillar of the administration's Indo-Pacific strategy and announced nearly \$300 million in additional funding intended for South and Southeast Asia. We've gotten a lot of questions about this, so I just wanted to highlight some of what is involved in that program. There's been a lot of interest in this.

The funding represents a significant investment in our security relationships with Bangladesh, Indonesia, Mongolia, Nepal, the Pacific islands, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, and others. The investment focuses on four key areas that are critical to ensuring a free, open, and rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific region. This includes maritime security, humanitarian assistance, and disaster response, also peacekeeping capabilities and countering transnational crime. As part of the maritime security theme, we launched the Bay of Bengal Initiative to help enhance the capacity of civilian and military maritime actors in this vital region, which is home to important sea lanes linking the Indian Ocean to East Asia. And it was nice to have some of you along on the trip.

Last thing I'd like to address today, and that is Iran and the reimposition of sanctions that were rolled out today. At 12:01 this morning, the President's executive order entitled "Reimposing Certain Sanctions with Respect to Iran" went into effect. The executive order is reimposing sanctions on Iran's automotive sector and on its trade in gold and precious metals, as well as sanctions related to the Iranian rial, in support of the President's decision to cease U.S. participation in the JCPOA. A number of provisions of this order became effective today, while others will become effective on November the 5th. The United States is fully committed to enforcing all of those sanctions.

The United States is seeking new detail – excuse me, a new deal, rather, that will comprehensively address the Iranian regime's destabilizing behavior – not just their nuclear program, but also their missile program, their support for terrorism, and their malign regional behavior. The United States is willing to engage in talks with the Iranian regime, but we are looking for a commitment that they are willing to make fundamental changes in their behavior. Iran will need to think seriously about the consequences of its behavior and the consequences that it's having on its country, and especially on the Iranian people, and they should choose to correct their course of action going forward.

And with that, I'd be happy to take your questions.

QUESTION: Thanks, Heather. Before we get back to Iran, I just – I want to see if I can get a little bit more of a detailed response from you guys on the whole spat between the Saudis and the Canadians.

MS NAUERT: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Do you have anything more to say than the rather milquetoast comment that –

MS NAUERT: Well, and what was the milquetoast comment that you believe we put out earlier?

QUESTION: Just that they're both close partners and that you're going to refer any questions about this actual dispute to the two foreign ministries.

MS NAUERT: No, I have a little bit more for you on that. Thank you so much for asking.

QUESTION: Okay.

MS NAUERT: We've talked about this type of issue before. I think the last time we briefed, you and I addressed this very issue and concerns about Saudi Arabia.

We have a regular dialogue with the Government of Saudi Arabia on human rights and also other issues. This particular case regarding Canada, we have raised that with the Government of Saudi Arabia. They are friends, they are partners, as is Canada as well.

Both sides need to diplomatically resolve this together. We can't do it for them. They need to resolve it together. The United States respects – has respect for international recognized freedoms and also individual liberty. That certainly has not changed, and that's basically where we stand today.

QUESTION: Right. But I mean, Canada is more than just a close partner. It's actually your very, very, very close neighbor –

MS NAUERT: Yep.

QUESTION: – and it's also a NATO ally.

MS NAUERT: You're right.

QUESTION: You have treaty obligations with Canada. You don't – unless this administration has done something that I'm not aware of – don't have treaty obligations with Saudi Arabia. And I just – I don't understand why – there's one country here that has imprisoned human rights activists, and another one is your immediate neighbor and NATO ally. And I don't understand why you don't come down on the side of agreeing with the Canadians when it sounds as though, from what you're saying, your human rights dialogue with the Saudis, you do agree with them.

MS NAUERT: Matt, I can tell you that we have those conversations with the Government of Saudi Arabia. We have had conversations with them

about this as it pertains to Canada. But we would encourage both governments to work out their issues together. It's a diplomatic issue. Saudi Arabia and Canada can certainly stand to work it out together. We would encourage the Government of Saudi Arabia overall to address and respect due process and also publicize information on some of its legal cases.

QUESTION: Do you think the Saudis overreacted to this?

MS NAUERT: Matt, I'm not going to characterize it. I could just tell you we have discussed it with the Government of Saudi Arabia, and it's up for Saudi Arabia and the Canadians to work this matter out.

Okay? Hi, Lesley.

QUESTION: Can I ask –

MS NAUERT: Hi.

QUESTION: Hello. Yesterday in the statement you all said that the U.S. had asked for additional information on the – on several activists. Are they the same activists that Canada is raising an issue with?

MS NAUERT: I'm not sure which activists Canada is asking about in particular. I can just tell you we've asked the Government of Saudi Arabia for additional information on several activists.

QUESTION: I believe it's the activists – the same ones, the blogger and his wife.

MS NAUERT: Okay, I'm just not aware of which ones they in particular asked about. I can tell you that we have raised those cases with the government.

QUESTION: And did you receive that information from the Saudis?

MS NAUERT: I think I just – I'm going to be able – the information I just provided you is what I'm going to be able to provide you. Nothing beyond that.

Hi, Andrea.

QUESTION: Hi. Can I –

QUESTION: Can I just ask one – one more follow-up on this, please? Sorry.

QUESTION: One more on that? Sure.

MS NAUERT: Okay.

QUESTION: And then I'd like a chance –

QUESTION: You said you've raised the issue, though. Would you condemn

the arrest of this activist?

MS NAUERT: Look, I'm not going to get into all of this. I know you want me to characterize all of these things. Some of these issues we choose to discuss privately with our friends, with our partners, with our allies. And so you want me here to say certain things. I can tell you, however, we have raised these issues, and I'll leave it at that.

QUESTION: Well, it's just there was a Saudi general who's been quoted as saying that what the Canadian call that upset them so much is evidence of Canada's support for international terrorism. Do you believe that?

MS NAUERT: I'm not going to comment on what this general allegedly said about someone. I don't have any information on that. I'm not going to comment on that.

Andrea, go right ahead. What do you want to cover?

QUESTION: I want to ask you about the 20th anniversary, to follow up on the commemoration that was held this morning. Some of us covered that, and it was a watershed moment.

MS NAUERT: Certainly.

QUESTION: And Ambassador Bushnell said the following today here in the lobby: "We cannot waive the need for incoming Foreign Service officers, for high technology, or for the health services necessary after we have been sent to dangerous places. This occurred three years before al-Qaida bombed our homeland. We are, in fact, in a more dangerous place than we were. Our colleagues today face issues we didn't have to. Please take today" – this was addressed to Deputy Secretary Sullivan – "and this moment to pledge to alter the trend of providing inadequate resources to the people who work in peace, not only for the sake of those of us who work here today, but for the sake of our neighbors and communities where we live overseas."

I'm wondering whether the Secretary and others in command here are taking that in and realizing that the failures of 1998 were replicated in the failures of Benghazi, which I know the Secretary was a leading voice on, and whether there is more attention being paid to inadequate resources to Foreign Service officers and their dependents in dangerous places throughout the world.

MS NAUERT: Yes, so I'm glad you asked that question. I was sitting there today, and I heard Ambassador Bushnell's comments. And all of this was a very, very touching moment to have had so many survivors and then family members of victims there in the audience. Some people came from very far away to be a part of the 20th commemoration of those attacks.

The department takes seriously security concerns. You've seen significant changes in terms of our embassy security posture over the years as we unfortunately have learned from some very difficult circumstances. You will see changes at our embassy today that we did not

have in place years ago.

So we take those matters seriously. Deputy Secretary Sullivan was standing there as she spoke, as was I, and he acknowledged that and said we're – we certainly pledge to provide the resources that we're able to provide that we believe will fully take care of our people. That's something we take very seriously.

QUESTION: Do you think that the current budget as recommended or the mark that's coming back from OMB is adequate?

MS NAUERT: I have – would have to take a much, much closer look at the budget to see what they have for security. I don't have those numbers at my fingertips. Unfortunately, I don't have that for you today.

QUESTION: Can I follow up? Can I follow up right here?

MS NAUERT: Yeah. Hi – hi.

QUESTION: Why didn't the Secretary attend the event?

MS NAUERT: The Secretary was busy with other meetings today. We put out a statement. He has an extremely packed schedule, and we have a deputy secretary who was happy to attend. Do not take away from this that this is not of great value and interest to our colleagues here. This is something that's very important. But we're happy to have the deputy secretary attend, and the Secretary put out a statement this morning.

QUESTION: On Turkey –

MS NAUERT: Yes.

QUESTION: – have you reached an agreement with the Turks regarding Pastor Brunson? And who was the delegation, the Turkish delegation meet in D.C.?

MS NAUERT: If we had reached any type of agreement, I think you'd see Pastor Brunson back here at home, along with the other American citizens. I don't have any announcements for you on that today. I can tell you that the Secretary spoke yesterday with the foreign minister from Turkey. They had a conversation. I just don't have any details to read out from that conversation.

QUESTION: Today or yesterday?

MS NAUERT: Excuse me, yesterday. They spoke yesterday. Thank you.

QUESTION: And who was the Turkish delegation meeting –

MS NAUERT: I've seen reports about that. I can't confirm any of that, and we just don't have any meetings or anything to announce at this time. Okay.

QUESTION: This is something that continues to happen with the Turks, where they announce that these agreements – I mean, it happened with the previous Secretary and Manbij. It happened – is this getting a little bit annoying for you guys that they keep announcing these things?

MS NAUERT: Matt, I'm not going to comment on that. I think you know that there are governments who will sometimes say things that are different from what we say, and that is no surprise. That has happened –

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

MS NAUERT: – that has happened time and time again, as a general matter.

QUESTION: Heather, do you feel that there was progress or there is progress being made with the Turks to stave off further sanctions?

MS NAUERT: I can't comment on sanctions. That's obviously something that the Vice President had discussed about a week and a half ago or so. You ask if there's progress that has been made. I think the kind of progress that we want is for Pastor Brunson, our locally employed staff, and other – our other American citizens to be brought home. That's the real progress that we're looking for, and obviously we're not there just yet.

QUESTION: Do you feel that he's closer to coming to home or is it just nothing –

MS NAUERT: I'm not going to comment.

QUESTION: – nobody's budging on this one?

MS NAUERT: I'm not going to comment on that. But I think it's a – I think it's certainly a good thing that the Secretary and the foreign minister were able to have a phone call yesterday.

QUESTION: Heather –

QUESTION: Secretary –

MS NAUERT: Hi. Laurie, go right ahead.

QUESTION: Yeah. Secretary Pompeo said when he was leaving Jakarta that he was optimistic about Pastor Brunson – or leaving Singapore, wherever he was leaving.

MS NAUERT: I'm not sure he actually used that word. But look, we're working hard on this. It's an important matter to everyone, I think, in the U.S. Government, including Congress as well and here at the State Department in particular. So we're working hard on this case. And when we have news to bring you, I will certainly bring it to you, gladly.

QUESTION: But since then President Erdogan spoke strongly. They imposed sanctions. Has his optimism or whatever the word was diminished since that point?

MS NAUERT: Oh, they had a chance to speak when they were in Singapore. They had a phone call yesterday. And I'm just going to leave it at that, okay. When I have something to tell you, I certainly will.

Hi.

QUESTION: And would you still say that – thanks – that things are moving in the right direction at least? Or would you say that it's stalled at this moment?

MS NAUERT: I think having a phone call is certainly a good sign. I think having a conversation certainly cannot hurt. And that's why we believe that dialogue is something important to have. I don't have anything more for you on Pastor Brunson or the other American citizens, any updates on their cases. I would be more than happy to tell you when we do. Okay?

QUESTION: Can we go on to North Korea quickly?

QUESTION: Wait, wait. Hold on. This is the "call me maybe" diplomacy?

MS NAUERT: The what?

QUESTION: "Call me maybe" diplomacy. You know what I'm talking about?

QUESTION: Quick question on Turkey.

MS NAUERT: Yeah.

QUESTION: Are the Turks still demanding the exchange for Cleric Gulen?

MS NAUERT: I haven't seen anything recent on that.

QUESTION: Would that be even considered by this administration?

MS NAUERT: I – look, I think that would be a matter of extradition, which is something that we don't comment on. That would be a Department of Justice matter. I've not seen anything on that. I've not seen that brought up recently at all, Andrea. I want to just be clear about that.

Hi, Said.

QUESTION: Heather, how are you?

MS NAUERT: Where –

QUESTION: I want to move to the Palestinian-Israeli issue very quickly.

MS NAUERT: Sure.

QUESTION: Yesterday, or the day before yesterday, news reports suggested that the team is looking to expand, the Kushner-Greenblatt team is looking to expand, and they're looking to the State Department for specialists in negotiation, economic and so on. Can you share with us whether you have been contacted by the State Department on this issue or

are you providing any experts?

MS NAUERT: I think that was Matt's story, right? Matt, was that your story?

QUESTION: I had part of it.

QUESTION: He had part of it.

MS NAUERT: Oh, he had part of it. Sorry. We don't have any staffing announcements at this point right now.

QUESTION: Okay. So are you coordinating with them? Are you going to look into areas maybe to reignite negotiations or a large theme –

MS NAUERT: Well, I think we would always like to be able to do more on negotiations. That is largely being handled by Mr. Kushner and Mr. Greenblatt. We work closely with them, of course. And I think everybody would like to see progress on that front.

QUESTION: And very quickly on – there was a report in *Foreign Policy* that the Trump allies sought to destroy UNRWA because they feel that it has – it's hindered the peace process, it did not – it held the Palestinian refugees; it kept them in limbo, and so on. Is that the feeling in this building? Are you giving the White House advice on this, on how to handle UNRWA, or are you also agreeing with them that the organization should cease to exist?

MS NAUERT: Said, I can just tell you that the State Department and the White House – also the NSC – are all having conversations about our position with respect to UNRWA. We don't have any decisions or anything to announce at this point, and when I do, I will let you know. Okay?

QUESTION: Once more on North Korea?

MS NAUERT: Go ahead. Yep.

QUESTION: Just two quick questions. You probably heard John Bolton today speaking on the subject in interviews, and he's saying that North Korea has not done – it's not taken the steps that the U.S. would like to see, which I think is obvious to most people. But days ago, when the Secretary was testifying on Capitol Hill, he was telling senators that he felt that there was progress. So how would you characterize where the situation stands right now?

MS NAUERT: Yeah. I think, first of all, when we reflect on our trip that we recently went on to ASEAN in Singapore, the Secretary had many bilateral and multilateral conversations with many nations there. The resounding theme coming out of those meetings was thanks to the United States for its leadership, thanks to President Trump for his leadership on this issue. These countries were happy that we were able to get Chairman Kim and the North Korean Government to the table to begin having these conversations. That's an incredible step and a huge step

from where we were just one year ago. Chairman Kim made a commitment to President Trump on June the 12th; he said that he would denuclearize his country.

The Secretary has had subsequent conversations, as has the State Department, and we do not believe that that position has changed in any way. We've been working very hard since that time to develop the process by which denuclearization can be achieved. The Secretary spoke about this just on Sunday and said the process of achieving denuclearization is one that we have all known would take some time. The world is united in seeing this achieved. So it will certainly take some time.

QUESTION: Well, although right after the summit, it was the President himself who said that denuclearization would start to happen immediately. But now John Bolton is saying that they have not even begun any of that process. So –

MS NAUERT: Look, the conversations continue. We knew that this would be a road. We knew that the road would certainly take some time, and we're in the middle of that process right now.

QUESTION: And the White House is also saying that it's possible that Secretary Pompeo might go to North Korea next and meet with Kim. So what happens in that process? Is that something that the State Department is going to start actively working on?

MS NAUERT: I think that would be getting ahead of where we are right now. We have no trips, no travel to announce. And by the way, just on Sunday, we got back from a very long – a lot of flying hours to Asia. I think it was twenty-some hours. So I think we're okay with being here right now.

QUESTION: One way.

QUESTION: But are you saying –

MS NAUERT: One way, yes. That's just one way.

QUESTION: So you don't see that happening anytime soon?

MS NAUERT: (Laughter.) Look, I'm not going to predict what's going to happen, certainly, but we have no trips or travel to announce at this time. Okay?

QUESTION: Thanks.

MS NAUERT: By the way, Laurie, do you have a new colleague in the room here? Is there someone new here from i24?

QUESTION: K24?

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

MS NAUERT: Yes, okay. Yeah.

QUESTION: She's K24; I'm i24.

MS NAUERT: Oh, K24, i24. My apologies.

QUESTION: Yes. Can I just –

MS NAUERT: Go right ahead.

QUESTION: Thank you. My name's Nina Larsen, i24. Can I follow up on the Kushner email story, please?

MS NAUERT: Uh-huh.

QUESTION: Kushner said explicitly he thought that UNRWA was an impediment to the peace process. What's the State Department's stance on this?

MS NAUERT: Yeah. Look, part of the difficulty, I think – and we have discussed this extensively here at the State Department – is that UNRWA is a program that has lacked a good revenue funding stream that does not just rely on the United States for very many years. The United States has called on, as has Ambassador Haley, for UNRWA to restructure it. That's our piece of it; that's what our piece talks about. We have close conversations, of course, with the White House and with Jared Kushner and Jason Greenblatt, and I'm afraid I just don't have anything more for you on that specific part of the question.

QUESTION: One more thing.

MS NAUERT: Yeah.

QUESTION: How does this impact the right to return? Does that mean that is not going to be part of this peace plan?

MS NAUERT: Look, the peace plan is being largely handled out of the White House, but we're in close consultation with them. I'm not going to get ahead of any announcements or negotiations that they are involved with, so I'm just not going to have anything more for you on that. Okay?

QUESTION: Follow up on that?

MS NAUERT: Okay. Yeah. Go right ahead.

QUESTION: On that subject. There was a story – I believe in the FT the other day – that said that the peace plan has basically been sidelined because of Sunni Arab concerns about the Jerusalem embassy move, and that has removed any impetus for them to be supportive of the larger plan of Kushner or Greenblatt.

MS NAUERT: Yeah, I have not seen that story, so I don't want to comment on it. I've not seen it; I'm not aware of that. Okay?

QUESTION: On Bangladesh –

MS NAUERT: Hi. How are you?

QUESTION: On North Korea, quickly.

MS NAUERT: Yeah.

QUESTION: Just a quick one on – do you have a reaction on – to North Korea's foreign minister just visited Iran on the same day the United States –

MS NAUERT: I'm sorry. Say that again? His – about his what?

QUESTION: The North Korean foreign minister just visited Iran, then – and they had a official meeting yesterday, although there is no formal readout of the meeting.

MS NAUERT: Right.

QUESTION: But I'm wondering, what's your reaction to it? On the same day the United States just reimposed the sanction on –

MS NAUERT: Yeah. I certainly saw the reports. We've seen the reports that he was supposedly traveling to Iran as a government – I don't know that we can confirm it. I don't know – I think those are just media reports right now. If we can confirm it and have something for you on that, I'll let you know, okay?

QUESTION: On Iran. On Iran again.

MS NAUERT: Hi, yes.

QUESTION: Hi, Heather. I'm Guita with Voice of America Persian service.

MS NAUERT: Oh, hi. Nice to meet you.

QUESTION: Nice to meet you as well. Going back to your statement on the sanctions on Iran, you said Iran needs to think about the consequences of its actions on its people. At the same time, in different – on different occasions and again on the – at the outset of this announcement of the renewal of the sanctions, the U.S. administration has said that it stands with the Iranian people who are demonstrating against the country's mainly economic situation. How do you square these two? You're saying Iran needs – the sanctions obviously impact the Iranian – the general population first and foremost, so how does the U.S. want to stand next –

MS NAUERT: I would say let's keep the focus on where it belongs, and that is the Iranian regime. The reason people there are frustrated and have been increasingly frustrated over the years is because Iran has chosen to spend the money and resources and the hard work, efforts of its own people on destabilizing – excuse me – destabilizing the region.

They spend it on foreign adventurism, they spend it on attacks in other countries, going into Syria, going into Iraq, you name it. That is all well documented and very well known, and they're not giving the benefits of the labor back to their own people. And so I think people choosing to protest are expressing their concerns about the government.

We'd like to see a change in the behavior of the Iranian regime. We're not ashamed to say that. We'd like to see a change in their behavior where they take care of their own people, they stop their human rights abuses, and they spend their money on their own people, not the foreign adventurism and not terrorism around the globe.

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

QUESTION: How do you – how does the administration intend to support the Iranian people?

MS NAUERT: Well, I think one of the ways that we can do it is by giving voice to their concerns and by highlighting concerns that we have about the Iranian regime, and we're doing – we are doing just that. Secretary Pompeo has spoken extensively about this issue and by supporting the Iranian people, letting them know that we stand with you.

QUESTION: On –

QUESTION: When you say – when you say –

MS NAUERT: Go ahead, Said.

QUESTION: – “change their behavior” –

MS NAUERT: Yeah.

QUESTION: – you're talking about a fundamental change in policy – I mean, not some sort of behavioral therapy, right?

MS NAUERT: Well, we'd like to see them –

QUESTION: So you're expecting –

MS NAUERT: – see them stop terror attacks, that's for sure.

QUESTION: You're – yeah.

MS NAUERT: We – I don't think that's too much to ask.

QUESTION: That is a fundamental change in almost all of their policies, not just one particular area, correct? And that includes the 12 points that the Secretary of State outlined a couple months ago?

MS NAUERT: That would be correct.

QUESTION: Thank you.

MS NAUERT: We've not changed our policy in that regard.

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

QUESTION: Heather. Heather.

MS NAUERT: Yeah. Hi.

QUESTION: Iran again.

QUESTION: If the administration wants to hold them accountable for this whole comprehensive range of bad behaviors, how can you really get them to stop sponsoring terrorism around the region through financial sanctions alone?

MS NAUERT: Yeah, I think financial sanctions lead to that because we know that the government doesn't spend its money on its own people. It's not spending its money on health care, on services that we enjoy and so many other nations – free nations enjoy. They're not spending their money there. We know that they are spending that money on terror attacks. We know that they're spending their money on bombs and launching weapons against other countries. We know that that's where they're spending their money. And so the United States, in choosing to impose these sanctions, is taking that effort. We would certainly much rather use sanctions than – in this instance than use other resources or assets, and we think that this is a good way forward.

QUESTION: Quick follow-up: Has State been talking at all to DOD about –

MS NAUERT: Has what?

QUESTION: Has State been talking at all to DOD about the possibility of any kind of military action required?

MS NAUERT: That would be a DOD question, but we do diplomacy here. But I can tell you the Secretary speaks regularly with his counterpart over at DOD.

And we're going to have to wrap it up in just a couple minutes.

QUESTION: Heather, just a couple more on Iran.

MS NAUERT: Hey. How are you doing?

QUESTION: On Iran, you're basically saying to the country change your entire foreign policy and we'll talk to you if you agree to change everything that you –

MS NAUERT: I would think that we should ask another country to stop attacking other nations and to stop fomenting terror. That's one of the things that the United States Government does. We're not alone in asking them to do that. I think that's important to take that stand and not back away from that.

QUESTION: How do you square that with the stance of Saudi Arabia and the UAE and Yemen?

MS NAUERT: Well, you don't see – I'm sorry, what are you – what do you mean by that?

QUESTION: Well, you're just saying that you don't have any problem telling a country how to conduct its foreign policy –

MS NAUERT: Yeah, yeah.

QUESTION: – but you're siding with Saudi and Yemen.

MS NAUERT: We have concerns about what the Houthi rebels have been doing for quite some time. That is well documented. They have been terrible and conducted many, many attacks against their own – against the people of Yemen. We've seen what has happened at the port there, the Hodeidah Port, and the inability to have a good free flow of goods coming in, and Saudi Arabia certainly has a right to try to take out some of those bad actors. That's something that they have a right to do and we support that.

Okay, and I'm going to have to wrap it up, so final question.

QUESTION: One more?

MS NAUERT: Hi, ma'am. What is your name?

QUESTION: Hello. My name is Sylvie Lanteaume from AFP.

MS NAUERT: Okay, welcome.

QUESTION: Thank you.

MS NAUERT: Lot of new faces here.

QUESTION: There is another anniversary today. Ten years ago, Russia invaded some parts of Georgia, and I wanted to know if you have a comment on that.

MS NAUERT: Yeah. I believe that the NSC put out a statement on that very anniversary today, or the White House did. Our position on the Russian-occupied Georgia regions of Abkhazia and also South Ossetia is unwavering; that remains unwavering today. The regions are part of Georgia, they are not part of Russia, and the United States continues to support Georgia's sovereignty, its independence, and also its territorial integrity within the internationally recognized borders. This is a policy that has not changed. I'm glad you asked about it because it gives us the opportunity to state this once again, that the United States urges Russia to withdraw its forces to the pre-invasion war positions, per the 19 – excuse me, per the 2008 ceasefire agreement. Okay.

QUESTION: And if I can follow up?

MS NAUERT: Yeah.

QUESTION: Would the U.S. support Georgia to join NATO?

MS NAUERT: Well, that's something that – NATO took a decision about that at the Bucharest summit, I believe it was, back in 2008 that Georgia will become a member of NATO. I know there's certain things that have to be done. I don't have any additional details on that, but my understanding is that is in train right now.

QUESTION: Did this come up in Helsinki? Did the President raise this issue with Vladimir Putin?

MS NAUERT: I am not sure; I can't speak to that. I'd have to refer you to the White House on that. Okay.

QUESTION: No one knows.

QUESTION: Heather, do you have anything on a critically ill political prisoner in Bahrain named Hassan Mshaima?

MS NAUERT: I do not, but I can certainly look into that and see if I can get –

QUESTION: Can you? Thank you.

MS NAUERT: And see if I can get that for you. Okay, everybody. Thanks a lot. We'll see you real soon.

(The briefing was concluded at 3:13 p.m.)

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