

# Press Releases: Department Press Briefing – July 11, 2017

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TRANSCRIPT:

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2:45 p.m. EDT

**MS NAUERT:** Hi, everyone. Welcome back to the State Department. Who's back from the G20? All right. Well, welcome back. I hope you had a good trip over there.

I would like to welcome some students that we have in the back row. So, again, keep it clean when we have guests. They're from Georgetown Day School. So welcome to the State Department, great to have you here today. And they're studying international affairs. So thank you for coming.

I've got a few pieces of business to address first today, and the first is an announcement that we made over the weekend, but we're really pleased with it, so I wanted to highlight it for you again. We've talked a lot about the four famines in Africa, and so I wanted to tell you about a USAID big chunk of change that has gone to that effect.

On Saturday, the United States announced nearly \$639 million in additional humanitarian assistance to the millions of people affected by food insecurity and violence in South Sudan, Nigeria, Somalia, and also Yemen. With the new assistance, the United States is providing additional emergency food and nutrition assistance, life-saving medical care, improved sanitation, emergency shelter, and protection for civilians who have been affected by conflict, including those displaced internally, and also refugees.

The United States is also providing safe drinking water and supporting hygiene and health programs to treat and prevent disease outbreaks for all the four crises, including in Yemen, which is experiencing the world's largest cholera outbreak. The United States is the largest single donor of humanitarian assistance around the world. The aid we provide represents the best of America's generosity and its goodwill.

Today marks – actually, Sunday marked the two-year anniversary of the launch of China's government nationwide campaign of intimidation against defense lawyers and also rights defenders. The State Department remains deeply concerned about the continued detention of at least seven defense lawyers and rights defenders and reports of their alleged torture and denial of access to independent legal counsel. We urge the Chinese authorities to immediately release those still in detention and drop the charges, and also allow them to reunite with their families. We urge the Chinese authorities to view lawyers and rights defenders as partners in strengthening Chinese society through the development of the rule of law.

**QUESTION:** Can we go to Qatar?

**MS NAUERT:** Sure, let's start at Qatar. Hi.

**QUESTION:** Can you update us on the latest efforts by Secretary Tillerson? And I know we saw the statement that was issued, and he basically said – quoted to have said that the Qataris' position is reasonable. Could you elaborate on that?

**MS NAUERT:** So the Secretary was in – I'm sorry, UAE – no, he was in – he's based in Kuwait and has had a few series of trips. He went to Doha today to talk to the leaders there. And he will travel to Saudi Arabia tomorrow, and that's where he'll meet with the Saudis, the Emiratis, the Egyptians, and also the Bahraini officials.

An important piece of news to announce is that we worked out an arrangement with the Qataris separate from the Qatar feud, if you will. And this is something we're pretty proud of, and this is something that

the President has made a major initiative of his that was worked out at the Riyadh conference. And that is the Qataris and the United States have signed a memo of understanding between the United States and Qatar on counterterrorism financing. So some of the details I understand are still being worked out at this hour; the Secretary was pleased to be able to announce that piece of work today.

**QUESTION:** Do you see this as paving the way for Qatar to go back into the good stead of the other four countries that cut off relations with it?

**MS NAUERT:** We certainly hope so. We know that all of those countries, as we talked about in Riyadh, share the concern about ISIS, the global terror network, and they recognize that we are all stronger when we are working together and coordinating in the fight against ISIS. So we believe that this memo of agreement between the United States and Qatar is a good first start to get that underway.

Hey, Michelle.

**QUESTION:** Initially in this, what we heard from the Saudis was kind of take or leave it, here are our demands. So how would you say that through the course of the Secretary's meetings the willingness level has changed, or hasn't, among the other countries besides Qatar?

**MS NAUERT:** So I know that the countries and the Secretary are committed to trying to work this through and come to a resolution. It's been more than a month now. We've continued to ask them to do that. I think those nations all understand the concern and the importance to work together to come to a resolution on this.

**QUESTION:** And Tillerson's spokesperson during part of this trip had said, when he was talking to reporters, that there are no clean hands here. Was he talking about Saudi Arabia or what? Can you clarify that?

**MS NAUERT:** I think – I know what you're referring to. I think when he referred to no clean hands what he was talking about – and I wasn't there for this, but I think what he was talking about is that all parties can do a lot more to work together, that all of the nations have issues that they need to address and work together on. And I think that this new counterterrorism financing and funding initiative that the Secretary was able to announce today with the – his foreign – the foreign minister of Qatar is a good first place to start.

**QUESTION:** And when he said that some of those demands were just completely untenable but some could be workable, can you give a little more detail on what he was talking about?

**MS NAUERT:** So I'm not going to characterize any of the specific demands, but we know overall from taking a look at the initial lists and subsequent lists that some of the things would be harder for certain nations to do than others. Some of them would, frankly, not be workable

for some of those nations. I'm not going to point out specifics. That's for each of those nations to look at and highlight themselves. But we're hoping that they will come to an agreement on this.

Hi.

**QUESTION:** Heather, State and Qatar have described this agreement that they signed today as a separate agreement to the process that had begun in Riyadh before this blockade began. But given that the most cited grievance that these countries have against Qatar is – has to do with terrorist financing, and this is a terrorist financing agreement, could you characterize this as linked or as a breakthrough to try to end this impasse?

**MS NAUERT:** Well, I think to highlight that the United States and Qatar have this agreement on terror financing sends a really good message to all of the nations that, hey look, we can get to this agreement on this, we can get to an agreement that terror financing is a major issue and a major concern. So I think that helps set a good example for the other nations that we hope that they will come to the table with us as well.

**QUESTION:** And there's an expectation or a hope that Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Egypt, these other nations, will sign similar agreements with the United States?

**MS NAUERT:** That I'm not sure. I wouldn't want to get ahead of the Secretary's discussions because he has a lot of meetings ahead of him and a lot of hard work ahead as well.

Okay. Hi, Kel.

**QUESTION:** Hey, does Secretary – just to clarify – want other nations to sign onto it, considering that the Qatari foreign minister said that they are the first nation to sign onto this memorandum?

**MS NAUERT:** I'm not certain if this memorandum is going to be extended to the other nations. There could potentially be, but I don't want to get ahead of the Secretary. I suppose there could be separate memorandums that would come of these conversations. But again, I just don't want to get ahead of what those discussions might look like.

**QUESTION:** And when will we be getting the details of what was in this memorandum? It seems like it's a bit unclear right now.

**MS NAUERT:** Well, this is all fresh. It's all new. The President had asked the Secretary to go over there and personally handle this. So we're just going to keep an eye on it, keep an eye on the situation, because it's still developing.

Okay.

**QUESTION:** On Syria?

**MS NAUERT:** Anything else on Qatar?

**QUESTION:** Yeah.

**QUESTION:** (Off-mike.)

**MS NAUERT:** No, let's stay with Qatar. Are we done with Qatar?

**QUESTION:** Yeah.

**MS NAUERT:** Okay, let's move on.

**QUESTION:** Yeah. Syria?

**MS NAUERT:** Hey, Josh. Go ahead.

**QUESTION:** Hi, Heather. Is there going to be – is there any clarity so far on the monitoring of the Syrian ceasefire? Obviously, Lavrov said yesterday that it was going to be done with the United States and Jordan from a center in Amman. Do you have any more details on that?

**MS NAUERT:** Mr. Lavrov likes to talk a lot and get out ahead, I think, of some of the negotiations that are underway. That is all still being worked out. We are a little over two days into the ceasefire in that part of Syria. We're pleased with that. We think it's holding fairly well at this point. In terms of who is doing what, when, where, how, some of those details are still being worked out.

**QUESTION:** Is there a level of urgency in working that out? Because it seems like if you don't have a monitoring or an enforcement mechanism of a ceasefire it sort of incentivizes people to break it, because who's monitoring?

**MS NAUERT:** Well, I think the first objective was – and this is no small feat that the United States, that Jordan and Russia, were all able to work out an agreement to bring in a ceasefire in a separate, new area. This is aside from the Astana process which had the other zones. This is the de-escalation zone that is a fifth and separate region. So I think it's a terrific feat that they were able to identify this region and call – agree to a ceasefire and allow that ceasefire, for the most part, to take hold.

So this is something that I know is important to get to the position where there are monitors, and who those monitors will be I don't know at this point. I know we have folks in the region. I know that our special envoy to Syria is actively engaged in these conversations, so I anticipate we'll get that information in the in the near future.

**QUESTION:** (Off-mike.)

**QUESTION:** Do you think you might be able to provide a map or an outline of the specifics of the region, or just give more clarity on what we're talking –

**MS NAUERT:** I'm not sure that we'll be able to. That may be classified at this point. I can certainly look into that.

Okay.

**QUESTION:** And is there any assessment about – there was some flashpoints that happened in the last 24 hours in parts of the area that might have been considered the ceasefire or might not have –

**MS NAUERT:** Yeah.

**QUESTION:** – a regime offensive in Suwayda or – on the outskirts?

**MS NAUERT:** So my understanding is that is actually outside of the area where the ceasefire has been called or has been identified. Again, for the most part, this seems to be holding right now. I'm not going to say that there aren't going to be skirmishes or things here and there, but so far, this is holding, and a pretty incredible feat that the United States, Russia, and Jordan were able to come to this.

Okay. Anything else on Syria?

**QUESTION:** (Off-mike.)

**MS NAUERT:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** Yeah. I got a quick follow-up. Are you concerned that this ceasefire would allow extremists from ISIS, from other groups – especially Jabhat al-Nusrah – to be funneled – to make all the way up to Idlib and even coming out of Mosul and Raqqa and going there, where they are going to congregate? Is that still –

**MS NAUERT:** I think –

**QUESTION:** Are these groups are still free targets? They don't fall under the ceasefire?

**MS NAUERT:** This is still a fresh agreement, so we're going to wait a little bit and let this agreement play out. We have a lot of folks who are in the region, a lot of coalition partners who care about trying to keep this ceasefire holding at this point, and then we'll try to build on it from there.

**QUESTION:** Thank you.

**QUESTION:** Syria?

**QUESTION:** Are you skeptical of Russia's intentions here at this point, or would you say that the situation seems better than that this time?

**MS NAUERT:** Well, I think the Secretary and the President have talked about our difficulties in our relationship with Russia, that we remain at a low point but we're looking for areas of agreement. I think when

you find areas of agreement that you can work on, you start to build from somewhat of a point of confidence and comfort level. If we can get that initial building block in place, perhaps we could work on some – on the next step. I know one of the commitments we share at this point is not just this ceasefire but also allowing humanitarian access to get in. That's badly needed. And so the hope is that we can get in humanitarian access and help the folks there in that area.

**QUESTION:** Would you say that the State Department stance at this point is optimistic, or is it not at that point yet?

**MS NAUERT:** I think optimism in a country that has seen a brutal regime, that has seen so much misery over six years – I think optimism is perhaps too strong of a word, but I think it is promising, in a certain sense, that we've been able to get this ceasefire underway. And for the most part it's been able to hold so far, and we'll keep building to do more.

Okay. Anything else left on Syria?

**QUESTION:** Syria.

**QUESTION:** Yeah.

**QUESTION:** Syria.

**MS NAUERT:** Okay. Who had Syria?

**QUESTION:** Here.

**MS NAUERT:** Sir, hi.

**QUESTION:** Yeah. Is the deal sustainable without Iranian buy-in, and do you know if the negotiators are in contact at all with Iran?

**MS NAUERT:** I have no information on that whatsoever. Okay?

**QUESTION:** (Off-mike.)

**QUESTION:** Syria. Yeah.

**MS NAUERT:** Okay. Miss, did you have something on Syria?

**QUESTION:** Yeah, a follow-up on Syria. I'm Tatiana Kalykova. I'm correspondent for Russian news agency Ria Novosti. I want to go back to previous statement of Mr. Tillerson on proposal to establish joint mechanism, and specifically that includes establishing no-fly zones in Syria. Is that something that we are going to see in the near future? Are you working on that with Russian counterparts, or for now it's like just a proposal?

**MS NAUERT:** So I'm not going to get ahead of any of our diplomatic conversations that could be had. I think the focus today is on this

ceasefire. We're pleased to see that. We also have had some movement on – from the standpoint of meeting with the Russians, and that's something I wanted to announce today, that Under Secretary Shannon will be meeting with the Russians, with his counterpart, here in Washington on Monday. So that was something that the Russians – we had had on the schedule with him previously and Russia had canceled that meeting, as you all know, in Saint Petersburg. Under Secretary Shannon has been hard at work, as we have been trying to find areas that we could deal with some of these so-called irritants, and that meeting's set to happen here in Washington on Monday.

**QUESTION:** (Off-mike.)

**QUESTION:** (Off-mike.)

**MS NAUERT:** Pardon me?

**QUESTION:** Is that meeting an outgrowth of the discussions?

**MS NAUERT:** I don't know. This is something, I believe, that – I know that Under Secretary Shannon – excuse me, that Mr. Shannon had had this conversation about a week and a half or so ago, and I – so I think this is sort of as a result of that.

**QUESTION:** Is he meeting Ryabkov? Is Ryabkov coming over, or is it somebody else?

**MS NAUERT:** I believe it's Ryabkov coming here to Washington.

**QUESTION:** Okay.

**MS NAUERT:** Okay. Anything else on Syria?

**QUESTION:** Syria.

**QUESTION:** (Inaudible) on the Shannon meeting?

**QUESTION:** On Russia.

**QUESTION:** Iraq.

**QUESTION:** Syria.

**MS NAUERT:** Okay. Let's go on over to Iraq. Hi, sir.

**QUESTION:** Okay. So the Pentagon issued a statement, which resonated what other U.S. officials from the State Department have said about the liberation of Mosul. It said we have to – we need to address the conditions that led to the rise of ISIS in Iraq. So I want to know whether the United States mission from now on will be to address those conditions in Iraq and what are those conditions.

**MS NAUERT:** I think our mission in Iraq – we'll do what we can to support the Iraqi Government and the people of Iraq. We are not going to



unilaterally decide what's best for the Iraqi Government. We have had close cooperation with them and we are very, very pleased to see the liberation of Mosul. Let's not forget it was not that long ago where the most horrific things on the part of ISIS were taking place in Mosul, where we saw the beheadings of civilians, where we saw the crucifixion of Christians, where in various parts of Iraq and Syria we've seen people burned in cages, we've seen people drown. So I think it's a real welcome sight – not that the fight is over, but a welcome sight that Mosul has been liberated. Again, a tough fight ahead for the Iraqi Government, other governments in the area, coalition partners. That's something that we're addressing here in Washington. But we remain committed to that and also to the Iraqi people and the Iraqi Government.

**QUESTION:** One more question on the Amnesty International report. They have made some accusations against the coalition and the Iraqi forces, arguing that they might – war crimes might have been committed by the coalition and Iraqi forces in Mosul because –

**MS NAUERT:** I'm familiar with the Amnesty International report. And some would say let's take a step back and take a look at this. The coalition and its forces do everything that they can to avoid civilian casualties. That's something as Americans and I know the coalition as a whole takes very, very seriously. Let's remember why we are engaged in this fight against ISIS. Let me remind you of something I just said – the beheadings of civilians, the beheadings of children, the crucifixion of Christians, the burning of the Jordanian pilot in the cage. All of these things – I can go on and on about the atrocities that have taken place in that region over a few numbers of years. So we will continue to take that fight to ISIS and continue to allow Iraqi civilians to come home. The United States, coalition partners, have had that win, if you will, but we know that it's not over yet.

**QUESTION:** Have you looked at the findings, Amnesty's findings?

**MS NAUERT:** I have not seen those findings myself. I know that they did not contact the Department of Defense or our coalition partners in putting together that report.

**QUESTION:** Thank you.

**QUESTION:** Iraq?

**MS NAUERT:** Let me go to that. Hi.

**QUESTION:** ISIS could not have controlled Mosul without support from at least some local elements. So my question is anyone – perhaps the Iraqis, perhaps you would know something about this – is anyone planning on establishing a mechanism for the victims of ISIS to seek justice, to hold accountable those who were involved in the terrible crimes that you've just described?

**MS NAUERT:** I know that the United States has continued to offer Iraq our

support in doing what is needed to help them, to not only help stabilize the country but to help provide additional assistance. I believe that's something that the Iraqi Government – I cannot speak for the Iraqi Government – could potentially be looking into themselves. But I think that's something for the Iraqi Government to decide.

**QUESTION:** Would you be encouraging them to look into it?

**MS NAUERT:** Again, I'm not part of the diplomatic conversations that are underway. I'm not aware of any that are taking place about that specific issue. But I know just historically we would certainly support the government in what it needs to do to bring people to justice.

Okay. Anything else on Iraq? Iraq? Okay.

**QUESTION:** (Off-mike.)

**MS NAUERT:** Okay. Okay. Let's – hi. How are you?

**QUESTION:** So can you provide any sort of update on the cyber framework that Secretary Tillerson announced on Friday? The President had described it as a cyber security unit, but the Secretary had used the term framework. So just sort of any details you can provide and whether or not it is happening.

**MS NAUERT:** So I know a lot of people like to pick apart the exact words that are used. Sarah Huckabee Sanders over at the White House addressed this issue yesterday, in which she gave a little bit more color about this. One of the things she said is that we recognize Russia as a cyber threat. We also recognize the need to have a conversation with our adversaries. And I think that sort of formulates what – part of what the President's discussion was. She went on to say that the discussions may still take place over that particular issue that you mention, but that's as far as we can really look ahead right now.

**QUESTION:** So it won't be part of, for example, Under Secretary Shannon's meeting next Monday?

**MS NAUERT:** I'm not aware of that. I know that this was a meeting that the under secretary has been trying to get on the books for quite some time. Again, it was canceled, as you all know, about three weeks ago or so, and so we're pleased to have that meeting on the books.

**QUESTION:** And can you say – the Secretary was saying after that meeting as well that both presidents agreed, rightly, in his opinion, that we needed to move on from this issue of a cyber intrusion. Does that mean that there will be no sort of repercussions for Russia because of the meddling in the U.S. election?

**MS NAUERT:** Well, I'm not going to speak for the White House or the President, but I think Secretary Tillerson has been very clear about that, about – and that's part of the reason that the Russian Government was asked to leave its dachas here in the United States –

**QUESTION:** So no –

**MS NAUERT:** – because we knew that there were some activities taking place in those dachas that were not permitted under U.S. law.

**QUESTION:** But no further repercussions by this administration?

**MS NAUERT:** I can't speak to what the White House could potentially be working on or not working on at that point.

**QUESTION:** So any support for the – I know you don't want to comment on legislation –

**MS NAUERT:** Yeah.

**QUESTION:** – but the sanctions bill, I know at least one senior administration official had expressed support for it. Is that the position now of the State Department?

**MS NAUERT:** Again, it's – I don't know which particular member of Congress you're speaking about.

**QUESTION:** No, it was, I believe, Marc Lotter with the White House that said the administration would support it.

**MS NAUERT:** I see. Okay. Let me just refer you back to the White House on that one.

**QUESTION:** Okay.

**MS NAUERT:** Okay. Anything else?

**QUESTION:** (Off-mike.)

**QUESTION:** On that same issue?

**MS NAUERT:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** China?

**QUESTION:** Different –

**MS NAUERT:** Dmitri, go ahead.

**QUESTION:** A couple on dachas.

**MS NAUERT:** Yes.

**QUESTION:** Just a quick follow-up.

**MS NAUERT:** I know you must be so excited to talk about that. It's summertime, you want your place back on the eastern shore of Maryland and New York. It's hot here in D.C.

**QUESTION:** To be completely honest with you, I don't want to touch that at all, but I have to.

**MS NAUERT:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** (Off-mike.)

**QUESTION:** I'm afraid I have to. The Russians essentially warned that they are prepared to retaliate. They still view it as a tit-for-tat situation. Thirty-five of Russian diplomats were thrown out last year, those two dachas were shut down, so they're saying guys, we're basically at the deadline, you need to make a decision, and we're – I think we're racing to go on a downward spiral again. Do you have a response to that?

**MS NAUERT:** What was – about – a downward spiral about what?

**QUESTION:** Yes, because the Russians are threatening to take – mirror similar –

**MS NAUERT:** I see what you mean, okay. Okay.

**QUESTION:** – to retaliate.

**MS NAUERT:** I think – and I don't mean to be cute in saying this, but we're used to certain officials from the Russian Government making a lot of comments. So I'm not going to comment on any or speculate on any specific Russian actions, any specific Russian threats. It's a hypothetical at this point. I just know that the under secretary is looking forward to sitting down with his counterpart and we'll see where it goes from there.

**QUESTION:** Okay.

**MS NAUERT:** Okay. Yeah.

**QUESTION:** Was that issue – the Russians have been making threats for, what, two months now about retaliating for the seizure of property. So to what extent was that discussed in the meeting with Putin?

**MS NAUERT:** I'm not sure. I'm not sure. I'm not aware whether or not that came up. I can certainly look into it for you, though, and I'm – but I'm not sure I'll be able to get an answer.

**QUESTION:** Okay. And when you were just asked about any potential repercussions or more punishment for Russia's cyber-meddling, you mentioned the dachas and the expulsions. Are you saying that Secretary Tillerson feels that that is an adequate response to what Russia did in the election?

**MS NAUERT:** I don't know that I would characterize it that way. I think the Secretary has been clear –

**QUESTION:** I'm not sure if he has.

**MS NAUERT:** (Laughter.) Okay. I'll disagree with you there politely –

**QUESTION:** Okay.

**MS NAUERT:** – but I think the Secretary has been clear on his concerns about that, and we'll leave it for Mr. Shannon and Mr. Ryabkov to have those conversations on Monday, and I'm not going to get ahead of those.

**QUESTION:** All right, thanks.

**MS NAUERT:** Thank you.

**QUESTION:** (Off-mike.)

**QUESTION:** Turkey, (inaudible).

**MS NAUERT:** Let's switch regions now.

**QUESTION:** Turkey, (inaudible).

**MS NAUERT:** Okay. Let's go over to North Korea now.

**QUESTION:** Thank you very much, Heather.

**MS NAUERT:** How are you? How are you?

**QUESTION:** Yeah. Does the U.S. have any update – sanctions against the North Korean such as secondary boycott?

**MS NAUERT:** Such as what?

**QUESTION:** Secondary boycott, like –

**MS NAUERT:** Ah, okay. One of the things Secretary Tillerson has talked about is we would be willing to – and I don't say a lot about sanctions but I can say this because it is a general matter – we are willing to look at third-party sanctions and look at other nations and sanction them if they are involved in activities that help give money to the DPRK. A couple recent examples: There were sanctions issued against some Chinese entities last week. There was also – there were also some sanctions issued against – I believe it was a Russian corporation a week or 10 days ago or so. So the United States continues to look at those as ways to try to shut down the money that is illegally going to North Korea that we believe, we firmly believe that it goes to fund its illegal weapons programs and also – and that.

**QUESTION:** Do you have any information on the Six-Party representative talks in Singapore – U.S., South Korea, and Japan?

**MS NAUERT:** We announced last week that our Ambassador Yun was heading over there. I believe those talks are still underway at this point. I don't have any additional information for you at this time.

**QUESTION:** Thank you.

**QUESTION:** (Off-mike.)

**QUESTION:** Can we go to India, please?

**MS NAUERT:** Okay. Okay. Anything else on Asia?

**QUESTION:** Yes, follow-up –

**MS NAUERT:** Are you on Asia?

**QUESTION:** Yes.

**MS NAUERT:** Okay, hi.

**QUESTION:** Same topic. The U.S., there have been reports, is circulating a draft resolution at the UN Security Council for additional sanctions on the DPRK. Do you have an update on how those discussions are going? And also, was it discussed in the meeting with President Xi and President Trump?

**MS NAUERT:** Okay. A couple things in terms of potential sanctions at the United Nations. I know that that is something that is a hot topic. A lot of people are talking about that right now. The sanctions are – I know it's something that Ambassador Nikki Haley has touched on briefly about that. She has said any new potential sanctions or resolutions, I should say, should be proportionate to the new escalation that has been faced as a result of North Korea's actions.

I hate to say this again, but I don't want to get ahead of some of those diplomatic conversations that are going to take place at the United Nations. We're going to be talking with the nations there and the members of the UN Security Council to see what is the best move yet. One thing I think is clear and that is the world is very concerned about the escalation in terms of the threat that the DPRK faces, not just with regard to the region, but with regard to the world.

Okay.

**QUESTION:** And then also one more on Liu Xiaobo's condition. There have been reports that he is in critical condition. Are you concerned for his health, and also is the U.S. ready to accept him into the country to receive medical treatment?

**MS NAUERT:** So Liu Xiaobo, we've been following that case very closely. You've heard me talk about it here for the past few weeks. We continue to call on the Chinese authorities for his full parole and also for the release of his wife. At China's invitation – and we were pleased to see this take place – U.S. and German medical experts were able to come and visit him and also visit his family. I understand that his wife, who had been under house arrest, was able to be with him at the hospital. We're happy about that, however, we continue to call on China to release him so that he can receive medical treatment wherever he desires. If it's in the United States, I think we would certainly welcome that. The State

Department was involved in helping to get a U.S. doctor from MD Anderson to China to be able to take a look at him. I know the German – there was also a German doctor that was in attendance too. We would like for Mr. Liu to be able to make his own health choices about where he would like to go.

Okay. Anything else on China?

**QUESTION:** China?

**QUESTION:** One more question.

**MS NAUERT:** Okay, go ahead.

**QUESTION:** Yeah, so I was wondering if you have a reaction to your counterpart at the Chinese foreign ministry. Spokesperson Geng rejected the idea that China has a responsibility for mitigating the North Korean nuclear crisis.

**MS NAUERT:** Hm. Okay, I'm not aware of those comments, but I know that we have been very clear that China has a unique kind of leverage with North Korea. About 90 percent or so of the trade that North Korea does is done with China. We've continued to have conversations with Chinese Government officials at all levels, at the highest levels, and we continue to say, "Thanks for what you've done, but we expect and we want you to do a whole lot more." So we'll continue to have those conversations.

**QUESTION:** Great, thank you. Would you mind just taking the question so you actually have a chance to read through the statement that he made? Could you follow up –

**MS NAUERT:** I'm sorry?

**QUESTION:** Could you follow up – once you actually have a chance to look at the statement, would you mind following up on that?

**MS NAUERT:** I'm sorry, which – at which statement?

**QUESTION:** The Chinese spokesperson's statement.

**MS NAUERT:** Okay. I mean, I can certainly see what I can do, but –

**QUESTION:** Sure. Well, you said you haven't had a chance to look at it yet.

**MS NAUERT:** – as I'm sure you've heard me here say before say –

**QUESTION:** Yes.

**MS NAUERT:** – every statement that comes out from every person around the globe, whether it's a spokesperson or a foreign minister, I'm not going to comment on those things, okay?

**QUESTION:** Sure.

**MS NAUERT:** All right. Anything left on –

**QUESTION:** Change topic?

**MS NAUERT:** – China or DPRK?

**QUESTION:** On India?

**QUESTION:** Can we –

**MS NAUERT:** Okay, we'll go to India. Hi, sir. How are you?

**QUESTION:** Fine, thank you. Are you aware about the – do you know about the terrorist attack in Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir where seven pilgrims were killed – shot dead by terrorists yesterday?

**MS NAUERT:** That took place on July the 10th.

**QUESTION:** Yeah.

**MS NAUERT:** That is what you're referring to?

**QUESTION:** Yes.

**MS NAUERT:** And yes, we are aware of that. We're familiar with it, but the – we consider it to have been a terrorist attack in the state of Jammu and Kashmir in which seven religious pilgrims were killed. That's of great concern to us. These were civilians, they were killed as they were exercising their right to worship, and that is in large part what makes this so reprehensible. That is a great concern to us. Our thoughts and prayers go out to those people and to their families as well. Our prayers are with the victims and those who were injured.

**QUESTION:** And do you know who were behind these attacks? The state police is saying the Lashkar-e Tayyiba from Pakistan were behind this attack.

**MS NAUERT:** Sir, I'm not aware of who may have been responsible or may not have been responsible for that.

**QUESTION:** Is there any cooperation between India and the U.S. on this terrorist attack?

**MS NAUERT:** I'm not aware of that.

**QUESTION:** Thank you.

**MS NAUERT:** Okay, thank you. Hi, sir.

**QUESTION:** Thank you. This is Jahanzaib Ali from ARY News TV Pakistan. I just want to ask a question about some Afghanistan. As we all know that you are going to announce, the current administration is going to



announce, the new Afghan policy. So what kind of designation you are giving to the Afghan Taliban in that policy, because the Obama administration, in this last two or three tenure, they stopped calling Afghan Taliban as terrorists. So what kind of designation you are giving to the Taliban in the new Afghan policy?

**MS NAUERT:** Well, our Afghan policy review is still underway. That has not been announced just yet. So they are looking at – our officials who are involved in that Afghan policy review, which goes from the State Department to the Department of Defense to the National Security Advisor and his team, and plenty others, I'm sure, that I'm just not mentioning right now. So that review is underway. That review continues. I'm not going to get ahead of what's in that review. We'll just have to wait and see what comes out of it.

**QUESTION:** But are they terrorists or not – the Afghan Taliban?

**MS NAUERT:** Sir, we're going to wait for that review to take place, okay? Okay. Sir, I –

**QUESTION:** Is there any update on kidnapped American citizens in Afghanistan?

**MS NAUERT:** And who exactly are you referring to?

**QUESTION:** Referring to? I don't understand what you're saying.

**MS NAUERT:** Okay. So you asked me about – about who kidnapped?

**QUESTION:** Yeah, American citizens kidnapped in Afghanistan. Is there any update on that?

**MS NAUERT:** Let me get back with you on that and let me see what I have, okay?

**QUESTION:** Can we go to Turkey?

**QUESTION:** Mm-hmm. I have a few more question if you allow me.

**MS NAUERT:** Pardon me, sir?

**QUESTION:** I have –

**MS NAUERT:** Let me move on. We have a lot of other people, and so we've got a lot of questions. Okay?

**QUESTION:** A quick question on the Palestinian-Israeli issue really quick?

**MS NAUERT:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** Today there was a high-level meeting in Jerusalem between Mr. Jason Greenblatt and the Palestinian chief negotiator Saeb Erekat, and also present was Ambassador David Friedman along with General Consul

Donald Blome. Now, in the past, the meetings with the Palestinians did not include the American ambassador to Israel. It's been like a protocol. Has there been, in your view, a downgrading of your view of the Palestinian Authority, or is this just something – because it has not been done since, like the '90s?

**MS NAUERT:** So I would say it's, in fact, the opposite, not a downgrading but perhaps even an upgrading.

**QUESTION:** Right.

**MS NAUERT:** The fact that our U.S. ambassador would be included in this meeting and that the Palestinians, as I understand it, would welcome him into this meeting –

**QUESTION:** Right, right.

**MS NAUERT:** – shows a step forward in terms of our cooperation.

**QUESTION:** Right.

**MS NAUERT:** We're very pleased to have the ambassador's expertise in this. And I think it raises the level and indicates just how important it is for this administration to try to come to some sort of peace agreement. As I've said many times before –

**QUESTION:** Right. Sure.

**MS NAUERT:** – and I'll just throw this out one more time –

**QUESTION:** I –

**MS NAUERT:** – we know that that process is not going to be easy.

**QUESTION:** I understand.

**MS NAUERT:** We know the process is going to be difficult. We know that both sides are going to have to compromise. But I think this is a good step and that we'll continue to have additional meetings.

**QUESTION:** Because in the past there was the consul general who basically behaved as or conducted himself as an ambassador to the Palestinians. So is this changing now?

**MS NAUERT:** Said, I don't know why you want to get into the bureaucracy and the diplo-speak of all of this, but I see it as a positive thing that the ambassador is there. It does – I don't really think it matters if that position had not been there at the meetings. What matters is the Palestinians, as I understand it, they welcomed him –

**QUESTION:** Right, right. Yeah.

**MS NAUERT:** – and that he was a part of that meeting, and I think that really underscores the importance that this administration is putting on

that issue.

We're still hopeful, okay? We're not giving up yet.

**QUESTION:** Palestinian follow-up questions?

**MS NAUERT:** Okay. Last one.

**QUESTION:** Last week, AP asked a question about the difference between restrained and unrestrained settlements, and the AP reporter specifically asked about whether the location of the settlement differentiated between restrained, which would be somewhat acceptable, versus unrestrained, unacceptable. So my question is you said you'd follow up on that.

**MS NAUERT:** Yes.

**QUESTION:** Do you believe that settlements on the Palestinian side of the barrier, that would be unrestrained, and on its – and within the settlement blocs that would be restrained? Or how do you differentiate in terms of location?

**MS NAUERT:** I think that's something that is still under review. As you know, Mr. Greenblatt in the region, Mr. Kushner has made many trips there. And so I'm just going to defer to them on that issue for right now. Okay?

**QUESTION:** Turkey?

**MS NAUERT:** Okay. Last thing. Turkey, yes.

**QUESTION:** Thank you. Yesterday, *Washington Post* had an editorial titled "Mr. Tillerson's betrayal of democratic ideals" with regards to Turkey visit, and basically argued that Mr. Tillerson went there but did not mention any of the human right issues, including press freedom and all the other issues. And this is the second time Mr. Tillerson went to Turkey and did not meet again with the opposition figures. What's your comment on this criticism?

**MS NAUERT:** Well, first – first regarding the Secretary's schedule, he has had an absolute whirlwind of a week from the G20 to then heading over to Ukraine in Kyiv to address the ongoing issues there, and then to Turkey for a short stop, in which he was very busy on that stop, and then now handling the GCC and the Qatar resolution of that dispute. So he's had an awful lot going on.

We have continued, from this podium and through our statements and elsewhere and in conversations at the highest level, to have expressed our concerns with what we see as certain areas of concern – human rights violations for example, mass imprisonment of people in Turkey. We continue to raise those concerns with the Government of Turkey, and that has simply not changed. Okay?

**QUESTION:** So you are saying that if there was more days, Mr. Tillerson would have met with the opposition figures? It is not a policy issue, but it was there was no time for that meeting?

**MS NAUERT:** I don't have the Secretary's schedule in front of me, but I know it was a tight schedule. I know that he has had an awful lot on his plate. I would go back to our previous statements where we have expressed, in Turkey as well as other nations around the world, expressed our great concerns about human rights and so forth. And so that has not changed. The Secretary has been clear about that.

Guys, we have to leave it there. Thank you.

**QUESTION:** Did he mention those concerns in his conversation with the president?

**MS NAUERT:** I don't have a readout of that meeting. But if I can get something for you, I will.

**QUESTION:** Thanks.

**QUESTION:** Great.

**MS NAUERT:** Thanks, guys.

(The briefing was concluded at 3:24 p.m.)

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