

Press Releases: Meeting With U.S. Consulate Sydney Staff

Remarks

Rex W. Tillerson

Secretary of State

Secretary of Defense James Mattis

Intercontinental Hotel

Sydney, Australia

June 5, 2017

SECRETARY TILLERSON: (Applause.) You can try to hide, Mr. Secretary. It's not going to work. (Laughter.)

Well, first, thanks to all of you for joining us. I know it's the end of the workday for all of you, but appreciate the opportunity to at least have a moment to say a few words. I want to thank Charge' Carouso, Consul Fowler, for the leadership they're providing both in the mission and here in the consular office as well in Sydney.

Secretary Mattis and I have had a really great day of discussions with the AUSMIN, and appreciate the work that all of you did. It helped prepare the way when we come down here for these visits. But very good, substantive discussions. Again, just a reaffirmation of how strong the relationship is with ourselves and with Australia, the important role that all of you play as well.

Also, of course, you had Vice President Pence came through and I know he had a great visit as well. I think, hopefully, what everyone is getting a sense of is how important this region to the administration – a number of visits here, a number of visits throughout the region. And that's a lot of what our message has been to folks on these trips, is that this is important to us. These relationships are important, and we want to remove any doubt, if there's any doubt in anyone's mind, as to how important these relationships are to the United States and to this administration. The best way we know to show that is by coming here and listening – doing a lot of listening – and then hopefully a lot of clarification about where our mutual interests are. And certainly, we have a number of areas of mutual interest with Australia – longstanding and those are going to continue.

So very strong relationships here. The meetings were fantastic. I want to

thank all of you again for what you do for us, your colleagues at the mission and what you do for us here in Sydney as well, what your family members do in supporting you in carrying out our mission, and your colleagues around the world. And I know all of you have served elsewhere, served in your careers, and we appreciate that service and the sacrifice that you make and that your families make on our behalf as well. It's important to us that you have their support. So I'm always pleased to see family members here.

I do want to give my colleague, Secretary Mattis, an opportunity to at least greet you. He can say whatever words he'd like to. We have just a terrific Secretary of Defense here with us, and he's such a wonderful partner to the State Department, and we work closely on a lot of these issues together.

So please, Secretary Mattis. (Applause.)

SECRETARY MATTIS: I just want to assure you, ladies and gentlemen, that not one week goes by when we're not face to face. There's not two days that go by, we're not on the phones together. And the whole point that I want to give him is I want to buy time. I want to give reinforcing fires and reinforcing efforts. I want to tell him the military factors, but when he's done, our foreign policy is in the hands of the State Department and carried out for the President with our full support over at DOD.

So we're with you all the way and my first stop whenever I go into any country – I've been to about 15 already – my first stop is with the ambassador and my first question is: What can we do to support you? And we'll stay in that mode, and if you ever see the DOD not doing that, you let me know because I don't add stress, I create it. (Laughter.) (Inaudible) from the Secretary of State. No problem – we have the technology to do that. (Laughter.)

(Inaudible) to the Secretary's point, just to thank you for what you do. In this age, we're in a constant war of ideas. That's all there is to it. And our ideas matter, and you represent them well, and there's a lot riding on your shoulders, so you're helpful.

But thank you very much for what you do. Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Thank you all. (Applause.)

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