

Press Releases: Remarks With Canadian Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland at a Press Availability

Remarks

Rex W. Tillerson

Secretary of State

Parliament

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FOREIGN MINISTER FREELAND: Okay. Hi, everybody. Great to see everyone here. Before I begin, I'd like to extend Canada's thoughts and condolences to our American guests in light of the terrible train derailment in Washington state. We extend our sympathies to those who lost loved ones and wish a full and swift recovery to the injured.

(Via interpreter) Thank you all for being here on the traditional Algonquin territory that we occupy. I am very happy to welcome to Ottawa my colleague, the Secretary of State Rex Tillerson. The close partnership between Canada and the United States rests on common economic interests and common values. This partnership enables us to collaborate on subjects like trade, investment, energy and the environment, the security – border security, defense, and global issues. So I really appreciate this opportunity to further discuss the relationship between Canada and the United States when it comes to important bilateral, regional, and global issues that have a great effect on the lives of both Canadians and Americans.

(Inaudible) an interesting time to come to Ottawa, one of the coldest capitals in the world, but in honor of your visit it warmed up a little bit today.

SECRETARY TILLERSON: I appreciate that.

FOREIGN MINISTER FREELAND: We covered a number of topics of great importance in our bilateral relationship and in the work that we do together around the world. We had positive discussions about the Canada-U.S. relationship, including border management and security, North American defense, energy security, and environmental cooperation. This conversation was greatly enhanced by the participation of my fellow ministers who sit on the Canada-

U.S. Cabinet Committee, and I'd like to thank them for coming to Ottawa for that very important meeting.

On NAFTA, Canada's priority continues to be maintaining the achievements that have bought 23 years of predictability, openness, and collaboration to North America and that supports so many jobs on both sides of the border. We will continue to bring fact-based arguments to the negotiating table as we work to develop a modernized agreement that addresses today's realities while preserving our shared economic prosperity. We believe a win-win deal is both possible and necessary.

Rex and I also had the opportunity to discuss hemispheric concerns, including the crisis in Venezuela and what actions we can take individually, together, and in cooperation with the Lima Group, of which Canada is a member, to address the deteriorating political, economic, and humanitarian situation there. We discussed an issue that we and the world and I think very much Canadians are watching closely: Myanmar and the plight of the Rohingya. This is a crisis that we in Canada have taken important steps to address, and Canada appreciates the leadership the U.S. is taking at the Security Council.

I also want to note that Rex has raised the issue directly with the authorities in Myanmar. Thank you, Rex, for doing that. And I was pleased to see the Security Council Presidential Statement on Myanmar on November 6th which called for an end to the violence being committed against the Rohingya. This is ethnic cleansing, it is a crime against humanity, and it is absolutely essential that the perpetrators be held to account.

Regarding Ukraine, Rex and I had a very good conversation about the potential for a peacekeeping mission and our two countries' resolute support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity in the face of Russia's illegal invasion and occupation of Ukrainian territory. Our conversation was particularly useful because I'll be traveling to Ukraine tomorrow, and I'll be meeting with leaders of the Ukrainian Government.

And then finally, Rex and I spoke at length about North Korea and what further action the international community can take to put pressure on the North Korean regime to abandon its dangerous nuclear and ballistic missile programs. Canada and the United States are aligned with the rest of the world in our position that these provocative and illegal acts cannot be tolerated. We fully support regional and international efforts to address the North Korean threat and the work of the UN Security Council. We believe that a diplomatic solution to the crisis is essential and possible.

In the spirit of working to achieve that and of maintaining pressure on the North Korean regime, I am pleased to formally announce today that the Secretary of State and I have agreed that on January 16th, Canada and the United States will cohost in Vancouver a meeting of foreign ministers from around the world in a demonstration of international solidarity against North Korea's dangerous and illegal actions. We will use this gathering as an opportunity to advance our work on diplomatic efforts towards a more peaceful, prosperous, and nuclear-free future on the North Korean Peninsula and to demonstrate international solidarity in our condemnation of North

Korea's actions.

Finally, I want to thank you, Rex, and the rest of the American delegation for traveling to Ottawa today. I really appreciate the opportunities to have a really frank, candid dialogue about issues around the world and issues in our bilateral relationship. *Merci beaucoup*, Rex.

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Well, thank you so much, Chrystia, Foreign Minister Freeland, for the kind words and for the welcome to Canada. As indicated, I did make a commitment to come to Canada in the first year as Secretary of State, and I made it to Canada. And pleased to be in Ottawa. Obviously, not the first time I've traveled to Canada but my first trip as Secretary of State.

I think it's also indicative of the importance of this relationship that during my first week in office as Secretary of State, I think if not the first meeting certainly one of the very first meetings that I had with a foreign visitor was with Foreign Minister Freeland. And I think symbolic but also indicative of how important this longstanding partnership is. From maintaining a strong trading relationship to defeating terrorism, to cooperating on a number of threats around the world, including North Korea, which was just mentioned, the United States and Canada really have a very close shared mission and shared objective in addressing all of these.

Our countries enjoy the most extensive economic relationship you'll find anywhere in the world, and there are a number of opportunities to grow that relationship – important opportunities – and build on the strengths of both countries in the years ahead. I think it's well known that almost 400,000 people move back and forth across this shared border, and almost \$2 billion of goods and services cross our shared border every day – a real testament to the strong economic ties that exist between our people.

Canada is also an extremely important foreign market for U.S. goods as well. Millions of jobs in both of our countries depend upon our partnership. We too are committed to continue making progress toward a modernized NAFTA agreement, one that protects jobs and stimulates economic prosperity for both of our countries and is fair to both sides as well.

Canada and the United States do have one of the strongest, most reliable security partnerships, and early on it was an honor for us to cohost Foreign Minister Freeland and Defence Minister Sajjan at the State Department in May alongside Secretary Mattis for very comprehensive discussions of how we could strengthen the security relationship as well.

We appreciate Canada's significant contributions to the coalition to defeat ISIS, to their – both their military and their humanitarian assistance to address the needs of that region that has been under conflict for some time. Canada has pledged millions of dollars of support in humanitarian assistance, which is very important to relieving the suffering of people who are only now being liberated from the clutches of ISIS.

Our countries also stand shoulder-to-shoulder in NATO, and we appreciate

Canada's decision to send troops and a lead battalion in Latvia, which underscores Canada's commitment to the strength of the alliance in Europe and NATO. Canada's strong support for Ukrainian sovereignty and maintenance of their territory is very likeminded with the U.S., and we have shared many, many discussions about how we can progress the talks in Ukraine to lead to Ukraine's restoration of its full sovereignty in the face of Russia's aggression.

And of course, NORAD, as some of you know, will celebrate its 60th anniversary next year. U.S. and Canada forces protect and defend all of North America. And we did discuss next month's ministerial in Vancouver, and I appreciate the minister's willingness to cohost this event as we continue to find ways to advance the pressure campaign against North Korea, to send North Korea a unified message from the international community that we will not accept you as a nuclear nation, a nuclear weapons nation, and that all of us share one policy and one goal, and that is the full, complete, verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. And such was expressed I think in the ministerial at the UN Security Council meeting last Friday.

We're really grateful to the relationship that Chrystia and our teams have developed over this past year. I've lost track of the number of the meetings that the two of us have had around the world as we find ourselves in common locations, but we never miss the opportunity to spend time together and continue what's been a very active dialogue on a number of shared issues that are important to all of us.

To the Canadian people, I have said it before but I haven't had the chance to say it while standing in Ottawa: Happy 150th. And on behalf of the American people, we wish you all a peaceful holiday and a most prosperous New Year. Thank you.

FOREIGN MINISTER FREELAND: Okay. Where are our press guys?

QUESTION: Right here. So Minister Freeland and Secretary Tillerson, Warren Strobel from Reuters. Good to see you. I wanted to ask you a little bit more about this ministerial in Vancouver. Other than a demonstration of solidarity, what do you hope to achieve? The North Korean weapons program is something that has festered for 30 years. What precisely do you hope to achieve?

And secondly, both of you have called in different ways for – or said that there – diplomacy should be an option with North Korea. Have you seen any sign from North Korea that – either publicly or privately that they're interested in diplomacy? Thank you.

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Was that to you or me?

FOREIGN MINISTER FREELAND: That's to both of us, right?

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Okay.

FOREIGN MINISTER FREELAND: It's one of yours, so why don't you go first.

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Okay. Well, with the convening of what we're calling the Vancouver group in mid-January, this is a convening of foreign ministers from the original sending states that were involved in the original Korean conflict. But we also obviously are including other important parties – the Republic of Korea, Japan, India, Sweden, and others, who we think are important to have engaged in this meeting.

What we'll be discussing will be, first, how do we – how do we improve the effectiveness of the current pressure campaign? Are there other steps that could be taken to put additional pressure on the regime in North Korea, and how do we further take our diplomatic efforts forward? And then how do we prepare for the prospects of talk? I think it's important to remind everyone the whole reason the pressure campaign exists and the reason the UN Security Council passed two very strong unanimous resolutions are to lead to talks. The pressure campaign is intended to lead to talks.

Now, we can't talk unless North Korea is ready to talk. And I think as we've indicated, we're waiting for them to indicate a readiness to talk. But what's important for North Korea to know is that this pressure campaign will not abate. We will not be rolling any of it back. It will only be intensified as time goes by. And it will remain in place until they agree to give up their nuclear weapons and allow us to verify that, in fact, that is what they have done.

FOREIGN MINISTER FREELAND: Yeah. And what I would add to that, Warren, is you started off by saying what apart from solidarity is this meeting about. Let me a little bit take issue with the question by saying solidarity is an important thing to demonstrate. It's very important. Canada believes – and I think Rex and I share this view – to demonstrate to North Korea that this is truly a global issue, that the international community is united in condemning North Korea's actions and in understanding them as a threat to our shared security. And showing that international solidarity is something that's important to do and will be an important goal of this meeting.

Rex has already talked about the very important connection that we see between a sustained international pressure campaign and working on how diplomatic engagement works. And how we see it is it's important to understand that the international pressure campaign – we believe it's going to be successful, and a successful outcome of the international pressure campaign is a diplomatic engagement and a real conversation. And so those are the issues that we will be discussing in Vancouver in January.

QUESTION: Good afternoon. Thank you very much for taking our questions. I have a question for both of you.

I'll start with Secretary Tillerson: The White House has rejected calls to reopen diplomatic talks with North Korea. So if diplomacy is not on the table at the White House, what did you come here to talk to Canada about and what role do you see Canada playing in this?

And Minister Freeland, to you, in your discussions today, did you talk about military options in North Korea? And what is Canada's position on military

options in North Korea? And can I get, Minister Freeland, your answer *en Francais* as well? Thank you.

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Well, the White House position on talks – they have not rejected diplomatic talks. What the White House has merely observed is that North Korea has not exhibited a willingness to talk. But the White House position and the President's policy has always been – and I go back to why does the pressure campaign exist – and this pressure campaign of sanctions and diplomatic pressure is the President's policy. It is the policy that came from the National Security Council that we would put in place a sanctions regime like has never been seen before, and that's what we have today – one that involves the entire international community and one that goes beyond what just the – what the UN Security Council calls for, but countries taking unilateral action on their own to let North Korea know that we do not accept the development of their nuclear weapons program. All of it has always been intended to lead to talks. Otherwise, we wouldn't need to do this; we'd just go straight to the military option.

So I think the White House position's quite clear. The White House supports diplomatic talks. The observation that's being made – and I would agree with the observation – is we're waiting on North Korea to come to that conclusion. And until they do, the pressure campaign will only intensify.

FOREIGN MINISTER FREELAND: And nice to see you, Katie. So look, it's important for people to appreciate the extent to which this unprecedented threat from North Korea has rallied and united the international community. We've already seen that with stronger than ever before resolutions by the UN Security Council supported by China, supported by Russia. That is a measure of the extent to which the international community in solidarity understands that North Korea is posing a real threat to our collective security.

The meeting of the Vancouver group is going to be another visible sign that the international community is acting in concert to speak to the Government of North Korea and to say this is threatening us all, and the pressure will increase until the behavior changes. Having said that, we believe – we're confident that this campaign of international pressure will lead to the best outcome for the whole world, I think the only outcome for the whole world, which is a diplomatic path to a resolution of this crisis, a diplomatic path to the outcome that I think we all believe in, which is a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula.

(Via interpreter) And in French, we believe that, firstly, it is important to show international solidarity against the danger posed by North Korea to the international community. The UN Security Council resolutions show this international solidarity, and our Vancouver meeting will also show this international solidarity, including a pressure campaign waged against North Korea. We firmly believe that the diplomatic approach is necessary and essential and is indeed possible. And our pressure tactics and our international solidarity are the way forward towards that diplomatic approach.

And as I mentioned earlier, at our Vancouver meeting, we will discuss

diplomatic avenues.

QUESTION: (Inaudible.) Mr. Secretary, first to you, on North Korea, is the U.S. considering halting joint military exercises in the lead-up to the Olympics as the South Korean president suggested recently in an interview?

And to both of you, both the U.S. and Canada share the conclusion that North Korea is behind the recent WannaCry cyber attack. What are both countries considering doing to punish North Korea for their – for the cyber attack and what will you do to prevent a similar attack in the future?

SECRETARY TILLERSON: I'm unaware of any plans to alter longstanding and scheduled and regular military exercises with our partners in South Korea, the Republic of Korea, or with our partners in Japan. These exercises have been ongoing for many years. They are carried out on a scheduled basis. We announced them in advance. There's no – nothing surprising about them and I'm aware of no – I'm not aware of any plans to change what is scheduled.

FOREIGN MINISTER FREELAND: So let me just say on the cyber security issue, that is an issue which we discussed today. I'm not going to go into details of our conversation, but I think Canada certainly takes cyber security very seriously, including the threat from North Korea. And I would like to add in opening remarks Rex talked about the importance of having South Korea and Japan at the meeting. That's very important for Canada, and let me emphasize the importance of having South Korea at the table. We talk about the Korean Peninsula, and we really cherish our relationship with South Korea, and we really recognize the particular threat they face and the importance of having their voice in this conversation.

QUESTION: (Via interpreter) My first question is for you, Minister Freeland. Did you discuss Jerusalem with Mr. Tillerson? And did you see what happened at the Security Council yesterday? You are campaigning to get a seat on the Security Council, and yet we don't yet know what Canada thinks of Mr. Trump's gesture regarding Jerusalem. And also, please answer in English.

(Inaudible) with the minister. I am speaking English.

SECRETARY TILLERSON: I can hear you.

QUESTION: So you're good? (Laughter.) I'm sorry.

SECRETARY TILLERSON: I can actually hear you better through here.

QUESTION: Oh, sorry about that.

SECRETARY TILLERSON: There's an echo in here.

QUESTION: Okay, so you discussed NAFTA with Minister Freeland. We want to know if there was any advances. And there's this impression in Canada, or maybe only in the Canadian media, that the Americans don't truly want to renegotiate NAFTA. So do you want to try to prove us wrong?

FOREIGN MINISTER FREELAND: (Via interpreter) Thank you for these excellent

questions. We did have a lengthy discussion of issues in the Middle East. This is a region where there are very complex issues, and Secretary Tillerson's personal experience is something I always find very helpful in our discussions of the Middle East. Canada and the United States have different positions. We, however, always have candid and frank discussions, and I think our discussion of the Middle East was useful and important.

(In English) Certainly we did discuss a number of issues in the Middle East. It's a subject that Rex and I have discussed on many occasions in the past. I particularly value my conversations with Rex about the Middle East given his deep personal experience of the region, including before he became Secretary of State. Canada and the United States have different views on issues, and I think that we have a strong enough relationship – both our two countries and Rex and I personally – that we're able to be candid about those differences and explain them to one another.

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Well, the subject of NAFTA obviously was a part of all the discussions today and all the meetings I had, as it rightly should be because it's an extremely important issue to both of our countries. I am not engaged in the NAFTA negotiations directly. Those are carried out by the U.S. Trade Representative Mr. Lighthizer.

Having said that, though, we had an exchange of the importance of the trading relationship. Again, we commented on a couple of numbers. This is a trading relationship that's important to millions of American jobs; it's important to millions of Canadian jobs. And it is an effort to modernize the agreement that's been around now for more than three decades, and we talked about how other events in the world and other trading relationships in the world have emerged over the last 30 years that are having an impact on how NAFTA performs. Some of these impacts come from other third parties that are trading with each of our nations, and so it is timely and right that we should re-examine that agreement and bring it up to date and modernize it for today's global trading balances.

Having said that, it's – as a – as the old saying goes, the devil's in the details. And the parties are now involved in the details of those negotiations, and I know both parties are approaching the negotiations in good faith and an effort to achieve a modernized NAFTA agreement. I think the next several weeks are going to be very important to those discussions, and my role in the State Department is to be supportive of a positive outcome and ensure that parties are considering all aspects in the broader context of the specific trade issues that the two are negotiating.

Thank you.

FOREIGN MINISTER FREELAND: Okay. *Merci a tous.*

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