

Press Releases: Remarks With Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir at a Press Availability

Remarks
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Secretary of State

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FOREIGN MINISTER AL-JUBEIR: (In Arabic.)

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Well, thank you very much as well, Your Excellency, and I think it was, in many respects, a truly historic event this afternoon, this Arab Islamic American Summit. And first, I want to congratulate the King, first for convening such a historic event, but also on his remarks.

And in many ways, you, I'm sure, found parallels between the King's remarks and those by the President. I was particularly struck by the King's strong commitment, just as the President expressed, to fight against those forces that are the cause of terrorism, extremist activities, and was particularly encouraged by his strong encouragement as well to address many of the root causes and aspects of reform that are necessary throughout the region: a strong support for the development of youth, education, enabling women. These are all important elements to a new forward-looking society, a new forward-leaning society. And I found the King's remarks in that regard truly remarkable.

I think with respect to President Trump's remarks this afternoon to the summit, I think what you heard is the expression of this administration's policy and views not just toward this region, but toward American relationship with the Muslim world here as well as more broadly. And I think the President clearly was extending a hand and understanding that only together can we address this threat of terrorism that has befallen all of us, not just in this region but worldwide.

As I think all of you know, the President leaves tomorrow to travel to Tel Aviv, and then after that, the Vatican to have an audience with the Pope. And I think the context of all of this where the President begins his journey here at the home of the Muslim faith under the leadership of the Custodian of

the Two Holy Mosque – this great faith, the Muslims – then to travel to the home of Judaism and then to the great leader of Christianity, that the President is clearly indicating that this fight of good against evil has nothing to do with religion. It has nothing to do with country. It has nothing to do with ethnicity. This is clearly a fight against good and evil.

And the President is convinced with all sincerity that when the three great faiths of this world and the millions of Americans who practice these three great faiths – when we unify with our brothers in faith the world over, we can prevail over this – these forces of evil and these forces of terrorism and destabilization. And when we succeed in dismantling these forces, we create enormously positive conditions for the advancement of human rights everywhere, because it is these forces that are most oppressive to peoples. It's these forces that are most oppressive to women. It's these forces that prey on those who are less able to care for themselves. So I think in our view, and I know the President's view, defeating these evil forces is the first step on advancing human rights worldwide, and he clearly has that in his mind as well.

So I think it was a historic event today. Again, we thank His Highness The King for convening such an event. I think only the King and the President of the United States could have convened such a well-attended summit on Muslim-Islamic-American issues. So we again thank His Highness and I think it was, again, an extraordinary afternoon for all of us, and one that I would tell you gives me great hope about our ability to finally address this most daunting challenge of our time.

QUESTION: (In Arabic.)

(In English.) And another question for His Excellency (inaudible): Do you have – you said a lot of (inaudible) regarding Iran. When are you going to (inaudible) while you are saying (inaudible)? I mean, (inaudible) Iran?

SECRETARY TILLERSON: With respect to Iran and their absence here – and I think His Excellency clearly addressed why Iran is not here today – Iran continues its hegemonic activities in this region in Yemen, in Iraq, in Syria, and its support of Hizballah in Lebanon. And until Iran shows its willingness to be a good neighbor, I think is the words that were used by many, that shows its willingness to cease its enablement of the kind of destabilizing activities that go on, their payment of foreign fighters, their payment of militias to go into other countries and destabilize those countries, then Iran will not have a place around this table that was set today.

So it is our hope that – and we have a new leadership or a renewed leadership beginning another term in Iran – that they will begin to examine what this behavior is gaining for them, and rather, they will find their way back to a place that Iran historically enjoyed: good relations with its neighbors. And that's what we hope they find their way back to as well.

In the meantime, we will continue to take action to make it clear to Iran when their behavior is unacceptable – and that means in terms of carrying out

and supporting acts of terrorism, continuing the development of their ballistic missile programs – we will continue to take action through sanctions and we will continue to encourage others in the global community to take action as well so that Iran understands this is not acceptable.

So we will be dealing with Iran in the economic sanction front and we will be dealing with Iran in these countries where they have decided to put their presence militarily.

FOREIGN MINISTER AL-JUBEIR: (In Arabic.)

QUESTION: (In Arabic.)

FOREIGN MINISTER AL-JUBEIR: (In Arabic.)

QUESTION: Thank you very much, (inaudible). Traveling from Pakistan, (inaudible) summit today. My question, Your Excellency, the foreign minister of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, is that Pakistan has been fighting against this terrorism since 9/11 and we (inaudible) more than 50,000 innocent lives. How has been the assessment in this conference that there could be shared learning from the experiences that Pakistan has fought in this war against terror?

And my question to Excellency is: The partnership desired today with the Muslim world must have certain processes to move forward. There is a lot of fear among the Muslim community, including myself and my friends, there is a notion of Islamophobia all around in different countries. When partnerships have been sought and desired and there are great response from all – most of the Muslim countries that were present today, how these processes then have their (inaudible) learn to bridge the gap and (inaudible) the fears among the Muslim communities? Thank you.

FOREIGN MINISTER AL-JUBEIR: Can I take the second part?

SECRETARY TILLERSON: No, I was going to take the – you can –

FOREIGN MINISTER AL-JUBEIR: Oh, no, no, go ahead. You can –

SECRETARY TILLERSON: I'm happy to. With respect to, I think, the relationship and how the Muslim world is viewed, if – I assume you listened to President Trump's speech this afternoon. I hope he dispelled the concerns that many might have with that speech.

And in terms of specific processes, much of what came from the two days that we've been here in Riyadh working with our counterparts in the kingdom as well as working with the GCC countries – and we had a very good meeting this morning among the GCC countries – was to put in place specific plans of action that, working together, I think we will also improve the understanding among ourselves: the creation of the center to counter extremism messaging, the working together on disrupting terror financing networks, clearly the economic activities between this region and the United States are all helpful in terms of strengthening those relationships.

But I think perhaps the point you're making, and it is an important point, is that all of us have to strive to understand each other's cultures better, understand each other's perspectives better. And I think on this trip, I know the entire delegation traveling with the President has gained a much greater appreciation for this region, the rich history, the rich traditions and cultures of this region, and also a much better understanding of the Muslim faith by traveling to this special place, the special place of the two holiest sites. All of this is, I think, useful to us understanding everyone better here, and we hope – we hope people in the Muslim community will make a similar effort to understand the American people's interest and concerns that they may have.

But I think importantly, out of this speech the President delivered this afternoon, what he said, again, is this fight is ours together. It is not between us. It is ours together. And it's only together that we will ultimately prevail and that it is not a fight among religions, not a fight between Shia, Sunni, it's not a fight between Christians, Jews, any of the faiths. This is a fight of good against evil, and in all of those three great faiths that millions of Americans follow, we are guided by that same tenet. This is what unites us in attacking this evil face of terrorism that has befallen us and has hurt so many around the world.

FOREIGN MINISTER AL-JUBEIR: I think Pakistan had – can play a big role in the war against terrorism and by sharing its experiences and by learning from the experiences of others. I want to add my voice to what Rex said about the issue of the importance of tolerance and (inaudible). I believe that the fact that this summit took place is historic. I cannot overemphasize the importance of it to the history of the world.

This is a – unless we are able to move from notions of a clash of civilizations and move towards a partnership among civilizations, we will not be able to eradicate the scourge of terrorism or – which emanates from extremism, and extremism emanates from ignorance. People in the Muslim world believe there is enmity towards them in the West, and so they use that to recruit psychopaths who go and murder people, who then increase the negative attitude of people in the West towards Islam. That causes Western countries to take steps that then fuel the cycle in the Islamic world, and also vice versa. You have extremists in the West who take very bigoted positions or ignorant positions towards the Islamic world which causes them to recruit psychopaths who demands things or try to do things that provoke a reaction in the Islamic world, and the vicious cycle continues unless we move away from this.

And then if we are able to move away from this, we're able to isolate the terrorists as mere criminals and psychopaths, and then it becomes a law enforcement matter and we can deal with it much more effectively. The President deserves a lot of credit for taking this step, making his first visit outside the U.S. to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the birthplace of Islam and Land of the Two Holy Mosques, and then going to Israel and then going to the Vatican to deal with the Jewish world and with the Christian world in order to try to bring the three religions together.

This is the way to proceed. This is the way we move from enmity to partnership. This is a fight – not a clash of civilization, this is a fight for civilization. It's as the President said, it's good versus evil, and good includes everybody – Christian, Jew, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, everyone. And evil includes everyone who seeks death and destruction, irrespective of their faith. And so the importance and significance of this conference today is that it is the first step where there's an outreach and there's a desire to say we need to work together, and we need to work together in order to support good versus evil and we need to take concrete steps to do that – to do so, and I think we have a number of concrete steps that came out of the conference: the launching of the global counter-extremism center, the agreement on dealing with financing of terrorism and extremism, the recognition – which is the most important part – the recognition that we have to work together in order to build a better future for our children and their children. That's the first step in the process towards dealing this – with this issue.

They say in medicine that diagnosis is half the cure. Well, we've diagnosed the problem, and the diagnosis of the problem is that we need to pull the rug out from under the forces of evil by seeing this as a common problem that meets a common solution, and seeing ourselves as children of God irrespective of what our religion is. That's how we deal with this problem. Thank you.

MODERATOR: I'm afraid we don't have much time because you have to catch up with your next appointment.

FOREIGN MINISTER AL-JUBEIR: Do you want to take another question or –

SECRETARY TILLERSON: That's fine.

FOREIGN MINISTER AL-JUBEIR: Okay. Thank you very much.

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