

# Press Releases: Remarks With Secretary of Defense James Mattis, Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono, and Japanese Defense Minister Itsunori Onodera at a Press Availability

Remarks

Rex W. Tillerson

Secretary of State

Dean Acheson Auditorium

Washington, DC

August 17, 2017

---

**SECRETARY TILLERSON:** Well, good afternoon. I'd like to start by acknowledging the incident in Barcelona which has the hallmarks, it appears, of yet another terrorist attack. We offer our condolences to the loss of life and the injuries that have occurred to so many innocent people yet again. We will continue to monitor the situation. We stand ready to assist law enforcement, national security authorities in Spain. Our consulates in Barcelona and our entire Mission Spain team are currently assisting Americans in Spain who are affected by these events. We ask U.S. citizens in the area to let your loved ones know you are safe. Terrorists around the world should know the United States and our allies are resolved to find you and bring you to justice.

Secretary Mattis and I are grateful for the opportunity today to host Foreign Minister Kono and Defense Minister Onodera today. The bonds of America and Japan have – forged over previous decades will continue to endure. Today's honest and productive discussions reaffirmed our mutual commitment to confronting threats to regional peace and security.

As you might imagine, we spent a fair amount of time discussing North Korea. North Korea's recent intercontinental ballistic missile and other missile launches are unacceptable provocations, and they must stop immediately. We agreed to bolster our alliance capabilities to deter and respond to North Korea's unacceptable behavior and other challenges to regional security. In cooperation with other nations, we will continue to employ diplomatic and economic pressure to convince North Korea to end its illegal nuclear and ballistic missile program.

I think, as was clear by all peace-seeking nations and the unanimous UN Security Council resolution that was adopted, as well as very strong statements being made by the ASEAN nations and others throughout the world, we all seek the complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearization of North Korea. We again call upon all nations to fully enforce the UN Security Council resolution imposing additional sanctions on the regime in North Korea. We will remain vigilant against the North Korean threats through our military preparedness.

The United States will honor our treaty agreements with Japan without reservation, whether in times of peace or in the face of conflict. We will also cooperate to advance trilateral and multilateral security and defense cooperation with other partners in the region, notably the Republic of Korea, Australia, India, and other southeast Asian countries.

We also discussed our concern about the security environment in the East China Sea and South China Sea. The United States and Japan oppose any unilateral action that seeks to undermine Japan's administration of the Senkaku Islands, and we reaffirmed that Article V of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty covers these islands. We also oppose militarization activity in the South China Sea. Maritime disputes should be settled peacefully and maintain the freedom of navigation in accordance with the United Nations Conventions on the Law of the Sea.

We maintain our unwavering commitment to the 2015 Guidelines for U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation, and we have instructed our staff to accelerate their implementation. We also will explore new and expanded activities in intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance training and exercises, research and development, capacity building, and joint or shared use of facilities. Our conversation stressed the critical role that U.S. extended deterrence plays in ensuring the security of Japan, as well as the peace and stability of the Asia Pacific region, and we plan to deepen our engagement through the extended deterrence of dialogue.

Both the United States and Japan are committed to the realignment of U.S. forces in Japan, which seeks to maintain operational and deterrent capability while limiting the impact on local communities. I welcome the resumption of the plan to construct the Futenma replacement at the Camp Schwab Henosaki<sup>[1]</sup> area and adjacent waters, as this is the only solution that addresses operational, political, financial, and strategic concerns, and avoids the continued use of the Marine Corps Air Station Futenma. We hope to avoid further delays that will impede our ability to provide peace and security to Japan and the region. We do express our sincere appreciation to Okinawa for hosting U.S. military personnel and for playing a central role in the U.S.-Japan alliance.

The United States and Japan will continue our shared resolve to protect our citizens and work for security and stability in northeast Asia. Our conversations today reaffirmed that we are stronger and more secure when we work together, and we will continue that course of action.

And with that, I turn it to Foreign Minister Kono.

**FOREIGN MINISTER KONO:** (Via interpreter) My name is Taro Kono, Foreign Minister. At the outset, with regard to the incident that occurred in Barcelona, to all those that have been sacrificed and to their families, I'd like to express my deepfelt condolences. And to those that have been injured, I should also like to express my sympathy. Under no reason can terrorism be condoned. We absolutely condemn this. And at this very difficult time, I'd like to express our solidarity to Spain.

At the 2+2 conference between Japan and the United States, we had discussions, which were very rich in substance, allowing us to achieve major outcomes. I'd like to thank Secretaries Tillerson and Mattis and all those who have worked to make the conference a success.

The conference was convened based on instructions from the leaders of the United States and Japan on the occasion of Prime Minister's Abe visit to the United States in February of this year. The security environment in the Asia Pacific is becoming increasingly severe. Never has there been a time that calls for a more united and concerted response by the United States and Japan. From such a perspective, we had an in-depth discussion on the strategic environment of the Asia Pacific region, beginning with the North Korean situation. At this first 2+2 conference since the start of the Trump administration we were able to reaffirm the strong commitment of the United States and Japan, which is extremely significant, the strong commitment to the region, which is extremely significant.

On North Korea, towards its denuclearization, we agreed we would ramp up effective pressure. We will call on China to take specific measures to make North Korea change its behavior. On the threat of ballistic missiles, as an alliance, we will strengthen our defense posture and capabilities and respond. We have agreed on this point. We have confirmed the importance of cooperation through the security treaty.

We shared our concerns regarding the situation surrounding East and South China Sea. We reaffirmed that the Senkaku Islands are within the scope of Article V of the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty and that we would oppose any unilateral behavior attempting to undermine Japan's administration of the Senkaku Islands. For the peace and stability of East Asia and the East China Sea, we will continue to cooperate with the United States.

On the South China Sea, we have confirmed that we need to continue to engage ourselves and watch for any acts which would impede freedom of navigation. Under this severe security environment, under all situations, the alliance must secure seamless response, and it's extremely important. And we agreed that we would properly examine ways to strengthen the alliance.

And in area of cyberspace and space, we would steadily promote Japan-U.S. cooperation in new areas. We were able to achieve agreement on this.

ROK, Australia, India, and Southeast Asian countries – we will promote more than ever before cooperation and security and defense. The coastal nations of the Indo-Pacific region and with regard to capacity building in the area of marine security, for Japan, we will provide assistance to the tune of

approximately \$500 million in the three years from this year to 2019. We want to deepen our cooperation with the United States on this front as well. For the transparent economic development of this region between Japan and the United States, we agreed that we would closely cooperate.

At the conference today, we reaffirmed that it is indispensable to steadily promote realignment of the U.S. armed forces in Japan from the perspective of maintaining the deterrence of Japan-U.S. alliance while mitigating the impact on Okinawa and other local regions. In order to avoid Futenma Air Station becoming a permanent facility, it was reaffirmed between the U.S. and Japan that the only solution was relocation to Henoko. I explained that in compliance with the present agreement between Japan and the United States that we would proceed with relocation to Henoko with strong resolve. We will make an all-out effort to realize the complete return of Futenma Air Station. I also pointed out that it is important to make the effort to have the understanding of the local citizens on issues such as that of Kadena Air Base.

As a result of the conference today, we were able to elucidate the path that the Japan-U.S. alliance should pursue in a security environment that is becoming increasingly severe. Based on the results obtained today, we want to firmly move forward with measures to further strengthen the deterrence and response capabilities of a Japan-U.S. alliance. Thank you.

**SECRETARY MATTIS:** It's been an honor for us to host Japan's defense and foreign ministers here. I don't think anything better demonstrates that importance that our two nations place on this alliance than our counterparts traveling here so soon after assuming their positions.

As you've heard, we've just completed warm and very productive, detailed conversations about the situation facing our nations, and we've achieved very highly useful results. First, of course, we never take alliances for granted, and what we've done is we've reaffirmed the trust between us.

Second, we have deepened and broadened our combined military efforts by improving on our bilateral relations and exercises. As President Trump noted in February, the United States commitment to defend Japan through the full range of military capabilities is unwavering under Article V of our mutual defense treaty and the extended deterrent commitment.

As demonstrated by the UN Security Council resolution and by the ASEAN communique, the international community also recognizes North Korea as a threat to Asia and to the world. Japan and the Republic of Korea are on the front line against the North Korean threat. We in the United States recognize any confrontation with North Korea would pose an immediate danger to our allies and their populations.

Today's meeting is a reminder that each nation gains security in concert with other nations. The international community is speaking with one voice: North Korea must stop its dangerous actions as we work to maintain security and denuclearize the Korean Peninsula. In light of the serious situation we face, we are accelerating implementation of the 2015 Guidelines for the U.S.-Japan

Defense Cooperation and continuing to realign U.S. forces in Japan and Guam. Our militaries are also cooperating in new ways, and you've heard several of them mentioned here already. This includes our emerging cooperation in such areas as space and counterspace – cyberspace as well as ballistic missile defense and maritime security.

Together, we will deter and, if necessary, defeat any threat. Any initiation of hostilities will be met with an effective and overwhelming response. Our two nations will demonstrate the strength of our alliance by continuing those bilateral activities and by enhancing cooperation with the Republic of Korea. We call on North Korea to choose a better path than one of provocation and threats. Such a path is not in its own best interests nor in the best interest of any other nation.

Thank you. Minister Onodera.

**DEFENSE MINISTER ONODERA:** (Via interpreter) My name is Onodera. I think we had a wonderful discussion. First of all, I would like to express my heartfelt respect to Secretary Mattis and Secretary Tillerson for leading us to have such a great outcome of the meeting. In 2015, we have drawn up the guideline and we have changed the guideline following the new – the new legislation. And since that, the defense cooperation between Japan and U.S. has greatly progressed and the alliance has never been so solid.

However, if we look to the regional strategic environment in front of us, in front of our alliance, we have the pressing issue of North Korea. North Korea has plans to launch ballistic missiles to the waters close to Guam and it is also advancing on their efforts to launch ICBM-class ballistic missiles, miniaturizing nuclear weapons to warheads.

So for this threat of North Korea, at this meeting we agreed to increase the pressure and to strengthen the alliance capability. In light of the threat of North Korea, the four of us confirmed the importance of the unwavering U.S. commitment to extended deterrence. Also, the U.S. forces have been deploying even more assets in the Asia Pacific region and has been showing their commitment visibly to this region. I would like to highly evaluate the efforts of the United States and also, continuing with the United States, I would like to make efforts to enhance the defense capability and defense posture of Japan.

Also, we shared our concerns on East China Sea and South China Sea situation. We will deepen our defense cooperation in securing the peace and stability in East China Sea as well as engaging coastal nations in the South China Sea.

In order to secure a seamless response of the alliance to any situation, we must constantly continue our efforts to strengthen the alliance. Through today's discussion, we were able to seek out a specific direction for our future efforts. Moving forward, we will accelerate the implementation of a guideline and we will further promote cooperation under the peace and security legislation. We will expand peacetime cooperation such as surveillance and joint training. And furthermore, we will continue to promote cooperation in ballistic missile defense, including acquisition of new

assets, and enhanced capability in new domains such as space and cyberspace. Through this, we intend to strengthen further our joint responsive posture. Along with this, in order to strengthen our own defense capability, we intend to review the national defense program and also work on the new midterm defense program, and this was explained in the meeting today.

The presence of the U.S. forces in Japan is at the core for the alliance to function as deterrence. At the same time, the operation of U.S. forces should take into consideration the local residents and secure safety. These are indispensable. From this standpoint, we were able to confirm our steady advancement of the realignment of the U.S. forces in order to reduce the burden on the local people, maintaining the deterrence at the same time. The transfer of Futenma Air Station to Henoko would – is the only solution to avoid continuous usage of the Futenma Air Station, so we will steadily proceed with the construction of this transfer. Kadena Air Base issue and the Osprey are matters that I have renewed my request for the consideration to the local residents and securing the safety. In light of today's outcome, we would – I would devote myself even further for the securing the safety and security of the people in preparation for any situation to occur.

**MS NAUERT:** Elise Labott from CNN for Secretary Tillerson. Elise.

**QUESTION:** Thank you very much. Actually, I'd – I would love if both Secretary Tillerson and Mattis could answer a question on North Korea. You wrote in your op-ed last week that, obviously, the U.S. prefers a diplomatic solution to the crisis in North Korea, but you said that that diplomatic and economic efforts and pressure were, quote, backed by a credible military option. In recent days, the White House strategist Steve Bannon called the ratcheting – the diplomatic and economic ratcheting up of North – tensions with North Korea a, quote, "sideshow." He said that there was no military solution and that the real issue is an economic war with China. Does this reflect some kind of new opinion by the administration or was he speaking for himself, and are you afraid that comments like this might dilute the credible military deterrent that is backing your diplomatic and economic efforts? Thank you.

**SECRETARY TILLERSON:** Well, I don't really have a comment on what Mr. Bannon's remarks were in that particular interview. I read those. I think we have been quite clear as to what the policy and the posture towards North Korea is, and I think Secretary Mattis and I in that op-ed wanted to inform – as best we were able to do, inform the American people first, but also inform our important friends and allies as to what our approach is.

And our approach has been endorsed by the President. It is reviewed with him periodically in terms of the status of how the approach is working, and it is first and foremost, as you have seen, to undertake a very concerted, deliberate campaign of exerting pressure on the regime in North Korea to an extent that, as best we can tell – and we did study previous attempts over the past two decades. What's different about this campaign is, I think, the level of international unity around this campaign, the level of cooperation we are getting from China and from others in the region, and the intensity with which we are carrying out the campaign.

Obviously, any diplomatic effort in any situation where you have this level of threat that we're confronted with – a threat of proportions that none of us like to contemplate – has to be backed by a strong military consequence if North Korea chooses wrongly. And I think that is the message that the President has wanted to send to the leadership of North Korea, and it was really in response to this ever-escalating levels of threat and rhetoric that were coming from the regime in Pyongyang. And you've heard the words; you've seen the videos that they have produced. I think the President just felt it was necessary to remind the regime of what the consequences for them would be if they chose to carry out those threats. We are prepared. Our – we're prepared militarily, we're prepared with our allies to respond if that is necessary. That is not our preferred pathway, and that was – that's been made clear as well.

So we continue our full-out efforts, working with partners, working with allies, to bring that pressure on the regime in North Korea with a view that at some point, with a unified international message like we've never had before, they will realize the level of isolation they find themselves in and that the future that they will face with that level of isolation is bleak and will only become bleaker if they continue this pathway. So that is – our effort is to cause them to want to engage in talks, but engage in talks with an understanding that these talks will led to a different conclusion than talks of the past. And so we will continue that effort diplomatically first and foremost, but knowing that North Korea sits with a significant capability already within their grasp, I think it is only prudent that they fully understand the consequences should they make a bad choice for themselves and, obviously, there are consequences for others as well.

**MODERATOR:** The next question from Japanese media. Mr. Sugimoto.

**QUESTION:** (Via interpreter) My name is Sugimoto from Sankei Shimbun newspaper. My question is addressed to Minister Kono and Secretary Tillerson. The question is the following: It's related to dialogue and pressure in connection with North Korea. With regard to North Korea, what conditions must be met for you to decide that you can start a dialogue? Could you outline your thinking? And in addition, at today's conference, to China, which has influence over North Korea, you've asked for resolute measures to be taken. However – and there was agreement on this. However, up until now, with regard to China, they have not sufficiently applied the kind of pressure that the United States and Japan are seeking. In the efforts made by Japan and the United States, in what respect is it lacking so that you're – China is not being fully mobilized, please?

**FOREIGN MINISTER KONO:** (Via interpreter) The July Japan-U.S.-ROK summit meeting confirmed that North Korea, if it changes its course and if it refrains from intimidating and provocative action and toward denuclearization, if it is ready to come back to serious dialogue, these measures to be taken are important, first and foremost. There's no sense to dialogue for the sake of dialogue; we agreed on this point between Japan and the United States, or Japan, U.S., and ROK at the center.

The international community will continue to apply maximum pressure to North

Korea. I think there's a necessity of doing so. The trade amount with North Korea is such that 90 percent is accounted for by China, and their role is very important. And I agree with that. The new UNSC Resolution 2372, if that's fully implement – strictly and fully implemented, foreign reserves of North Korea can be decreased to the tune of over \$1 billion. China must fully and strictly implement – we would like to encourage China to strictly and fully implement these measures after the 15th. Oil and steel and seafood – China announced that it would restrict importation of this. As we saw an agreement to encourage a specific action by North Korea, we will work on China to take responsible and constructive action, and we would like to continue to seek that China do this.

**MS NAUERT:** Yeganeh Torbati from Reuters for Secretary Mattis.

**QUESTION:** Thank you. Secretary Mattis, I wanted to ask you first about Afghanistan. Do you expect to have a decision on the administration's South Asia strategy after tomorrow's meeting at Camp David, and what should we expect that strategy to look like? And just very quickly, your service chiefs have spoken about the events of Charlottesville and condemning white supremacy and racism and hate, and I was just wondering if you wanted to add to any of those comments as well. Thank you.

**DEFENSE SECRETARY MATTIS:** Certainly. First, in response to CNN's earlier question, I can just assure you that in close collaboration with our allies, there are strong military consequences if DPRK initiates hostilities.

In regards to the Afghanistan meeting tomorrow, we will meet with the President – Secretary Tillerson and I and several others on the national security team. We will move this toward a decision. As I said, I think it was yesterday, publicly, we are coming very close to a decision and I anticipate it in the very near future.

On the service chiefs and the comments after Charlottesville, these are leaders of our diverse armed forces. They simply said the same message that we have lived by for decades and we continue not to serve in the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, the Marine Corps; we serve in the United States Army, United States Navy, et cetera. And in that regard, it's a widely diverse force. We look at E Pluribus Unum on our coins. Out of many, one. They were simply emphasizing on the battlefield we are one team and that's the way we stay.

Thank you.

**MODERATOR:** One more question from the Japanese media. Mr. Shiga.

**QUESTION:** My name is Shiga from NHK. I have a question to Secretary Mattis and to Minister Onodera on the missile defense. North Korea has plan to launch some ballistic missile to the surrounding waters of Guam and we are seeing tension mount. In the 2+2 joint statement, the – it is incorporated that Japan's role would be expanded in the alliance. When the missile is launched, what specific actions would the U.S. take?



And then for Japan, what would Japan's role be in the missile defense? Also, what would the U.S. expect Japan to do in the case of the launch of the missile?

**DEFENSE SECRETARY MATTIS:** In the event of a missile launch towards the territory of Japan, Guam, United States, Korea, we would take immediate, specific actions to take it down.

Minister Onodera.

**DEFENSE MINISTER ONODERA:** (Via interpreter) Yes, simply if – my response would be in the event there's an attack on Japan, then we will use the asset available to us for the missile defense and we will defend Japan. But should different circumstances occur, then we will solidify the relation that we have with the U.S. with a closer communication, we will defend the country. And that is – we discussed today.

**FOREIGN MINISTER KONO:** Thank you.

*The Office of Website Management, Bureau of Public Affairs, manages this site as a portal for information from the U.S. State Department. External links to other Internet sites should not be construed as an endorsement of the views or privacy policies contained therein.*