

# Press Releases: UN International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action

Press Statement  
Heather Nauert

Department Spokesperson

Washington, DC  
April 4, 2018

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Today is the United Nations' International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action, which provides an opportunity for the world to reflect on both the progress made and the challenges that remain in clearing landmines and unexploded ordnance. These explosive remnants of war still endanger civilians in more than 60 states and other areas. The United States is working closely with partners worldwide to address this serious humanitarian challenge that puts innocent people, including many children, at risk.

The United States is the world's single largest financial supporter of efforts to address humanitarian hazards from landmines and unexploded ordnance in post-conflict countries and to reduce the availability of excess, loosely-secured, or otherwise at-risk weapons and munitions. Since 1993, the United States has invested more than \$2.9 billion for the securing and safe disposal of excess small arms, light weapons, and munitions as well as the safe clearance of landmines and explosive remnants of war in more than 100 countries.

The United States funds these programs worldwide to reduce at-risk weapons and munitions and improving stockpile security in order to prevent diversion of arms to terrorists and other destabilizing actors. Through its conventional weapons destruction program, the U.S. government has collaborated with partner nations and international organizations since 2003 to destroy more than 39,000 excess or poorly-secured man-portable air-defense systems (MANPADS), shoulder-fired missiles that pose a serious potential threat to global aviation in the hands of terrorists or insurgents.

Proactive community outreach through our Mine Risk Education programs have prevented countless injuries while U.S.-funded Survivor Assistance has provided essential medical and rehabilitation services to more than 250,000

people injured by landmines and unexploded ordnance.

Working in close cooperation with the Department of Defense and the U.S. Agency for International Development's Leahy War Victims Fund, the Department of State has helped numerous countries to declare themselves mine free.

On this day of mine awareness, we urge other nations to join us in a robust international partnership with the shared goal of reducing the impact of landmines around the world.

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## [Press Releases: First Anniversary of the Sarin Attack in Khan Shaykhun, Syria](#)

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One year ago today, the Assad regime launched a horrific attack using the nerve agent sarin against its own citizens in Khan Shaykhun, killing approximately 100 people – including many children – and injuring hundreds more. Our hearts go out to the Syrian people in remembrance of that shocking day and those families who experienced the horrific loss of their loved ones.

An independent and impartial investigative body, mandated by the UN Security Council, has confirmed the Assad regime was responsible for the attack in

Khan Shaykhun and three other chemical attacks. The reports of chemical weapons use against the Syrian people continue. The Assad regime has blatantly violated the Chemical Weapons Convention and UN Security Council resolutions, and no drumbeat of nonsensical claims by either the regime or its protectors can hide this truth.

Meanwhile, Russia continues to shield its Syrian ally by openly impeding international efforts to hold the Assad regime responsible for these heinous attacks. At the United Nations, Russia thrice vetoed renewing the mandate of the only international, independent body authorized to determine attribution for these attacks. Russia can and must help ensure accountability for chemical weapons use in Syria.

On this solemn occasion, we once again condemn in the strongest possible terms the use of chemical weapons anywhere, by anyone, under any circumstances, and pledge our continued commitment to ensure that those responsible face serious consequences. We call on the international community to help us bring an end to the use of chemical weapons.

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## **[Press Releases: Joint Statement on First Anniversary of Chemical Attack on Khan Sheikhoun, Syria](#)**

Media Note  
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC  
April 4, 2018

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The text of the following statement was released by UK Foreign Secretary

Boris Johnson, French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian, German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas, and U.S. Acting Secretary John Sullivan.

*Begin Text:*

Today marks one year since the heinous attack on the town of Khan Sheikhoun, where Asad's forces unleashed sarin nerve gas with tragic consequences for hundreds of men, women and children.

For more than seven long years there has been no let-up in the atrocities committed by the Syrian regime, enabled by its backers, in flagrant violation of international law. The suffering that has been inflicted on the Syrian people by the Asad regime and its backers is abhorrent.

In 2013, Russia promised to ensure Syria would abandon all of its chemical weapons. Since then, international investigators mandated by the UN Security Council have found the Asad regime responsible for using poison gas in four separate attacks. Instead of fulfilling its promise, Russia reacted by using its Security Council veto to shut down the investigation.

Each time a chemical weapon is used, it undermines the global consensus against their employment. Any such use is a clear violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and gravely undermines the rules-based international order.

We condemn the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere. We are committed to ensuring that all those responsible use are held to account. We will not rest in our efforts to seek justice for the victims of these abhorrent attacks in Syria.

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## **[Press Releases: Acting Secretary Sullivan's Meeting With Moroccan Foreign Minister Nasser Bourita](#)**

Readout  
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC  
April 3, 2018

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The below is attributable to Spokesperson Heather Nauert:

Acting Secretary of State John J. Sullivan met today with Moroccan Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Nasser Bourita. Acting Secretary Sullivan thanked Foreign Minister Bourita and the Moroccan people for their strong friendship and partnership with the U.S. on shared priorities, including in the global fight against ISIS.

The Acting Secretary and the Foreign Minister discussed the deep U.S.-Morocco bilateral relationship and regional issues, including efforts towards achieving regional peace. The United States also expressed its commitment to United Nations-led efforts to find a peaceful, sustainable, and mutually acceptable political solution to the long-standing dispute over the Western Sahara.

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## **[Press Releases: Top State Department Drugs Official to Moderate Global Opioid Crisis Panel at National Drug Abuse Summit](#)**

Media Note  
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC  
April 3, 2018

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Today in Atlanta, Georgia, James Walsh, the Senior Bureau Official for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), will lead a global panel discussion on the international opioid crisis at the National Prescription Drug Abuse & Heroin Summit (Rx Summit). Walsh will deliver opening remarks and moderate a panel discussion, which will feature participants from Mexico, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA).

The annual Rx Summit is attended by thousands of participants from the medical, law enforcement, public health, civil society, government, and drug treatment sectors. Several U.S. Senators and Representatives, the U.S. Surgeon General, and the heads of the Food and Drug Administration, National Institutes of Health, and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are taking part in the Summit.

In October 2017, President Trump declared the U.S. opioid crisis a National Public Health Emergency; over 42,000 Americans died from opioid overdoses in 2016. In his remarks at the Rx Summit, Deputy Assistant Secretary Walsh will address the international dimensions of this crisis, as well as the newly emerging technologies and trafficking patterns which are making the opioid epidemic so challenging. Walsh will also discuss the State Department's key role in fighting the crisis in meetings during the Summit with Representative Hal Rogers, founding co-chair of the Congressional Caucus on Prescription Drug Abuse, as well as Senators Maggie Hassan and Edward Markey.

For further information, please contact [INL-PAPD@state.gov](mailto:INL-PAPD@state.gov), and follow the INL Bureau @StateINL on Twitter and Facebook.

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