

Press Releases: Publication of Final Rule Changing the Passport Execution Fee

Media Note
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
January 31, 2018

The Department of State published a [Final Rule](#) on January 31, 2018, that increases the passport execution fee. The passport execution fee will be \$35 starting on April 2, 2018. This rule increased the fee \$10 from the previous \$25 fee. Individuals who apply for a passport renewal by mail will not see a fee increase.

Passport execution involves the submission of a passport application in person to a passport acceptance agent for identity verification and document review. The majority of these passport applications are executed before a U.S. Postal Service passport acceptance agent, and many are executed before state and local government officials as well. Approximately 10 percent of in-person passport applications are executed before a Department of State official.

The Department of State generally sets consular fees at an amount calculated to achieve recovery of the costs to the U.S. government of providing the consular service. The Department of State's Bureau of Consular Affairs determines the cost of each service through a Cost of Service Model. The most recently approved update to the Cost of Service Model showed that the costs associated with passport execution were higher than the current fee of \$25. A similar study conducted by the U.S. Postal Service came to the same conclusion. In both cases, the studies showed that the cost of the passport execution service was close to \$35. The Department seeks to recover for the U.S. government, as far as possible, the cost of providing consular services through the collection of consular fees.

The proposed fee change was published in the Federal Register as a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking and public comments were accepted until November 18, 2016, 60 days after the Notice's publication. The Final Rule, implementing the change, includes the Department's response to relevant comments received. The passport execution fee change will take effect no earlier than 60 days after receipt of the Final Rule in Congress, pursuant to the Congressional

Review Act.

There are no other changes to fees for consular services at this time. Fee information also can be found on the Bureau of Consular Affairs website, travel.state.gov, and on the websites of U.S. embassies and consulates.

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Press Releases: Legislation in Poland Regarding Crimes Committed During the Holocaust

Press Statement
Heather Nauert

Department Spokesperson

Washington, DC
January 31, 2018

The history of the Holocaust is painful and complex. We understand that phrases such as “Polish death camps” are inaccurate, misleading, and hurtful.

We are concerned, however, that if enacted this draft legislation could undermine free speech and academic discourse. We all must be careful not to inhibit discussion and commentary on the Holocaust. We believe open debate, scholarship, and education are the best means of countering inaccurate and hurtful speech.

We are also concerned about the repercussions this draft legislation, if enacted, could have on Poland’s strategic interests and relationships – including with the United States and Israel. The resulting divisions that may arise among our allies benefit only our rivals.

We encourage Poland to reevaluate the legislation in light of its potential impact on the principle of free speech and on our ability to be effective partners.

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[Press Releases: State Department Terrorist Designations of Ismail Haniyeh, Harakat al-Sabireen, Liwa al-Thawra, and Harakat Sawa'd Misr \(HASM\)](#)

Media Note
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
January 31, 2018

The Department of State has designated Ismail Haniyeh, Harakat al-Sabireen, Liwa al Thawra, and Harakat Sawa'd Misr (HASM) as Specially Designated Global Terrorists (SDGTs) under Section 1(b) of Executive Order (E.O.) 13224.

In announcing these designations, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson emphasized that “these designations target key terrorist groups and leaders – including two sponsored and directed by Iran – who are threatening the stability of the Middle East, undermining the peace process, and attacking our allies Egypt and Israel. Today’s actions are an important step in denying them the resources they need to plan and carry out their terrorist activities.”

E.O. 13224 imposes sanctions on foreign persons determined to have committed, or pose a significant risk of committing, acts of terrorism that threaten the

security of U.S. nationals or the national security, foreign policy, or economy of the United States. These designations seek to deny Ismail Haniyeh, Harakat al-Sabireen, Liwa al Thawra, and HASM the resources they need to plan and carry out further terrorist attacks. Among other consequences, all of their property and interests in property subject to U.S. jurisdiction are blocked, and U.S. persons are generally prohibited from engaging in any transactions with them.

Ismail Haniyeh is the leader and President of the Political Bureau of Hamas, which was designated in 1997 as a Foreign Terrorist Organization and in 2001 as an SDGT. Haniyeh has close links with Hamas' military wing and has been a proponent of armed struggle, including against civilians. He has reportedly been involved in terrorist attacks against Israeli citizens. Hamas has been responsible for an estimated 17 American lives killed in terrorist attacks.

Harakat al-Sabireen is an Iranian backed terrorist group that was established in 2014. The group operates primarily in Gaza and the West Bank and is led by Hisham Salem, a former leader of the Palestine Islamic Jihad (PIJ), a State Department designated FTO and SDGT. Harakat al-Sabireen has carried out terrorist activities targeting Israel, pursues an anti-American agenda, and has attracted members and supporters of PIJ. These planned and executed terrorist attacks include firing rockets into Israel in September 2015 and detonating an explosive device targeting an Israeli army patrol in December 2015. Harakat al-Sabireen also previously established a rocket factory in Gaza that was destroyed in the summer of 2014, and the group had plans to carry out attacks against Israel in February 2016. Palestinian Authority security forces arrested five Harakat al-Sabireen operatives who were working under Iranian orders and received funding in Gaza to carry out their attacks.

Liwa al-Thawra is a terrorist group active in the Qalyubia and Monofeya governorates of Egypt. After announcing its formation in August 2016, the group claimed responsibility for the October 2016 assassination of brigadier general Adel Ragai, commander of the Egyptian army's Ninth Armored Division, outside his home in Cairo. In 2017, the group claimed responsibility for a bombing outside a police training center in the Egyptian city of Tanta.

HASM is a terrorist group also active in Egypt. Formed in 2015, the group claimed responsibility for the assassination of Egyptian National Security Agency officer Ibrahim Azzazy, as well as the attempted assassination of Egypt's former Grand Mufti Ali Gomaa. HASM also claimed responsibility for a September 30, 2017 attack on Myanmar's embassy in Cairo. Some of the leaders of the violent splinter groups, Liwa al-Thawra and Hasm, were previously associated with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood.

Today's actions notify the U.S. public and the international community that Ismail Haniyeh, Harakat al-Sabireen, Liwa al-Thawra, and Harakat Sawa'd Misr have committed, or pose a significant risk of committing, acts of terrorism. Terrorism designations expose and isolate organizations and individuals, and

deny them access to the U.S. financial system. Moreover, designations can assist the law enforcement activities of U.S. agencies and other governments.

Lists of State Department-designated FTOs and SDGTs are available [here](#).

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[Press Releases: Briefing on the Preparations for a Safe and Secure 2018 Olympic and Paralympic Games in PyeongChang, South Korea](#)

Special Briefing
I. Steven (Steve) Goldstein

Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs
Michael T. Evanoff

Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Diplomatic Security

Washington, DC
January 31, 2018

UNDER SECRETARY GOLDSTEIN: I'm Steve Goldstein. I'm the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs. The briefing today is on security preparations for the 2018 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games. I and the people with me will be happy to do interviews afterwards on camera if you would like that. The two thousand –

QUESTION: Hold.

(Interruption.)

QUESTION: That was not me. Can I – there was no mention made of this, you doing interviews on camera afterwards, was there?

QUESTION: No. And I don't understand why this briefing is not on camera.

QUESTION: And now the briefing was off – this briefing was supposed to be off camera. So now we have issues with –

UNDER SECRETARY GOLDSTEIN: Well, let's –

QUESTION: It's just a logistical thing.

UNDER SECRETARY GOLDSTEIN: I understand the point. Let's keep the guidelines the way they were. If you have some questions later and you need any of our security people to go on camera at a future point, we'll be happy to arrange that. How does that work?

QUESTION: That's good. Thank you.

UNDER SECRETARY GOLDSTEIN: Thank you. The 2018 Winter Olympics and Paralympics in PyeongChang will start next week. Thousands of athletes from around the world have been training much of their lives for these Games, and tens of thousands of international fans will attend to root for their home team. We look forward to an exciting array of Olympic and Paralympic events, and to cheering on Team USA.

Sports have a unique ability to capture the imagination of people and to inspire all of us to excel. They transcend gender, nationality, race, and creed. The Olympics and Paralympics exemplify the very best in sporting ideals, and they bring the world together every two years to highlight and celebrate some of the most cherished values all of humanity has in common – values like friendship, respect, excellence, determination, courage, and equality.

Our embassy in Seoul is highlighting these values through a robust public outreach campaign built around the Olympics and the Paralympics, focused on the theme of inclusion in sports, particularly of women and people with disabilities. U.S. embassies around the world are also using the Winter Games as an opportunity to discuss the importance of inclusion with their local audience.

I want to take this opportunity to congratulate our close ally, the Republic of Korea, for its extraordinary efforts in preparing for this year's Games. South Korea's authorities are world-class experts at hosting successful major events, most recently the 2014 Asian Games and the 2002 FIFA World Cup. Our two nations enjoy a warm relationship, and the United States is pleased to be supporting our friend and partner during such an exciting global event.

Vice President Mike Pence and secretary – Second Lady Karen Pence will lead

the U.S. presidential delegation to the opening ceremony of the 2018 Olympic Winter Games. In addition to meeting with and cheering on Team USA, Vice President Pence will also meet with South Korean Government officials.

As we do with all Olympic and Paralympic Games, the Department of State, led by our Bureau of Diplomatic Security, is working hard to ensure the safety and security of not just the official U.S. Government delegation, but the athletes from Team USA and American spectators, members of the media, and corporate sponsors. Of course, the authorities of the Republic of Korea are responsible for overall security for the 2018 Winter Games and – Olympics and Paralympics, and we're confident in their ability to host a safe and successful event this year.

As close allies, our two countries' security services have a longstanding and robust partnership. Today we'd like to share with you details about what the United States is doing to prepare. These Olympic and Paralympic Games are no different from any other in that our highest priority continues to be the safety and security of our citizens abroad. A key part of our effort is providing U.S. citizens with relevant information before they travel to the Olympics, which is why we're doing this today to give time to get this information out, as well as being ready to assist them when necessary in South Korea.

We've created two websites. One is [travel.state.gov – g-o-v – /olympics](http://travel.state.gov-g-o-v-/olympics). So that's travel.state.gov/olympics, and another on Embassy Seoul's webpage, with Olympic-specific content and distributed emergency contact information widely. We do have the information that was distributed and we'll give each of you a copy of that too.

We're also working with a number of private partners in the airline and hospitality industries to ensure our information reaches as many U.S. citizens traveling to the Games as possible. Our staff at Embassy Seoul has established a strong working relationship with local law enforcement, transportation, and health officials to resolve potential problems quickly.

Additionally, the Department of State recently launched significant improvements to the way we provide clear, timely, and reliable safety and security information worldwide. All safety and security information about the Republic of Korea is up to date and reflects the current Travel Advisory for that country. Any citizen of the United States traveling to the 2018 Winter Games can rest assured that the Republic of Korea has a comprehensive security system in place and that the United States Government is supporting our ally in that regard. The Department of State's Diplomatic Security Service is working closely with South Korean law enforcement and security agencies in the lead-up to the Game.

And I again want to thank the Republic of Korea for all they have done. This is going to be a terrific Olympics. They have been great partners, and we have enjoyed working with them as they've taken the lead to ensure the safety and security of all the people attending the Olympic Games.

Here to discuss what we're doing is Assistant Secretary for Diplomatic

Services [\[i\]](#) Mike Evanoff, and that's E-v-a-n-o-f-f. And assisting Mike with the questions will be Rick Colon. So it's Richard, goes by Rick, Colon, C-o-l-o-n. And Assistant Secretary Evanoff has a long background in security services and was actually sworn in 31 days before I, and has done a fantastic job with all the elements relating to the Olympics, but also all the elements relating to diplomatic security around the world. So Assistant Secretary?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY EVANOFF: Thanks, Steve. It's good to see some old friends from the past, and I appreciate the time in front of you today. So again, Diplomatic Security does have the lead in protecting the U.S. athletes, and also a conduit to the U.S. citizens and corporate sponsors. So with that, let me put on my – I'm getting a lot older.

We are just over a week away from the opening ceremony from the 2018 Winter Olympics and Paralympics in South Korea. I'm sure many of you have correspondents already there or will be there soon. Like you, the Diplomatic Security Service has been planning for the Games for quite some time. In fact, DSS has been planning for these Olympics for nearly two years, and we have been coordinating closely with our Republic of Korea counterparts, the security directorate of PyeongChang Organization Committee and the 2018 Winter Olympic Games, and the U.S. Olympic Committee themselves, USOC.

As the host nation, Republic of Korea is responsible for overall security at the 2018 Winter Olympic Games, and it's successfully hosted a number of major events including, recently, the 2014 Asian Games and the 2002 FIFA World Cup, not to mention the 1988 Summer Olympic Games. At the Republic of Korea's request, DSS is providing assistance. This is not unusual. DSS has supported every Olympic Games since the 1976 Montreal Games. We are working together to enhance their capabilities, ranging from airport screening procedures to managing entry and exit at stadiums and preventing security incidents in and around the clusters and the sporting events.

DSS is the security lead for the United States and is responsible for coordinating the safety and security of Team USA athletes, U.S. corporate sponsors, and the members of the U.S. media at the Olympics, at the IBC. Our working relationship with the Republic of Korea has been exceptional – and I repeat, exceptional. As the Under Secretary mentioned, our two countries enjoy a very close relationship, one of many benefits of being close allies. We have a longstanding partnership with the Republic of Korea's security services which continued to grow over the last several months as we've planned for these Games.

I would like to introduce to you the Supervisory Special Agent Ricardo Colon, Rick Colon, Director of Protection for DSS. One of his teams, the Major Events Coordination Unit, handles DSS's support to international security events like the Olympics. Rick, as his team, have been preparing for these Winter Games, as I mentioned, for a couple years now. They have been on-ground and working with our cohosts – with the hosts for quite some time, and two of us will join our team in security very shortly.

I hope to see some of you there and your colleagues. Rick now can answer any specific questions that you might have going forward. Thank you.

UNDER SECRETARY GOLDSTEIN: So Rick does not know everyone in the room, so if you could introduce yourself. Felicia Schwartz from *The Wall Street Journal*. If I know, I'll try to introduce you, too.

QUESTION: Hi, thanks for doing this. Can you give us a sense of how big the footprint is, ballpark number of DS agents, and how that has compared to other Games, and if the situation on the North Korean Peninsula is affecting that count? Or –

MR COLON: Well, first of all, in terms of the DS footprint, really no different than any other Games. I'll start by speaking to our collaboration with the Republic of Korea law enforcement counterparts and the work that we've done over the last couple of years, which, first of all, has been fantastic.

The Republic of Korea law enforcement services are across the board. They've got – their capabilities are phenomenal. And to put it plainly, I mean, they've got this. So their capabilities are fully capable to have a successful set of Games. We have been collaborating with them over the last two-plus years. Our approach to this has been no different than any other Olympic Game, any other international event. The DS footprint will be approximately over – approximately about 100 personnel on the ground, operating out of the embassy and at the two Olympic clusters in a liaison role with our Republic of Korea counterparts. As Assistant Secretary Evanoff indicated, in several areas we're – we've been in discussion with our South Korean partners where we've been discussing areas of collaboration. But like I said, most of those areas have been in a support role in areas where we've talked about collaboration.

South Korea has tremendous capabilities across the board, so really it's about – really we're in a support role, and we support their efforts.

UNDER SECRETARY GOLDSTEIN: Okay. Carol. Carol Morello from *The Washington Post*.

QUESTION: Hi. Thank you for doing this. Do you know if North Korea has its own security people coming, and whether that presents any particular challenges or – how are you going to deal with that? And this may be a question more for Steve: How concerned are you that the decision by North Korea to move up its military parade, its big military parade from late April 'til February 8th, the day before the Olympics begin? What do you think that's about, and does that worry you?

MR COLON: The first part of your question, I'm not familiar with North Korea's security component.

QUESTION: So you don't know if they're coming at all – security people are coming just specifically for North Korea?

MR COLON: I would have to refer your question to them on that. I'm not familiar with that security-wise.

QUESTION: Okay. Okay. Steve, do you –

UNDER SECRETARY GOLDSTEIN: Yeah. So the – most nations do bring a small security detail with them, but there is an understanding among all countries that South Korea is the lead for this Olympic Games because they are the host country.

On the second question that you asked, while we would prefer that this parade not occur on February 8th, it is our hope – and I know the hope of South Korea – that the North Koreans, who agreed to send people to the Games to participate, will join with all the nations of the world in celebrating the athletes. Fundamentally, the Olympic Games are about the athletes and nothing should be occurring which interfere with that.

Elise Labott, CNN.

QUESTION: Thank you for doing this. Could you – you talked about that this is in a support role, but – and you kind of just said very generally that it's to support the athletes and the corporate sponsors. Could you just talk a little bit more about the scope of what it is that you do? I mean, without getting into specifics that would jeopardize any security measures.

MR COLON: So our approach to these Games cuts across several areas. So first of all, with Team USA, we have an agreement in place with the U.S. Olympic Committee which obligates us to work on behalf of the U.S. Olympic Committee to provide a liaison with host nation law enforcement and security elements working through our offices at U.S. embassies with the host nations through our regional security offices to establish that connection with host country elements. So in this case, working initially at the front end with the regional security office, and then as we do with any Olympic event, then we establish an Olympic security office, an Olympic security coordination office which we did two years ago, and then assigned two DS special agents to that office to then establish that direct relationship with our host nation counterparts.

And that's – that process has been ongoing over the last two years, and that relationship has been growing over the last two years. And we've got an exceptional working relationship with all of our Republic of Korea counterparts. So that's been that collaborative effort in terms of establishing that relationship and that level of mutual collaboration.

In terms of – that's the U.S. Olympic committee part. So we're in constant contact with U.S. Olympic committee personnel. Once the Games begin, that contact will be daily in terms of that collaboration on that end. In terms of DS personnel on the ground, we'll have of that 100 or so personnel that will be on the ground, approximately 40 of those individuals will be – about 42 or so, 45 DS special agents will be assigned to the clusters in the capacity of what we refer to as field liaison officers, whose roles is to be that link between the U.S. Olympic Committee, the teams, and the support personnel, and our counterparts with the Republic of Korea to provide that liaison support.

In addition, we'll have some personnel that we assign to the embassy to facilitate a lot of these information flow discussions that we've had with the Republic of Korea. There will be some additional personnel, about a

hundred or so, from various other agencies that are supporting the effort. Again, this is all –

QUESTION: Other U.S. agencies?

MR COLON: Other U.S. agencies that are supporting the information flow effort that I've talked about. Part of this collaboration effort over the last two years, that's – that's led as part of this effort that DS provides on behalf of the U.S. Government, in terms of coordinating the entire U.S. security effort.

UNDER SECRETARY GOLDSTEIN: Okay, Matt.

QUESTION: Well, just a quick – just a quick follow. Like, I think there's this perception that like DS agents will be like guarding the team, each of the kind of – like the athletes at the – is that –

MR COLON: No.

QUESTION: Is that a misperception?

MR COLON: And I want to be very clear about this: The function of providing security not just for U.S. athletes, but for all athletes for all of the countries that are participating, is the role of the host country – in this case, the Republic of Korea. It is their responsibility.

And there's another one I certainly want to be clear about: They're doing a phenomenal job of preparing for these Games, and this is part of that discussions we've had ongoing. And we have full confidence in their capabilities and all of the elements that they're putting in place to prepare for what we expect to be a fully successful set of Games for not just the Olympics, but then for the Paralympics that are going to follow.

So when I say that we have full confidence in their capabilities to host these Games, it's because we've had these experiences over the last two years of their capabilities and this dialogue and of collaboration. Our piece is, like we do for any Olympics, is based on our agreements to support the U.S. Olympic Committee, what we do in terms of our support for the broader American corporate interests through our program through the Overseas Security Advisory Council, plus our commitment through U.S. American – U.S. citizens, plus our work through our regional security office at the embassy. So these are things that we normally do for any major international event, the – all Olympic Games.

UNDER SECRETARY GOLDSTEIN: Matt Lee from the AP.

QUESTION: Thanks. I've got a very brief logistical question, and then a broader question. On – you – the presidential delegation, the Secret Service, is doing this – they're security, right?

MR COLON: For the – their principals, correct.

QUESTION: All right. And then more broadly, does this particular venue and

the situation, the tensions that exist right now, pose any particular concern that has not been present – security concern that hasn't been present that previous either Winter or Summer Olympic Games?

MR COLON: What I would say is the Republic of Korea has developed very comprehensive security plans and we don't have any concerns that are beyond any concerns that we have for any other major international event.

QUESTION: Okay, so the atmosphere that exists right now, a political atmosphere, a military atmosphere that exists right now, it does not present any specific or any unusual – any concern that you haven't had for previous Games?

MR COLON: We're very confident in the Republic of Korea's capabilities and the security –

QUESTION: Well, I get that, but –

MR COLON: – and the security plan that they have in place.

QUESTION: Right. Well – okay, well, that security plan addresses what kinds of concerns?

MR COLON: Well, I – I can't discuss specific security plans for obvious reasons, but –

QUESTION: Well, I'm not asking what the plan is. I'm just asking what the concern is that the plans were drawn up to guard against or protect against?

UNDER SECRETARY GOLDSTEIN: Well, let me just say in every Olympic Games, there are always issues that are occurring around the world during the time of those Olympic Games. And so the security plans that are drawn up in – for those respective countries, whether it's Seoul right now or Japan in two years or whatever the – where the Olympic Games might be take those concerns into consideration. What – as Mr. Colon said, the – there are no more extraordinary actions being taken in this particular Olympics than there would be in any Olympic Games.

QUESTION: Really?

UNDER SECRETARY GOLDSTEIN: This – yes, really.

QUESTION: Is that really true?

UNDER SECRETARY GOLDSTEIN: Because the South Korean – the South Korean Government has done an outstanding job of preparing for this. We have been working with them, as have other nations, for what, almost two years now – two years on the ground, and we've seen firsthand. We would not jeopardize the lives of American citizens. And we are very confident that South Korea is going to be putting on a happy, successful, and a strong Winter Games.

QUESTION: I don't think anyone doubts that, or that your – doubts your confidence. But the – my issue is: Surely, there are different security

concerns for this Winter Olympics than there were, say, in Lake Placid.

QUESTION: Well, just acknowledging the elephant in the room –

UNDER SECRETARY GOLDSTEIN: Well, I just said –

QUESTION: Hold on, Elise.

UNDER SECRETARY GOLDSTEIN: Hold on. I just said –

QUESTION: Then – this is not Lake Placid, okay?

UNDER SECRETARY GOLDSTEIN: I completely understand.

QUESTION: It's not the same. So –

UNDER SECRETARY GOLDSTEIN: But this is also not 1960 or '64. But I completely – I understand.

QUESTION: Actually, that was 1980, but –

UNDER SECRETARY GOLDSTEIN: Well, I appreciate that, 1980. I've been around a long time. (Laughter.) The point I was making is in every – as I said before, I don't want to repeat myself – in every Olympic Games, there are always circumstances that exist in the world, and you have to address those circumstances. Of course any particular Olympic plan, security plan, that would be put in place for this Olympics would address the reality of today's world. But we are confident that our South – that the South Korean Government, which is leading the security in this for these Games, have put in place a set of preparations that will provide safety and security for all the people attending the Games.

And who else? Okay. Nick, I'll go back to the back in a minute. Nick Wadhams from Bloomberg.

QUESTION: Do you have any indication – I mean, North Korea has tried to disrupt Games in the past and did in 1988 with the airline disaster. Do you have any indication of a threat from North Korea, specific security concerns? I mean, you talk about South Korea doing a great job so far in preparing for the security situation. But what about from the other side, from North Korea? Is there any indication that they may try to do something to disrupt these Games?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY EVANOFF: We have no specific threats right now that we're concerned about in terms of specific threats. But what I would again take – go back to is we have a great – a high degree of confidence on the security – from the comprehensive nature of the security plan that's in place.

QUESTION: I guess, just obviously. you would have been aware of comments by members of Congress and some comments that Nikki Haley later clarified questioning whether American spectators and athletes should go to these Games at all.

UNDER SECRETARY GOLDSTEIN: Well, let me address that. The United Nations ambassador acknowledged that she misspoke when she said that. We are excited to participate in the Winter Games. We have a full complement of American athletes going. We are very confident that they will be safe and secure. And you should tune in for the Opening Games on February 9th – for the Opening Ceremony. I apologize.

QUESTION: Thanks, Steve.

UNDER SECRETARY GOLDSTEIN: It's Rich Edson from Fox.

QUESTION: The – I know that you're sort of directing questions about North Korea's presence to that government, but has North Korea's participation at all changed U.S. posture, DS posture in any way since they've only been participating now for the last couple of weeks or so?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY EVANOFF: Our approach to this game has been no different than any other Olympic Games. We started our collaboration with the Republic of Korea over two years ago. We established our presence at the embassy with the establishment of the Olympic security coordination office. We've staffed that office domestically through the DS-led International Security Event Group. We've – we have started collaborating with all of our partner agencies and started working with the Republic of Korea in terms of that interagency collaboration, which has resulted in that presence on the ground, not just with the hundred plus DS personnel on the ground, but also the interagency presence on the ground. So really, our approach has been no different than what it was for the Summer Olympics two years ago. We're already – started our collaboration for the Tokyo 2020 Games. So really, it's really been a continuous – it's really been no different. We've got an amazing partnership with the Republic of Korea, which again, is why I can stand here and say with full confidence that we're fully expecting a successful and safe Games, because we've had this level of partnership that – where we know what the capabilities are from the Republic of Korea, and we know how fully prepared they are and what their capabilities are across the board from all our law enforcement services and everything that they're putting together, how well prepared they are to carry out these Games.

UNDER SECRETARY GOLDSTEIN: Okay. Let me just get – in the back.

QUESTION: Thank you very much. I'm Janne Pak with USA Journal.

UNDER SECRETARY GOLDSTEIN: Are the microphones working?

QUESTION: Yes.

UNDER SECRETARY GOLDSTEIN: Okay.

QUESTION: On February 8th, the day before the opening ceremony of the Olympic Game, North Korea will hold –

UNDER SECRETARY GOLDSTEIN: We've already addressed that.

QUESTION: – a military parade at Pyongyang. What is your comment on this

security reason, because they change the date –

UNDER SECRETARY GOLDSTEIN: Right.

QUESTION: – for military parade against Olympic Game.

UNDER SECRETARY GOLDSTEIN: Okay. So I respect that question. We already – I already addressed it, and will refer you to the transcript. And if you have an additional question about that, you can come up and I'll be happy to talk to you afterwards. Elise, real quickly.

QUESTION: I – yes, just very quickly. I just want to – I mean, no one doubts your confidence in the South Korean Government and – to hold off a successful Game. But I think what we're all trying to get at is that no one is really acknowledging the elephant in the room, which is like, there are these huge tensions with North Korea. They've made all of these threats, now they're showing at the Games. I mean, I think what we're hearing you say, although it doesn't seem like you want to say it, is that you recognize that this is happening or you recognize what's going on, but you're confident that it will be – that it's not going to be a problem. Is that – because you're – I mean, no – it's like no one's acknowledging the North Koreans are going to be there at a time of extreme tensions where, at some point, people thought we were on a hair trigger from nuclear war. So, I just want to like acknowledge –

ASSISTANT SECRETARY EVANOFF: Sure.

QUESTION: – the situation and the climate that we find ourselves in.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY EVANOFF: Absolutely, it's a good question. We've – we have planned for all contingencies, and when I say all contingencies, you think about it. I mean, we're only less than a hundred miles from North Korea, so we've planned for all contingencies. So – but again, as Rick said, it's really no different how we set the gamebook or the playbook of protecting our athletes or working with the host country. But to your point, all contingencies have been addressed.

MR COLON: And to your –

QUESTION: Will one of those – will one of those contingencies be the preparations for the possibility that some missiles might be launched?

UNDER SECRETARY GOLDSTEIN: Well we don't – we don't discuss the security preparations, and so I think we've tried to address this as best as we can, and we're going to move on from that point.

QUESTION: (Off-mike)

UNDER SECRETARY GOLDSTEIN: The – Alicia?

QUESTION: Yeah, I just had a quick question. Do you have an estimate on how many Americans are traveling to South Korea for the Olympics?

UNDER SECRETARY GOLDSTEIN: Estimate of how many Americans are traveling.

MR COLON: The team or the – just citizens?

QUESTION: Both.

MR COLON: To watch – both? In terms of athletes, I believe that number – we can get you a precise number, and perhaps it's better we get you a precise number. I know it's in the average of I want to say about 275, but we can get you a precise number. I'd rather take that – that question, and give you a precise number. As far as U.S. citizens, I believe that number is around 60,000 that may be participating as spectators in the Games.

UNDER SECRETARY GOLDSTEIN: Michele from NPR.

QUESTION: Yeah. Michele Kelemen, NPR. Have there been any particular challenges doing the planning, given the fact that there's still no ambassador – U.S. ambassador – in Seoul? And maybe this is a question for you, Steve: Is – what are you telling the South Koreans about this decision? Last year, the Trump administration had offered Victor Cha's name to the South Korean Government, and that seems to be out now. So what are you telling them about the status of relations when something like that is happening?

UNDER SECRETARY GOLDSTEIN: Well, this briefing is about the Olympics and the fact that we do not have an ambassador in place has not impacted the security planning for the Olympic Games on behalf of the United States and for South Korea. Who else? Go ahead. Yeah, of course.

QUESTION: All right. Kylie Sertic with Kyodo News. So, Vice President Pence will be traveling to South Korea to attend the Games. Do we have the names of any other high-level State Department officials who are traveling with him? Like, for example, is Susan Sontag going to be traveling?

QUESTION: Susan Sontag?

UNDER SECRETARY GOLDSTEIN: Susan Thornton, you mean?

QUESTION: Thornton.

QUESTION: Yes.

UNDER SECRETARY GOLDSTEIN: Susan Thornton.

QUESTION: Sorry, sorry. My mistake. (Laughter.)

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

UNDER SECRETARY GOLDSTEIN: She is –

ASSISTANT SECRETARY EVANOFF: No, she's not.

UNDER SECRETARY GOLDSTEIN: No, she's – Susan Thornton is not traveling to the Olympic Games. Who else? Anybody?

QUESTION: But did the U.S. allow South Korean Asiana Airline enter the North

Korea for exercise their both athletic teams?

UNDER SECRETARY GOLDSTEIN: That's a question you'd need to address with South Korea.

QUESTION: Can I just ask –

QUESTION: But they already went there.

UNDER SECRETARY GOLDSTEIN: Well, I'm happy to talk to you about that afterwards.

QUESTION: Is this violation of U.S. sanctions?

UNDER SECRETARY GOLDSTEIN: I appreciate the question, but right now we're focusing on the Olympic Games.

QUESTION: Does the whole – your whole contingent stay through the Paralympic Games as well? So it's the same –

MR COLON: Yes.

QUESTION: – same footprint for the regular – for the Winter Olympics as it is for the Winter Paralympics?

MR COLON: Well, the Paralympics are smaller in scale in terms of athletes and support elements to the Winter Olympics, so our numbers are scaled to the size of the Paralympic event.

QUESTION: Okay. And it's scaled to both spectators and athletes, or just to athletes?

MR COLON: It's scaled to the size of the event, to – the security plans are scaled to the –

QUESTION: Okay. Because as I – if I'm correct, you said that roughly – we checked with USOC, but the – for the number of athletes, you said around 275. If that's correct, that's like one DS agent for every three athletes.

MR COLON: Well, I think I would rather take that question and get back to you with precise numbers.

UNDER SECRETARY GOLDSTEIN: Before we – so we're going to give you all this, but these are the cards that we have that talk about emergency services in Korea for American citizens, and also we want to encourage people to enroll in our STEP, the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program. That way we know where they are and where American citizens are staying. We'll give you a copy of this too. We've been working, as I said, in here with the airlines and with other transportation vehicles by which people are able to get into South Korea for the Games so that they can all get a copy of this. And we're – we believe that we're well prepared.

And anybody – any other question on the Olympic Games? Yes, sir.

QUESTION: Where are people going to get these cards? When you get off the plane?

UNDER SECRETARY GOLDSTEIN: We're going to give them to you right now.

QUESTION: Yeah, I have a question about –

UNDER SECRETARY GOLDSTEIN: Tell us your name. Tell us your name.

QUESTION: Oh, my name's Aaron Maisler. I'm with Fuji Television.

UNDER SECRETARY GOLDSTEIN: Okay.

QUESTION: I have a question about the K – the rail passes. I heard that for the Olympic Games, a lot of people are trying to buy rail passes for Korean public transit, and Korea decided to give priority to Koreans, causing the – we have 60,000 Americans going, however many Europeans – I heard it was causing them to sell out, causing great difficulties for travelers to even get to the Olympic Games. Do you have a comment on that?

UNDER SECRETARY GOLDSTEIN: Do you know about that?

MR COLON: I am not aware.

UNDER SECRETARY GOLDSTEIN: Okay. Well, let us look into that, and we'll get back to you.

QUESTION: One more?

UNDER SECRETARY GOLDSTEIN: Just come up afterwards.

QUESTION: Please. Thank you.

UNDER SECRETARY GOLDSTEIN: John Hudson.

QUESTION: Yeah. Is there any concern that this latest row about Victor Cha discussing the terms with which his ambassadorship nomination was sunk is causing frustrations in Seoul? Because it's surrounding these discussions over a bloody nose attack that sounds very scary, and they're – meanwhile, Seoul is trying to boost attention to the Olympics and have people show up. It's just not the type of conversation that any host country wants to be having in the run-up to big Olympics. So is that causing any tensions between Seoul and Washington?

UNDER SECRETARY GOLDSTEIN: The – what the Republic of Korea wants most and what we want to help them with is to have a successful Olympic Winter Games where the athletes are able to mingle with each other and participate fully on the world stage and people are able to see the – how well South Korea did in putting forward this very large event. And so we don't want anything to take away from that, and I know South Korea doesn't want anything to take away from that. The – I'll be happy to answer the other questions relating to that afterwards, but right now, this is about the Olympic briefing.

QUESTION: Well, they did – well –

UNDER SECRETARY GOLDSTEIN: Well, no, no, I – listen –

QUESTION: The South Koreans did ask for an ambassador before the Olympics specifically for this reason.

UNDER SECRETARY GOLDSTEIN: And South Korea understands that we have not yet nominated – that the White House has not yet nominated an ambassador, that the White House will do so when it has a candidate that they're willing to – that they are able to put forward, but –

QUESTION: Well, they did put a candidate forward, and the South Koreans gave (inaudible).

UNDER SECRETARY GOLDSTEIN: But we don't – we just don't discuss candidates who have not yet been named, and we have not yet – the White House has not yet nominated an ambassador. Let's not – we're –

QUESTION: Thank you.

UNDER SECRETARY GOLDSTEIN: Do you have any other questions about the Olympics?

QUESTION: Yeah.

UNDER SECRETARY GOLDSTEIN: Okay.

QUESTION: So I just want to elaborate –

UNDER SECRETARY GOLDSTEIN: Indicate who – where you're with, I'm sorry.

QUESTION: Jiwon Song with SBS. I just want to elaborate – elaborate further on one of the previous questions. What do you guys think about the South Korean athletes going to North Korea to practice? Is that really necessary?

And North Korean athletes who are coming to participate in the Olympics, do you think it's fair for the other athletes when, like, Russian athletes are banned from participating for their country? But none of – I mean, are we really sure that they are qualified?

UNDER SECRETARY GOLDSTEIN: Right. So I appreciate that question. That's something you might want to address to the Republic of South Korea. But we are happy that all athletes are able to participate.

Thank you all very much.

QUESTION: Thank you.

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Press Releases: Central African Republic: Conviction of Andjilo Rodrigue Ngaibona

Press Statement
Heather Nauert

Department Spokesperson

Washington, DC
January 31, 2018

The recent conviction of anti-balaka leader Rodrigue Ngaibona (“General Andjilo”) on charges of murder, criminal conspiracy, aggravated robbery, arbitrary detention/kidnapping, and illegal possession of ammunition and weapons is a significant step forward in the Central African Republic’s efforts to combat impunity and ensure accountability.

We commend President Touadera, the Ministry of Justice, and the members of the Bangui Court of Appeals for demonstrating their commitment to the rule of law and justice for all citizens in the Central African Republic. We recognize and appreciate the courage and risk involved in this effort.

The United States, through more than \$30 million in criminal justice-sector funding from the Department of State’s Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement, strongly supports the criminal court system. We will continue to work with Central African and international partners to support its criminal justice system.

Impartial justice and accountability is essential for stability, reconciliation, and a prosperous, peaceful democracy.

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