

Press Releases: Under Secretary Shannon Travels to Duke University

Media Note
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
January 31, 2018

Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Thomas A. Shannon, Jr. will travel to Durham, North Carolina on February 1-2, to participate in events at Duke University.

Under Secretary Shannon will deliver remarks as part of Duke's lecture series on global governance hosted by the university's Center for International and Global Studies, the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies, and the Program in American Grand Strategy. While there, he will meet with students, faculty, and administrators from Duke University and surrounding institutions.

To learn more about the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, please visit [here](#).

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Press Releases: Joint Statement of the Inaugural United States-Qatar

Strategic Dialogue

Media Note

Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC

January 30, 2018

The governments of the State of Qatar and the United States held the inaugural Strategic Dialogue in Washington D.C. on January 30, 2018. U.S. Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson and U.S. Secretary of Defense James N. Mattis co-chaired the opening session jointly with Qatari Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defense Khalid al-Attiyah and Qatari Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani. U.S. Secretary of Energy James R. Perry and U.S. Secretary of Commerce Wilbur L. Ross, Jr. participated in sessions with Qatari Minister of Energy and Industry Mohammed al-Sada and Qatari Minister of Economy and Commerce Ahmed bin Jassim Al Thani, respectively. U.S. Secretary of Treasury Steven T. Mnuchin and Qatari Minister of Finance Ali Sharif al-Emadi co-chaired the closing ceremony.

The two countries welcomed this first Strategic Dialogue, highlighting the strength of their bilateral relationship and the mutually beneficial opportunities for the peoples of both countries to deepen bilateral cooperation. Today, the United States and Qatar underscored the strength of their ties and established a shared vision for the future of their strategic partnership. The two governments took an important step to elevate the bilateral relationship by signing a Memorandum of Understanding establishing an annual Strategic Dialogue.

In this inaugural Strategic Dialogue, the two countries discussed specific areas of partnership, including defense, counterterrorism, combating extremism, and trade and investment. As those conversations continue, both the United States and Qatar believe their continued mutual cooperation will benefit the interests of both countries, as well as the security and stability of the Gulf region.

Qatar and the United States discussed and welcomed enhanced cooperation, particularly, but not limited to, the areas described below.

Political Cooperation

Qatar and the United States expressed satisfaction at the recently strengthened and expanded bilateral relationship. This highlights their shared commitment to advance global peace and prosperity.

Qatar and the United States discussed the Gulf crisis and expressed the need for an immediate resolution which respects Qatar's sovereignty. The two governments expressed concern about the harmful security, economic and human impacts of the crisis. Concern was also expressed over peace and stability in the Gulf and adherence to international law. Qatar emphasized its appreciation for the role played by the United States in the mediation of the dispute in support of the efforts of the Emir of Kuwait. Qatar and the United States affirmed their backing for a strong Gulf Cooperation Council that is focused on countering regional threats and ensuring a peaceful and prosperous future for all its peoples.

Qatar emphasized the role of the United States in the region and the significant part it plays in countering threats of terrorism and violent extremism. The two governments discussed regional security and stability, including joint efforts to defeat ISIS, ongoing conflicts in Syria, Iraq, Libya, and Afghanistan, as well as efforts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The United States acknowledged Qatar's generous humanitarian role bilaterally and multilaterally through the work of various UN agencies, in supporting forcibly displaced populations, and in assisting refugees including millions of vulnerable young children and women. The United States acknowledged recent progress and commitments made by Qatar on combating human trafficking and advancing labor rights. The two governments signed a Memorandum of Understanding to continue progress in these areas.

The two governments intend to identify and prioritize areas for further cooperation based on the results of the inaugural dialogue and decided to establish a working group to advance common policy priorities and political partnerships.

Defense

Qatar and the United States emphasized the vital contribution their defense partnership provides for the security and stability of the region. This cooperation is key to successfully combating terrorism, countering violent extremism, and deterring external aggression. U.S. officials lauded Qatar's contributions in supporting the sizeable U.S. military presence in Qatar under the U.S. Central Command.

The two governments issued a Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation, affirming the two countries' joint commitment to promoting peace and stability and countering the scourge of terrorism. The United States expressed its readiness to work jointly with Qatar to deter and confront an external threat to Qatar's territorial integrity that is inconsistent with the United Nations Charter.

The two governments discussed the \$24.7 billion Foreign Military Sales (FMS) program that currently exists between the United States and Qatar. Since 2014, Qatar has used its national funds to purchase state of the art military systems and conduct extensive training at U.S. facilities. The United States thanked the Qatari government for those purchases, noting they have resulted

in over 110,000 American jobs and the sustainment of critical military capabilities for the United States. Qatar highlighted the continued opportunity for future FMS and direct commercial sales, particularly relating to the development of the Expeditionary Amphibious Capability, which could lead to several billion dollars of future acquisitions and training in the near term, as well as an improved ability to defend against external aggression and to better interoperate with U.S. and NATO military forces in coalition operations.

The United States welcomed Qatar's offer to expand critical facilities at U.S. bases in the country. Qatari funding of capital expenditures and sustainment offers the possibility of an enduring presence, as with U.S. facilities in Europe and the Pacific. The two governments acknowledged the strong and lasting bilateral security partnership, and look forward to further discussions on the possibility of permanent basing.

Counterterrorism

Both sides intend to strengthen their security and counterterrorism partnership to eradicate terrorism and violent extremism. They reviewed the positive progress made under the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding on Counterterrorism signed on July 11, 2017, including with respect to information sharing, countering the financing of terrorism, aviation security, and capacity building. The United States thanked Qatar for its action to counter terrorism and violent extremism in all forms, including by being one of the few countries to move forward on a bilateral Memorandum of Understanding with the United States.

Qatar and the United States intend to begin the Anti-Terrorism Assistance training program as soon as possible, as set forth in a Letter of Intent signed in 2017; the program will focus on key areas such as aviation security, terrorism investigations, and the protection of soft targets.

The two governments also noted the recent conclusion of the Memorandum of Understanding between the U.S. Attorney General and his Qatari counterpart on the fight against terrorism and its financing and combating cyber-crime.

Qatar and the United States expressed the need to address violent extremism through preventive frameworks. They emphasized the role that both countries are playing in founding and being leading donors of the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) and the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF).

Trade and Investment

The two governments acknowledged the challenges facing Qatar as a result of the GCC dispute, which disrupted Qatar's previous trading partnerships. Qatar noted that despite the dispute, Qatar has honored its international trade obligations.

Qatar and the United States committed to boosting bilateral trade. They welcomed the role of U.S. companies in Qatar's development and of Qatari

investment in U.S. firms and jobs. Both countries recognized the importance of bilateral investment. The Qatari delegation described recent reforms designed to attract foreign investment in Qatar, including free trade zones, expanding ownership for non-citizens, improvement of the banking system, consolidation of the rule of law, including the development of a mechanism for dispute resolution.

The two governments recognized the importance of Qatar Investment Authority's previously committed investment of \$45 billion in American firms, real estate, and jobs. Qatar Investment Authority's chief executive described plans to increase investments in U.S. infrastructure and to expand across the United States of America.

The two governments recognized the positive outcomes emerging from the bilateral Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) signed in 2004. It was noted that TIFA continues to serve as a platform for increased cooperation in the fields of job creation, property law, communications, customs, SMEs, and new markets.

Qatar and the United States signed various Memoranda of Understanding and Letters of Intent in the fields of bilateral trade, investment, and technology. They welcomed the United States' Commercial Law Development Program's partnership with the Ministry of Finance, and officials signed a Letter of Intent on cybersecurity cooperation and a Letter of Intent on smart technologies collaboration.

The two governments welcomed a set of Understandings on civil aviation reached January 29 aimed at ensuring healthy competition in the global aviation sector while maintaining the Open Skies framework of U.S. international aviation policy. Anchored in the two countries' close bilateral economic and strategic relationship, the Understandings represent important, high-level political commitments. They affirm both governments' intention to promote best practices for marketplace participation by their airlines, while ensuring a continuation of the important economic, political, and cultural benefits of air services made possible by Open Skies.

Qatar and the United States stressed the importance of maintaining freedom of navigation, of overflight, and of unimpeded lawful commerce in accordance with international law.

The two governments expressed their mutual desire to further strengthen their bilateral relations in the energy sector, signing a Memorandum of Understanding to enhance cooperation between Qatar and the United States.

Forward Together

This new Strategic Dialogue process underlines the commitment of Qatar and the United States to increase cooperation in fields that are of the greatest mutual and practical benefit. Such cooperation includes the issues discussed today but also incorporates important work in the fields of sports, education, health, arts, and culture.

The two governments outlined a way forward together for the development of their partnership. They committed to continue their dialogue and cooperation on issues including: combating regional terrorism and violent extremism; countering the financing of terrorism; consolidating state of the art defense facilities; and expanding their trade and investment partnerships. Qatar and the United States look forward to making progress in these areas when the Dialogue reconvenes in Qatar in 2019. Both sides look forward to further enhancing bilateral relations during the visit of the Emir of Qatar to Washington later this year.

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[Press Releases: Background Briefing on the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act \(CAATSA\) Section 231](#)

Special Briefing
Senior State Department Officials
Via Teleconference
January 30, 2018

MODERATOR: Okay. Hi, everyone, and thanks so much for joining the call this afternoon. First, I'd like to say that the call is on background and will be embargoed until the end of the call. We organized this call to help add a little bit more context to our announcement yesterday related to Section 231 of the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act, or CAATSA. I want to make it clear that we are here to talk about the State equities of it; that is, of Section 231 of CAATSA. If you have questions related to Section 241, those should be directed to the Department of the Treasury.

We have with us today three senior State Department officials. I'll introduce

them by name now, but then they will need to be referred to in your reporting as Senior State Department Officials One, Two, and Three. First we have [Senior State Department Official One]. He'll be referred to as Senior State Department Official One. Next we have [Senior State Department Official Two]. She'll be Senior State Department Official Two. And finally, we have [Senior State Department Official Three]. He'll be Senior State Department Official Number Three.

With that, I'll turn it over to our Official Number One, who will have some brief remarks, and then take some of your questions. Please keep your questions to one per person so we can get to as many reporters as possible. Thank you.

SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL ONE: Hi, all. This is [Senior State Department Official One]. Thanks for joining us this afternoon. As [Moderator] mentioned, we were hoping to provide a little bit of clarity. We know that there was a lot of different activity going on yesterday, and so we thought this would be a good opportunity, again, to provide some clarity on 231.

The most important thing – and I wanted to start with this – is to clarify that yesterday, January 29th, was not a deadline under Section 231. So it was not a deadline to impose sanctions; it was actually a start date. It was the start of the race. It was the day on or after which we could start imposing sanctions if we make the determination here at the State Department of activity that falls under the provision. So with that in mind, I wanted to go back a little bit and give you a summary of how we've been implementing this provision since the bill was signed into law on August 2nd, and then where we're going from here, and then, of course, open it up for questions.

As you know, the President signed the bill into law August 2nd. He then delegated this provision 231 to the State Department on September 29th. On October 27th, we issued guidance regarding implementation of 231 of how we were going to go about implementing this provision. And as part of that guidance, we issued a list of persons that we saw or determined as being part of the defense and intelligence sectors of Russia. So the defense and intelligence sectors of Russia, in order to clarify it, in order to explain exactly the term and what we mean, we issued a list – which was not a sanctions list, but a list of persons that we see as comprising those two sectors of Russia.

We have spent, then, since even before our guidance was out but certainly since the delegation on September 29th and through to today, we have spent a considerable amount of time and energy on engaging with partners, with allies, with private industry, and in fact, globally with countries around the world, explaining what Section 231 meant – the provision, the sanctions attached to it – and demarching countries where we thought there could be potential sanctionable activity, explaining to them the consequences, and pushing them to stop potential deals that could run afoul of 231.

We have been doing this in the field with our posts overseas; we've been doing it here in Washington; it's been a global effort. We briefed this

effort to Congress yesterday in a classified setting. Our discussions, our diplomatic engagements, are sensitive and we don't talk about them publicly, but we did brief Congress yesterday because it's important, of course, to keep them updated. I can say publicly, though, that the results of our engagement and our demarches globally, we have been able to turn off potential deals that equal several billion dollars. And that is real success, it's real money, and it's real revenue that is not going to the Kremlin and is not going to Russia as part of the intent of this law and the intent of this administration, to remind Russia and remind the Russian Government of the costs of its malign activity, specifically with regard to Ukraine.

So that's real success. As with all sanctions, and this provision included, you cannot only judge the success of sanctions based on public rollout, right. There is a ton of engagement that goes on and a deterrent effect behind the scenes that we lead with countries around the world, and cutting off and stopping potential deals is success even if you don't see the rollout of sanctions. That doesn't mean that if we determined – we make final determinations that there is sanctionable activity, we, of course, will roll out public sanctions. That's part of our implementation. But it's important not to only focus on public rollouts as we look at the successful use of this tool to further our foreign policy.

With that, I will close and open it up for questions.

MODERATOR: Okay, our first question goes to Josh Lederman with AP. Hi, Josh.

QUESTION: Two quick questions. One, I know you say you're limited in what you could say, but can you provide any specific examples of deals with Russia's defense or intelligence sectors that have been withdrawn or put on ice? I mean, the Turkish S-400 deal, the Saudi arms deal, anything specifically? And if not, why should the public be expected to take the Trump administration at its word that Russia's feeling the pain to the tune of billions of dollars, as you said?

And secondly, can you tell us what the dollar figure is that constitutes a significant transaction as it pertains to implementing this law?

SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL ONE: Thanks, Josh. I'll start with the second question. We – and we've issued this in the guidance October 27th. But our definition of the term "significant" is a multivariable definition, so it's not only related to dollar figure. It also can include things like significant adverse impact to national – U.S. national security. So it's a multivariable definition of significance. We don't only look at the dollar impact.

As to your first question, we can't go into kind of our sensitive diplomatic discussions, but I assure you that the Russians know when a deal that they thought was moving forward is all of a sudden falling apart and not moving forward, they know which deals are being turned off. And that is having the intended consequence.

MODERATOR: Okay, next question. Dave Clark from AFP.

OPERATOR: Okay. And once again, ladies and gentlemen, if you do have a question, it's * then 1.

QUESTION: Hello.

MODERATOR: Hi, Dave. Go right ahead.

QUESTION: Hi, yes. Now, today and possibly still even as we speak, the Qatari foreign and defense ministers were here, were here for a meeting. Last week Qatar announced that it's negotiating to buy the S-400 from Russia. If that deal goes ahead, will that be a failure for this diplomacy?

SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL ONE: We're not going to speculate on – we're not going to, first, talk about ongoing discussions that we may or may not be having. We're not going to speculate about determinations that we might be making in the future. But rest assured, we are looking at all activity around the world. We're engaged in analysis and collecting information of a lot of potentials out there. It's important to remember that there are differences between potential deals, talking about deals, different stages of development, et cetera. But we are analyzing information. We're in ongoing discussions with a range of countries, and we will take appropriate action when we come to determinations.

MODERATOR: Next question, Felicia from *The Wall Street Journal*.

QUESTION: (Inaudible) give us a ballpark figure of the number of deals stopped based on your outreach?

SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL ONE: I can't go into the specifics of which countries we've been talking to and the ballpark. I just can't get into those kinds of sensitive discussions.

MODERATOR: Okay, next question, Kylie from CBS News.

QUESTION: Yeah, hi. Thanks. I'm wondering – you can't go into the ballparks number of deals. Can you talk about how many countries specifically you reached out to? And I also wonder – part of this legislation was also to make Russia kind of feel some sort of result due to their meddling in the 2016 election. Why do you not mention that at all when you are discussing these sanctions or the effect of what you guys have done here? Thanks.

SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL ONE: I'll start with the second. That was my omission. Certainly, when dealing with the broad array of malign activity that this law outlines and focuses on, we absolutely include Russia's disinformation campaigns undermining democratic processes and cyber activity. That is a focus, that has been a focus, and continues, will be a focus of our engagement with our allies and partners. So we absolutely – that was just my omission in the opening, but it has not been an omission in our engagement with allies and partners. It's been a focus.

With regard to your first question, I can tell you that part of our global effort is we have a term called an ALDAC, an All Diplomatic and Consular Affair Cable. We actually – we sent out as part of an – our engagement an

ALDAC. So we have engaged everybody, literally, that we can on this. And then as we get information in on potential – or information on potential deals or potential sanctional activity, we then have more tailored demarches and outreach engagement where we either go out to the field, have those discussions in capitals around the world or here in Washington. So it's both global and it's also very focused and tailored when we have particular instances of concern that we want to focus on.

MODERATOR: Okay. Michelle from CNN.

QUESTION: Thanks. When the Secretary of the Treasury today talked about there will be sanctions related to this in the near future, what can you say about that? And also, why was that not mentioned yesterday where it seemed that you were focusing more on the fact that if this works as a deterrent, you won't need any more sanctions? I mean, Mnuchin is saying that sanctions are coming and soon. So can you kind of explain the discrepancy there, as well as any more detail?

And as a separate question, we know that the Russian head of intelligence was in town last week. Did he meet with anybody at the State Department, and specifically concerning this issue? Thanks.

SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL ONE: So let me take those – I'm forgetting if it's first, second, or second, first. But I can say Secretary Mnuchin was referring to Section 241, and not 231, so I'll let you redirect that question to him and to the Treasury Department on that.

I can say generally, on deterrence versus sanctioning, I mean the sanctions tool is used – we use the sanctions tool in a flexible way both for deterrence, but we also obviously – we do sanction, right? You can't always – deterrence doesn't always work and you have to be ready, and we are ready to use the tool when we deem it appropriate.

So for example, just on Friday, of course, we issued a significant and large tranche of maintenance designations against a variety of Russian targets, separatists in eastern Ukraine, et cetera. We certainly do issue sanctions. We don't only rely on them to be a deterrent. So it's a variety of things.

The deterrence, also remember, is not just leading to a lack of business, but it actually turns into real – a real loss of money. It can – it has a very tangible impact when deals don't go through. For example, in this situation in 231, in this instance, where money actually doesn't flow into the Kremlin, so that's powerful as are actual sanctions when we choose to use them as well.

MODERATOR: Okay. Andrea from NBC News.

QUESTION: Hi. Thank you for doing this. Can you help us with – if you can't talk about the amount of money involved in these deals, can you give us any metric by which to analyze the success of the program?

Given the fact that Mike Pompeo briefed and is – or rather, in his interview with BBC said that Russia's role is continuing and he anticipates it will be

active and aggressive in the 2018 campaign, how are you deterring them if they are still as active as they were before?

And can you give us some insight into how you develop your lists of who should be sanctioned? Given what we now know about the way the Treasury late last night developed their lists, do you also refer to public sources and to Forbes Magazine in analyzing who should and should not be on the list within the Putin circle?

SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL ONE: Right, so we developed – starting when we were delegated this authority on September 29th, we developed a comprehensive approach on how we were going to implement this provision, including – that includes, of course, how we would deploy it, how we would sanction targets, and under what criteria. And that’s a little bit of what I answered to Josh Lederman’s question about a multivariable definition of the term “significant.” So we have a strong framework through which we’re implementing this provision. That’s what we’ve used as we have gone out across the world and engaged countries that may be involved or thinking about being involved in activity that could be sanctionable. So that’s a fairly comprehensive and very robust approach that we have.

How we deter – how we deter Russia, we have a variety of tools, right? We’re only today talking about Section 231. We have a variety of sanctions tools that CAATSA has given us. We also have close cooperation with our European allies where we can – where we discuss a variety of ways that we can counter the Russian threat that’s a common threat to us all. It’s not only about sanctions and it’s certainly not only about 231, but it’s one tool of many that we have in the toolbox.

MODERATOR: Okay. Conor from ABC News.

QUESTION: One of the other goals of the legislation, of course, was to punish Russia for that interference in the election. So now that there have been no sanctions so far, has Russia been punished enough specifically for that interference?

SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL ONE: This is an ongoing process, as I said at the very beginning. January 29th was not a deadline, it was a start date. And so this is an ongoing process; our engagement with partners and allies is an ongoing process. The ultimate goal, like you said, is to stop important revenue from going – from flowing into the Russian Government. As a punishment, as a reminder of the cost of their malign activity, you will see results publicly when we roll out sanctions, like we did on last Friday, but there are also plenty of results and successes that you won’t necessarily see through our engagement with our partners and allies in countries around the world.

MODERATOR: Okay. Nick from Bloomberg News.

QUESTION: I just wanted to be – to press a little bit more. Is there any specific detail you can give us on the exact number of the deals that were deterred and possible countries where those deals were deterred?

SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL ONE: I can't go into the specifics of our discussions with counterpart countries.

MODERATOR: Okay. And our final question goes to Boris from TASS.

QUESTION: Hi, can you hear me?

MODERATOR: Yes, we can.

QUESTION: Okay, thank you. I have question about your – yesterday's announcement. So you said that when and if we have sanctions to announce, then we'll do so. So I have a question: Do you have some kind of triggers in all the actions of Russia that could lead to new sanctions or kind of new restrictions against Moscow? Thank you.

SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL ONE: Yeah, thank you for the question. So in the guidance that we issued on October 27th, we detail exactly the criteria that we would look at in order to impose sanctions, and that includes how we would define a significant transaction with the defense or intelligence sectors of the Russian Federation. So we will – we will rely on that guidance which we issued publicly to move forward in implementing this provision.

MODERATOR: Okay, everyone, thank you so much for joining us. We appreciate your questions. And to my State Department colleagues, thank you so much. Hopefully this helped clarify some things, and we will look forward to seeing you all very soon. The embargo has now been lifted. As a reminder, Senior State Department Official is the designation to use – another word for designation. Thank you.

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[Press Releases: Deputy Secretary Sullivan's Meetings in Afghanistan](#)

Readout
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
January 30, 2018

The below is attributable to Department Spokesperson Heather Nauert:

Deputy Secretary of State John J. Sullivan traveled to Kabul, Afghanistan on January 29 and 30, where he met with President Ghani, Chief Executive Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, and other government officials. The Deputy Secretary extended his condolences to the families of the victims and all those affected by the recent terrorist attacks throughout the country. He condemned the senseless acts of terror and commended the Afghan security forces and all first responders for their bravery in responding.

Deputy Secretary Sullivan consulted with President Ghani and Dr. Abdullah about progress made on Afghan security, reforms, and peace initiatives, as we approach the six-month mark following President Trump's announcement of the South Asia Strategy. Among other priorities, the Deputy Secretary and the Afghan leaders discussed the importance of maintaining political stability and holding timely, credible, and inclusive elections. The Deputy Secretary applauded the Afghan government on their continued reform efforts to create a more peaceful and secure Afghanistan.

In addition to his meetings with government officials, the Deputy Secretary also engaged with young leaders, members of the media, aid and humanitarian leaders, and individuals from across the political spectrum. In addition, he met with U.S. government employees at the U.S. Embassy and with U.S. troops serving in Afghanistan alongside the brave Afghan forces to thank them for their hard work in implementing the South Asia strategy.

In all of his meetings, the Deputy Secretary focused discussions on the peace process, elections and inclusivity, and advancing development efforts. He also reaffirmed the United States' commitment to working with the government and the people of Afghanistan to bring peace, security, and sustained economic growth to Afghanistan and the region.

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Press Releases: Remarks at the High-Level Opening Session of the Inaugural U.S.-Qatar Strategic Dialogue

Remarks

Rex W. Tillerson

Secretary of State

Secretary of Defense James Mattis, Qatari Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al-Thani, and Qatari Defense Minister Khalid bin Muhammad al-Atiyah

Washington, DC

January 30, 2018

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Well, good morning, all. And the United States is very pleased to host this inaugural U.S.-Qatar Strategic Dialogue. I want to welcome Foreign Minister al-Thani, Minister of Defense al-Atiyah, and the entire Qatari delegation to Washington. And I want to express my thanks and appreciation to Secretary Mattis for joining us for this dialogue as well.

Qatar is a strong partner and a longtime friend of the United States. We

value the U.S.-Qatar relationship and hope the talks today deepen our strategic ties. In today's Strategic Dialogue sessions, we will discuss important areas of cooperation, including trade and investment, security, counterterrorism, energy, and aviation. The United States believes enhanced trade will contribute positively to both our countries' economic development, and create jobs for the American people and Qatari citizens while furthering the region's security and stability.

The United States welcomes the understandings we reached on civil aviation yesterday. These exchanges addressed concerns important to U.S. aviation industry stakeholders and strengthened our economic cooperation. The President has made this matter a priority, and the outcome we achieve will ensure a level playing field in the global aviation market.

I'm also pleased to announce that the U.S. and Qatari governments will sign a memorandum of understanding that creates a framework for the United States to provide technical assistance and training to the Qatari Government on combatting human trafficking. This MOU also provides for the creation of a bilateral government working group to discuss labor practices in Qatar. Through our continued cooperation, we hope to partner with Qatar to build institutional capacity to eliminate human trafficking, an area in which Qatar has already made significant strides.

With respect to counterterrorism, following President Trump's challenge to all of our Gulf partners during the Riyadh summit last year, Qatar has made significant progress to improve efforts to combat terrorism. As a result of the memorandum of understanding our countries signed in July, the United States and Qatar have increased information sharing on terrorists and terrorist financiers. We have participated in counterterrorism technical training and taken steps to improve aviation security. We look forward to building on this foundation and implementing next steps.

We will also discuss other critical regional security issues, including the ongoing battle to defeat ISIS, Daesh, the Gulf dispute, the situation in Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan, and Iran's role in the region. As the Gulf dispute nears the eight-month mark, the United States remains as concerned today as we were at its outset. This dispute has had direct negative consequences economically and militarily for those involved, as well as the United States. We are concerned by the rhetoric and propaganda employed in the region, playing out daily in Arab mainstream and social media.

It is critical that all parties minimize rhetoric, exercise restraint to avoid further escalation, and work toward a resolution. A united GCC bolsters our effectiveness on many fronts, particularly on counterterror – countering terrorism, defeating ISIS, and countering the spread of Iran's malign influence.

The United States and Qatar will be signing three documents today outlining our cooperation in the important bilateral and regional areas mentioned, including three at this ceremony.

The first is a memorandum of understanding that establishes the convention

for this U.S.-Qatar Strategic Dialogue on an annual basis going forward, so that we can continue to build on the close partnership between our two countries.

The second document is a joint declaration outlining the United States cooperation with Qatar on matters of shared regional and security interests.

The third document is a memorandum of understanding that creates a framework for the cooperation between the United States and Qatar to combat human trafficking.

I look forward to the outcomes of today's inaugural U.S.-Qatar Strategic Dialogue and our continued collaboration over the years to come. And with that, I'd welcome remarks from Foreign Minister al-Thani.

FOREIGN MINISTER AL-THANI: Thank you, Mr. Secretary. Good morning, dear friend Secretary Tillerson, dear friend Secretary Mattis, your excellencies member of the two delegations of the U.S.-Qatar Strategic Dialogue, ladies and gentlemen. I am delighted to express on behalf of the Qatari delegation our deepest gratitude for the warm welcome. This year we are celebrating the 45th anniversary of the U.S.-Qatar alliance. Our work today represents a milestone in a historically deep and continuous relationship between Qatar and the United States in defense, economic, education, and political unions.

Holding this immensely significant first session of Qatar-U.S. Strategic Dialogue come as an expression and a celebration of the enduring and the close affiliation between our two countries. In a recent January phone call between the President of United States Donald Trump and His Highness the Emir of Qatar, there – they have emphasized their mutual determination to strengthen the bilateral relation. A number of major agreements will be signed today covering defense, trade, investment, and energy – all area where Qatar is committed to investing in America's economy.

Qatar is already investing more than \$100 billion in the U.S. economy, including \$10 billion earmarked for infrastructure. Qatar and U.S. private sector have devoted substantial resources to the other, U.S. companies doing business in Qatar within construction, energy, and services industry. Qatari companies are investing in the U.S. financial services, health care, and technology markets.

From Qatar hosting six prominent U.S. universities in our education city, to Qatar investment in the LNG Golden Pass in Texas, our countries have shared interests – interests that translate into job opportunities for the American and Qatari people. To make all these investments flourish, regional security is essential. So today we will also discuss a range of security issues, including shared threats and further opportunities of regional cooperation.

This joint endeavor take place despite the difficult circumstances that Qatar currently faces as a part of a larger regional crisis taking place in the Middle East. The state of Qatar and its people have been illegally and unjustifiably blockaded. This blockade disrupts the joint efforts in providing stabilities for the – stability for the region. Let me express my

profound gratitude for the effort of the President Trump, the U.S. Congress, and Secretaries Tillerson and Mattis and Mnuchin in taking a just position on the illegal activities of the blockading states throughout this Gulf crisis. We look forward to our continued cooperation on regional security to deliver long-lasting peace and security for the Middle East.

In addition to security, both countries are committing to improving labor standards and joining forces to stop all forms of human trafficking. Qatar and U.S. are committed to delivering justice to our citizens.

In closing, I reiterate my appreciation for your effort to ensure that this first round of the Strategic Dialogue will be held successfully. We look forward to hosting the second round in Doha next year. Our mutual goal is to deepen strategic bonds between our two countries and go forward together to yield the greatest mutual benefit. Thank you.

SECRETARY MATTIS: Excuse me. Secretary Tillerson, thank you for hosting this inaugural Qatar-United States Security Dialogue with our counterparts, Foreign Minister al-Thani and my friend, the Minister of State for Defense al-Atiyah. The United States enjoys a longstanding defense relationship with Qatar. A strong and valued military partner, Qatar is a longtime friend in the region. Even in the midst of its own current challenges, Qatar and the United States maintain excellent military-to-military relations, hosting Al Udeid Air Base, home to our Combined Air Operations Center, the United States Air Force Central Command Forward Headquarters, and U.S. Central Command's Forward Headquarters, providing critical counterterrorism support to the Defeat ISIS/Defeat Daesh coalition and President Trump's South Asia strategy.

We are grateful to Qatar for their longstanding support of America's present and continuing commitment to regional security, a commitment that includes information sharing and counterterrorism training. It should be noted that just this last week, the Qatari Air Force completed its first two C-17 flights from the Gulf to Afghanistan and back, providing logistical support to the NATO counterterrorism campaign in Afghanistan. As Secretary Tillerson stated, a united Gulf Cooperation Council bolsters our effectiveness on many fronts, particularly on countering terrorism, defeating ISIS/Daesh, and countering the spread of Iran's malign influence. It is thus critical that the GCC recovers its cohesion as the proud Gulf nations return to mutual support through a peaceful resolution that provides for enhanced regional stability and prosperity.

I look forward to a lasting Qatar-U.S. security relationship, a relationship that will continue to bolster our efforts against common security threats and violent extremism. So thank you, and Minister al-Atiyah.

DEFENSE MINISTER AL-ATIYAH: Secretary Tillerson and General Mattis, thank you. Distinguished colleague, I reaffirm the remark raised by Sheikh Mohammed regarding our special relation with the U.S. Qatar and the United States have long enjoyed special relationship, a relationship built on a mutual respect and trust. We have stood together many time in the face of tyranny, fought those who defied the rule of law, and walked jointly to confront the complex and expensive challenges that face our region today.

The relationship extend beyond the security, defense, and political. It extend in the educational, as Sheikh Mohammed said, energy sector, commerce, and social tie. I speak of the special relation that we share with our friend and allies here in the United States, and there is no better way to demonstrate the uniqueness of this relation than by looking at our military-to-military partnership.

As some of you are acutely aware, Qatar and the United States have been strategic military allies for quite some time now. We have shared our friend burden and have carried on our own weight in the effort to bring peace, justice, and stability to our region and beyond. This integral meeting marks an important moment in our relationship with our friend here in the U.S. We look forward to building on the existing infrastructure of our historic and strategic relationship through exploring a way in which we are able to expand our bilateral coordination and further our effort to – in realizing our shared objective of peace, security and prosperity for our nation and beyond.

The state of Qatar has never waived its commitment to stand with friends and allies, especially when the – when they needed us the most. When other in the region were no longer able to accommodate U.S. present of their soil, Qatar eased restriction and expedited its offer to host its ally. Al Udeid airbase, which currently hosts 11,000 of your brave men and women, has been at the epicenter of the global fight against terrorism. Qatar has spared no effort in increasing the readiness and efficiency of Al Udeid operation by investing billions of dollar in the direct infrastructure and maintenance of the strategic airbase.

We are looking toward the future of our military partnership with the United States as we plan for the year ahead. Qatar and its trusted ally have reaffirmed their commitment toward the stability and prosperity of both nation. The recent purchased of the F-15s fighter jets signal a new era of cooperation. This strategic bird will assure our readiness to protect our own border and aid our allies further in our collective fight toward peace and stability. Creation of tens of thousand of jobs directs – new jobs, and ten of thousand more of indirect creation job.

The initiative has been jointly constructed – ensure – and I'm referring to the military initiative which we are looking to achieve in Qatar, and we call the 2040 one – has been jointly constructed to ensure the safety of the forces serving in Al Udeid and facilitate future capacity building by alleviating the classification of Al Udeid to permanent U.S. base. The cooperative initiative will include the exchange of military personnel and the expansion of Al Udeid airbase, and include on-base housing for the American service member and their families, new state-of-the-art schools, as well as building quality recreational entertainment and service facility. Qatar has demonstrated its commitment to well-being of the community of American service member in Al Udeid and their family who serves alongside them by facilitating for needs. The initiative aim to serve the needs of the community living in Al Udeid and ease their transition and assimilation.

In the current Gulf conflict, the disruption of CT offered the stabilizing allied forces' effort in the region. Brave men and women of Qatar, since our

inception, there has been those who wish to impose their domain over us. Qatar did not waver then and it will not waver now. And to protect the sovereignty and fight of its independence, the brave people of Qatar stood firmly with their leader in face of the mounting hostility directed toward their country. They refused to be manipulated or used as a pawn in an arbitrary and pointless conflict. We are here today to work for these men and women, and for the men and women of your great country, to explore economic, social, military and social opportunity that would progress our effort toward prosperity and stability. Thank you. Thank you, sir.

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Thank you very much for those opening statements, and I think now we're going to sign the three memorandums.

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