

# Press Releases: United States Applauds New European Union Sanctions on Syrian Regime Officers and Scientists Involved in the Use of Chemical Weapons in Syria

Press Statement  
Heather Nauert

Department Spokesperson

Washington, DC  
July 17, 2017

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We applaud today's decision by the European Council to sanction sixteen senior military officials and Syria's Scientific Studies and Research Centre Scientists (SSRC) for their roles in the development and use of chemical weapons against civilian populations. This action follows sanctions designations recently undertaken by the United States, similarly aimed at holding the Syrian regime accountable for its repeated use of chemical weapons on the Syrian people, including the April 4 Khan Shaykhun attack. In April 2017, the United States sanctioned numerous employees of the SSRC, the Syrian government agency responsible for developing and producing non-conventional weapons in support of Syria's chemical weapons program. Additionally, in May 2017, the United States sanctioned a number of Syrian individuals and entities in response to acts of violence committed by the Government of Syria against its own citizens.

The combined efforts of the United States and the European Union, as well as recent sanctions actions by other partner states, are part of a continuing effort in the international community to hold the Assad regime responsible for violating longstanding global norms against the use of chemical weapons.

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## **Press Releases: An Unequivocal Message From the People of Venezuela**

Press Statement  
Heather Nauert

Department Spokesperson

Washington, DC  
July 17, 2017

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The United States applauds the courage and determination of Venezuelans who exercised their rights to freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly in defense of their democracy on July 16. Yesterday's vote was a massive repudiation of the proposed National Constituent Assembly, which would undermine Venezuela's democratic institutions. The vote by millions of Venezuelans was an unequivocal affirmation in support of free and fair elections as well as respect for the existing constitution.

Further, we condemn the loss of life in Catia, Caracas and deplore the violence. We call on the Venezuelan government to bring the attackers to justice.

Millions of Venezuelans' voices must not be ignored. The United States calls on the Government of Venezuela to abandon the proposed National Constituent Assembly. We encourage governments in the hemisphere and around the world to call on President Maduro to suspend this process which only seeks to undermine democracy in Venezuela.

As the President stated earlier today, the United States is prepared to take strong and swift economic actions if the Government of Venezuela proceeds with the National Constituent Assembly action.

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## **Press Releases: Marking the Third Anniversary of the Downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17**

Press Statement  
Heather Nauert

Department Spokesperson

Washington, DC  
July 17, 2017

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Three years ago today 298 innocent civilians were killed in the downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17. The United States again extends its deepest sympathy to the families and friends of the victims.

The United States will continue to support the efforts of the Joint Investigation Team and urges other states to cooperate fully in order to ensure those responsible are brought to justice. As we and the Joint Investigation Team have said, Russian-led forces in eastern Ukraine fired the surface-to-air BUK missile – brought into sovereign Ukrainian territory from Russia – that took down flight MH17. We welcome the team’s recent decision to grant jurisdiction to the Dutch courts for the prosecution of those responsible for this tragedy. We have full confidence in the ability of the Dutch criminal justice system to conduct a prosecution that is comprehensive, objective and just.

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# Press Releases: Sixth U.S.-Thailand Strategic Dialogue

Media Note  
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC  
July 14, 2017

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Senior delegations representing the United States and Thailand met on July 14, 2017, in Washington, D.C., at the Department of State for the sixth U.S.-Thailand Strategic Dialogue. Acting Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Susan Thornton led the U.S. delegation and Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ambassador Busaya Mathelin led the Thailand delegation.

The Strategic Dialogue is an integral part of the enduring U.S.-Thailand relationship, which has spanned nearly two centuries, and covers the full range of political, security, and economic cooperation. The Dialogue addressed a wide variety of issues of mutual interest, including shared concerns with the security threat posed by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and collaborative efforts to counter terrorism. Both sides reaffirmed the principles expressed in the 2016 Sunnylands Declaration, as well as the importance of a cooperative approach to ensuring a peaceful and stable South China Sea, freedoms of navigation and overflight, and claimants exercising self-restraint in the conduct of activities that could complicate or escalate disputes.

The United States and Thailand discussed their enduring alliance and explored ways to deepen collaboration in areas like regional security, cyber policy, counterterrorism, and commerce and investment, including through regional fora like ASEAN and the Lower Mekong Initiative. Both sides reaffirmed their desire to strengthen cooperation under the ASEAN-U.S. Strategic Partnership. Thailand and the United States underscored the importance of free and fair trade practices and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms. The United States welcomed Thailand's intention to hold elections in 2018 and return to elected government.

The two sides discussed preparations for the visit of the Prime Minister of Thailand to Washington at a mutually convenient date and reaffirmed the importance of regular high-level consultations. The United States welcomed

Thailand's invitation to host the next Strategic Dialogue in Bangkok in 2018.

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## **Press Releases: On the Occasion of the One-Year Anniversary of the Attempted Coup in Turkey**

Press Statement  
Heather Nauert

Department Spokesperson

Washington, DC  
July 14, 2017

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One year ago, Turkey's brave and dedicated citizens of all backgrounds and political views defended their democracy against an attempted coup. We reaffirm the United States' steadfast support for Turkey's democracy and democratic institutions. We offer our condolences to the friends and loved ones of those injured or killed during the coup attempt.

Today, the United States commends the bravery of all of those who have taken to the streets to preserve the rights and freedoms of their democratic society. Their actions continue to remind us that the preservation of democracy requires perseverance, tolerance, dissent, and safeguards for fundamental freedoms. Persistent curbs on those fundamental freedoms erode the foundations of democratic society. More voices, not fewer, are necessary in challenging times.

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