

Press Releases: 15th Anniversary of the Hague Code of Conduct Against Ballistic Missile Proliferation

Press Statement
Heather Nauert

Department Spokesperson

Washington, DC
June 5, 2017

The United States recognizes the Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missiles Proliferation as an outstanding example of international cooperation and applauds the Code's 15 year record of promoting transparency and confidence building measures as well as generating a broad international predisposition against ballistic missile proliferation.

Since it was launched in The Hague in 2002, subscription to the Code has grown to include 138 countries and has contributed significantly to international nonproliferation efforts.

The U.S. government looks forward to continuing our close cooperation with all Subscribing States to promote ballistic missile nonproliferation and encourages all countries that have not yet done so to subscribe to the Code.

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Press Releases: Acting Assistant Secretary of State Patricia Haslach Travels to France

Media Note
Office of the Spokesperson

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Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Economic and Business Affairs Patricia Haslach will participate in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Ministerial Council Meeting June 7-8 in Paris, France. United States Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer will lead the U.S. delegation to the meeting.

During the meeting, the Acting Assistant Secretary will advocate for the advancement of U.S. economic interests in the OECD. The meeting will bring together ministers from OECD member countries and partners under the theme, "Making Globalization Work: Better Lives for All." The OECD is a unique forum where the governments of 35 democracies representing roughly half of the world GDP collaborate with more than 70 non-member economies to develop high-quality best practices and policies for economic growth and development.

For updates, follow Acting Assistant Secretary Haslach on [Facebook](#) and Twitter [@EconAtState](#). For more information about the meeting and surrounding events, follow #OECDwk.

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Press Releases: Remarks at the Ceremony for Montenegro's Accession to the North Atlantic Treaty

Remarks

Thomas A. Shannon, Jr.

Under Secretary for Political Affairs

Montenegrin Prime Minister Dusko Markovic, and NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg
Treaty Room
Washington, DC
June 5, 2017

UNDER SECRETARY SHANNON: Thank you very much, John. And good morning and welcome to all of you to the Department of State and to the Treaty Room. John indicated the dignitaries we have here today, and we're delighted to have all of you here. So many have you have played such an important role in reaching this important date. And as was noted by the foreign minister and by the ambassador, this is many years in coming. So this has been – like building a cathedral, this has been a process in which many people have played an important role.

But we want to extend an especially warm welcome to NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg. Thank you, sir, for being here today. And obviously, to Montenegro's leaders, to its Prime Minister Markovic, to its Foreign Minister Darmanovic, to Monenegro's ambassador here in the United States, to our ambassador in Montenegro. And to those of us, some who can't be here today but would have liked to, people like Toria Nuland, people like Sandy Vershbow. I don't know if Doug Lute is here today, but if so, these are people who played very important roles in this. But to our guests from NATO and from Montenegro, I want to thank you here. You do us great honor with your presence.

Over decades, the promise of NATO membership and broader Euro-Atlantic integration has advanced our security, our democratic values, and our respect for the rule of law. It has served as an incentive for nations to pursue difficult reforms. This policy has yielded clear results, and that is why NATO allies unanimously agreed to welcome Montenegro into the alliance.

Montenegro has taken NATO's guidance and mentorship to heart and implemented

meaningful reforms including force structure transformation and modernization and upgrading operational capabilities. We greatly appreciate that Montenegro takes seriously the financial commitment will undertake with NATO membership.

On May 25, NATO leaders met in Brussels and agreed that allies should develop national plans by the end of the year for implementing the 2014 Wales pledge to aim to reach 2 percent of GDP towards defense spending and 20 percent of defense budgets on necessary capabilities by 2024. Montenegro is on track to allocate 1.72 percent of its GDP in 2017, and its long-term defense development plan envisions reaching 2 percent by 2024.

Montenegro has been a reliable partner and force provider to NATO, the EU, and UN missions. It has contributed to NATO's operations in Afghanistan for six years and contributed over \$1 million in the last two years towards the sustainability of Afghan security forces.

We also appreciate that Montenegro has been an active contributor to the 67-member defeat ISIS coalition. All NATO allies are members of the coalition, and on May 25, NATO leaders agreed that NATO would formally join the coalition and that NATO would do more in the fight against international terrorism. Montenegro should be commended in particular for asserting its sovereign right to choose its own alliances even in the face of concerted foreign pressure. As President Trump said in his February 28th remarks to a joint session of Congress, "America respects the right of all nations to chart their own path."

Montenegro's accession sends a strong message of strength to the region and makes clear to our allies that the United States remains as committed as ever to the principle of collective defense as enshrined in Article 5 of the Washington Treaty. In a strong demonstration of U.S. support for Montenegro's membership, the U.S. Senate voted overwhelmingly, 97-2, on March 28 to ratify Montenegro's accession protocol.

NATO's strength is based on not only on its military might, but also on our allies' shared commitment to the fundamental values enshrined in the Washington Treaty, democracy, individual liberty, and the rule of law. Montenegro's accession also affirms to other aspiring members that NATO's doors remain open to those countries willing and able to make the reforms necessary to meet NATO's high standards, and to accept the risks and responsibilities as well as the benefits of membership. Montenegro's accession is an important stepping stone toward our vision of a Europe whole, free, and at peace.

Thank you all again for joining us here today. Thank you.

(Applause.)

MODERATOR: Foreign Minister Darmanovic will now present the instrument of accession to Under Secretary Shannon.

(The instrument was presented.)

MODERATOR: And now I'd like to introduce Prime Minister of Montenegro

Markovic.

PRIME MINISTER MARKOVIC: (Via interpreter) Dear Deputy Secretary of State, dear Secretary-General, excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, dear friends and allies, today is a big day for Montenegro, a day when my country is becoming a NATO ally. That is a historic event for a country and a nation which endured enormous sacrifices in the 19th and 20th centuries in order to defend their right to a free life, the right to decide on our own future, the right to be recognized by the world under our own name, and with our national symbols.

History has shown us that when we say Montenegro, these are the phrases that cross our mind: "the smallest country and an enormous sacrifice." Nearly a hundred years after it was deleted from the political map of Europe and at the end of the World War I and 11 years since restoration of its independence, Montenegro is again a part of global politics. We are celebrating today the fact that it will never happen again that someone else decides instead of us and our state, behind our back, as it was the case in the past.

Today, we are also formally becoming a part of the most powerful and most successful alliance in history which decides on the most important issues of today's world. Membership in NATO means permanent stability for us with Euro-Atlantic democratic values embedded in the society and economy geared towards further prosperity.

Allow me to extend my gratitude to our host country, the United States of America, gratitude to President Trump, to the Senate, for the staunch and continuous support for our membership in NATO, gratitude to Vice President Pence, Secretary Tillerson, and the entire State Department, who have been very helpful throughout this entire process in enabling us to be at this place today. I'm also grateful to all of you who are here today to share our satisfaction.

From the moment of reinstatement of our relations back in 2006, the United States has been a staunch, reliable, and precious partner of Montenegro in achieving the vision of a Euro-Atlantic and European country. This is also confirmation of something that has never been questioned – that Americans remain committed to the stability and security of the Western Balkans and Europe. We are very grateful to the NATO and esteemed secretary-general who is with us today.

Dear Mr. Stoltenberg, dear Jens, you have been actively supporting us all this time with vision and friendly advice. Montenegro will know how to prove that it is a trustworthy partner.

As an ally, Montenegro will continue working, reinvigorated towards that goal, so as to reach the standard of 2 percent allocations for the defense budget by 2024 and to develop a national plan by the end of this year, because we believe that equitable burden-sharing is important for the functioning of the alliance. We will be contributing to NATO deterrence and defense policy, counterterrorism, projecting stability, as well as to

overseas operations and missions. We will be a strong advocate and partner in the alliance's refocusing on the Western Balkans and further integration of the countries of the region into NATO.

I firmly believe that this is a historic day for NATO too. Facing the new and grave challenges, the alliance's admitting the 29th member show increasingly that the open-door policy is alive and that it works well as a beacon of hope to all of those who want to share its values and standards.

Ladies and gentlemen, since this day, June the 5th, 2017, we are an ally that will enjoy the benefits provided by the collective system of security with major responsibility to continue together with you unwaveringly and committedly to work towards durable peace, stability, and security of Europe and the world. This is a task that will be passed on to the next generations.

Allow me to send a message to the citizens of my country from this place: Let us unite and let us seize this opportunity to make Montenegro a country where people will live better lives with even higher level of democracy, rule of law, and equal opportunities for all. We primarily owe it to ourselves, but we also owe it to our allies who understood and supported, acknowledged, and accepted a small Balkan country as an equal partner. Let us be wise for the sake of our future as much as we were brave in our heroic past.

May Montenegro be eternal, may our alliance be eternal. Thank you.
(Applause.)

MODERATOR: And now, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg.

SECRETARY-GENERAL STOLTENBERG: John, thank you so much. Prime Minister Markovic, Under Secretary Shannon, excellencies, ambassadors, ladies and gentlemen, in April 1949, just a short distance from here, the 12 founding members of NATO Alliance signed the Washington Treaty. At that ceremony, President Truman said, "In this pact, we hope to create a shield against aggression and the fear of aggression – a bulwark which will permit us to get on with the real business of government and society, the business of achieving a fuller and happier life for all our citizens."

Since then, NATO's shield has been extended to cover 28 – now 29 nations in Europe and North America, enabling almost a billion people to live that fuller and happier life. We are an alliance of democracies and we have at times different political perspectives, but together, we rise above those differences and unite around a common purpose: to stand with each other, to protect each other, and, if necessary, to fight to defend each other. Article 5, our collective defense pledge, is the core of our alliance – a unique bond that has kept our nations safe for almost seven decades. Today, our commitment to the alliance is as strong as ever, not just in words but also in deeds. We see a stronger U.S. military presence in Europe, and Europe and Canada investing more in defense.

Today, Montenegro joins NATO with a seat at the table as an equal, with an equal voice in shaping our alliance and its independence guaranteed. In turn, NATO benefits from Montenegro's insight into the Western Balkans and the

professionalism, bravery, and dedication of its men and women in uniform – troops who serve with our Resolute Support mission in Afghanistan. Montenegro's accession is good for Montenegro. It is also good for the stability of the Western Balkans, and it's good for international peace and security.

Since NATO's founding, keeping our door open to new members has been one of our greatest contributions to international peace and security. Montenegro's accession sends a signal to other states that seek membership that if a country truly reforms, if it promotes democracy, strengthens the rule of law, modernizes its armed forces, and contributes to our collective defense, it too can join the alliance.

Sixty-seven years ago, President Truman said that people with courage, ambition can still determine their own destiny. Today, Montenegro has determined its own destiny to join NATO and to follow the path of freedom and peace.

So I congratulate you, Prime Minister Markovic. (Speaks in Montenegrin.) (Applause.) Welcome, Montenegro.

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[Press Releases: Acting Assistant Secretary Judith G. Garber To Travel to Belgium and Botswana](#)

Media Note
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Acting Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs Judith G. Garber will travel to Brussels, Belgium from June 5-7 to meet with European officials to discuss wildlife trafficking, ocean issues, health security, and scientific collaboration.

Acting Assistant Secretary Garber will then travel to Gaborone, Botswana from June 7-10. During her time in Botswana, she will meet with government officials and representatives from NGOs and other organizations to engage on wildlife trafficking, sustainable fisheries, public health, water, and advancing education and research in science and technology.

For further information, contact Yoon Nam (NamYS@state.gov).

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[Press Releases: Press Availability With Secretary of Defense James Mattis, Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop, And Australian Defense Minister Marise Payne](#)

Press Availability
Rex W. Tillerson

Secretary of State

New South Wales Government House
Sydney, Australia
June 5, 2017

FOREIGN MINISTER BISHOP: Good afternoon. On behalf of the Minister for Defense Senator Marise Payne, I would like to say how delighted we've been to host U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and U.S. Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis for our annual AUSMIN meeting, the Australian-U.S. Ministerial consultations, here in Sydney. This is a very important opportunity for Australia and the United States to share perspectives and insights and discuss strategies and ideas and ways in which we can continue to cooperate and work together to promote peace and stability and security in our region and globally.

We are the strongest of friends and allies. We have a shared military history going back 100 years, and today, we work as closely as two nations can operate in terms of promoting peace and stability and security.

We meet just days after the shocking terrorist attacks in London, and we stand resolute in our determination to fight terrorism and to fight the poisonous ideology that gives rise to these brutal attacks so often on innocent civilians. We discussed the issue of counterterrorism activities given that we're seeing strains of Islamic terrorism in our region. The ongoing conflict in the southern Philippines, in Mindanao, is a matter of deep concern.

We also discussed our region, Southeast Asia, our relationship with countries in our region. We discussed challenges on the Korean Peninsula, in particular the destructive behavior of North Korea in its nuclear and missile weapons testing, and what we can do together and with other nations to curb this behavior and the risk that it poses, not only regionally but globally.

We discussed regional cooperation in areas of maritime disputes, notably the South China Sea, and we urge all nations to resolve their disputes peacefully and in accordance with the international rules-based order. We had a very productive discussion on the Pacific and how we can work more closely together in the Pacific – our neighborhood, our part of the world.

In discussing operations and policies and strategies further afield, we focused on joint efforts in Afghanistan, in Iraq, and Syria, where we are determined to restore peace and stability to the Middle East and rid the world of the terrorist scourge that it has presented and is evolving.

We took the opportunity to discuss a whole range of issues where the United States and Australia have a similar view. In fact, we are like-minded in our worldview. We share values, interests, priorities, and outlooks, and this AUSMIN has reaffirmed once more the strength of the bilateral relationship between Australia and the United States.

Secretary Tillerson and I also had the opportunity to discuss bilateral issues on trade, on investment, and other areas where Australia-U.S. interests coincide.

So all in all, it was a very productive, useful, important discussion between counterparts, between friends, and we look forward to going to the United States in 2018 for the next AUSMIN meeting. In the meantime, we'll continue

to work with our counterparts. Rex and Jim have become good friends we've met on a number of occasions now, and Marise and I look forward to deepening and strengthening this already extraordinary partnership.

Secretary Tillerson, (inaudible).

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Thank you, Julie, and good afternoon, everyone. And let me begin, of course, by thanking Foreign Minister Bishop and Defense Minister Payne for their hospitality and for hosting this session of AUSMIN. Minister Bishop was one of my first counterparts that I met with when she traveled to Washington, and that began a very, very productive dialogue that has continued certainly through today. Secretary Mattis and I obviously look forward to having dinner this evening with Prime Minister Turnbull, and we know we're going to have a very fruitful exchange in that sense as well.

We had very productive meetings today, as Foreign Minister Bishop described to you. We covered a broad range of topics that are important to both of us, obviously clear that our longstanding friendship with Australia will continue to remain strong.

Our shared values of freedom, democracy, a rules-based order, are long bonds that have been formed in the sacrifices that we have made together over the past century through two world wars, and continue to stand shoulder to shoulder in upholding these values of freedom and democracy and a rules-based order evident today in our joint efforts in this fight against terrorism.

Today, we also speak with one voice in calling for North Korea to abandon its illegal nuclear weapons program. China and other regional partners should also step up their efforts to help solve this security situation which threatens not just that region but really presents a threat to the entire world.

The U.S. and Australia also reaffirmed our commitment to freedom of navigation and overflight and other lawful uses of the seas, particularly the South China Sea and elsewhere, to ensure unimpeded flow of lawful commerce and a rules-based order. We oppose China's artificial island construction and their militarization of features in international waters.

China is a significant economic and trading power, and we desire a productive relationship, but we cannot allow China to use its economic power to buy its way out of other problems, whether it's militarizing islands in the South China Sea or failure to put appropriate pressure on North Korea. They must recognize that with a role as a growing economic and trading power comes security responsibilities as well.

Australia and the U.S. will work together to support democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human rights, and that includes defending the rules-based order which the Asia Pacific region depends upon.

We are certainly grateful for Australia's commitment to defeating ISIS in Iraq and Syria, wherever else they may show their face, and certainly their face is appearing in the region. Countering violent extremism, stemming the

flow of foreign terrorist fighters, and shutting down propaganda arms online remains a shared goal for both the United States and Australia.

We reaffirm the strong state of bilateral defense, security, and intelligence cooperation under our alliance, as well as the strength of our bilateral security relationships with Japan, and our commitment to enhancing that trilateral cooperation. I'll leave it to Secretary Mattis to tell you more about these discussions.

We also share with Australia a keen interest in ensuring our economic policies advance prosperity at home as well as abroad. Australian companies employ almost 100,000 Americans, and American companies in Australia employ about 335,000 Australians. Good trade policies mean good jobs for both of our peoples.

On behalf the United States, I'm grateful to the government and the people of Australia for hosting our delegation and for a spirit of cooperation that's benefited both of our nations, and has for decades, and will continue in the future, and as Foreign Minister Bishop said, we look forward to continuing the dialogues among our staffs while we make our way to next year's AUSMIN in Washington, D.C.

So again, thank you, and I'll turn it to Senator Payne.

DEFENSE MINISTER PAYNE: Thank you very much, Rex, Julie, Jim, ladies and gentlemen, and I want to begin by thanking their excellencies the governor and Mrs. Hurley for their hospitality and enabling us to have this AUSMIN meeting here in the beautiful government house in Sydney.

I'd like to also join Minister Bishop in thanking both Jim and Rex for an excellent day of discussions here for AUSMIN 2017. Jim and I, in fact, have been hanging out all weekend at Shangri-La, in Singapore, where we met with our key regional counterparts, an excellent preparation, if I might say, for some of the discussions we had here today about our engagement in the Indo-Pacific.

What today's meeting has again underscored is the strength and the breadth of our unique relationship. As my colleagues have indicated, we covered a very wide range of topics, including North Korea, the Middle East, and other matters of global strategic importance, through to the very tactical aspects of how Australia and the United States as defense partners particularly can work together to achieve our common goals both globally and in the region.

In particular, we have reaffirmed our joint commitment to the force posture initiatives in Northern Australia as a tangible contribution to the stability, the security, and the prosperity of the Indo-Pacific region. We look forward to continuing to work together on the development of those force posture initiatives, and indeed, to engaging with a number of our regional neighbors in that context.

As I said, both at the Shangri-La Dialogue which Secretary Mattis and I attended on the weekend and also here today, countering the threat of violent

extremism is very much at the front of our minds. The attacks that have occurred in recent days and weeks around the world are further reminders – as if that were needed – of the new reality in which we live. And during today's AUSMIN meeting, we strengthened our resolve to defeat those who wish us harm.

We are both committed to defeating Daesh in Iraq and in Syria and to preventing its spread around the world, including in the Indo-Pacific region. For us, that means addressing the prospects of returning foreign fighters, if that happens, and also in the Australian context, our whole-of-government actions to deal with broader counterterrorism issues.

As Secretary Tillerson has said, we reaffirmed our condemnation of North Korea's ongoing provocations, which pose a grave threat to both global and regional security. We are committed to working very closely together with – together and with our regional partners, to impose greater costs on the regime for that destabilizing behavior.

This AUSMIN meeting has been a great opportunity to build upon our already close working relationship with the new U.S. administration. We have met in other international locations, in the United States, and I really want to thank both Secretary Mattis and Secretary Tillerson for traveling to Sydney to join us here today, and we look forward to continuing productive discussions.

SECRETARY MATTIS: Well, thank you. Ladies and gentlemen, as you've already heard, we stand here before you representing the strongest possible military alliance. This is one that has stood together through thick and thin and through generations, and I would just say that Australia has also proven to be a friend that tells us what we need to hear, not necessarily what we want to hear. And it was heartening today to find that we again share an appreciation of the security situation both regionally and worldwide.

The danger that we have faced over many, many years has built a sense of respect between our forces. I would remind you that after 9/11, when thousands of innocent people were murdered in America, including Australians, it was the Australians that were first to join us in the desert of Afghanistan in those uncertain days after 9/11, and we remain grateful for Australia's alliance with us. Today, we still stand together in that fight, and certainly, our sympathies, our respects are with the people of London; of Marawi, Philippines; of Kabul, Afghanistan; of Cairo, Egypt – the list goes on – Jakarta. And we stand together. We do not allow ourselves to be intimidated at all. Australia, as always, punching above its weight in defense of our values and freedom, and these are values and freedoms that we intend to pass on to the next generation intact, and we are committed again today to assessing how we're going to work together to do so.

I would add that your 2016 defense white paper, we have reviewed it in Washington and it's a model for other nations coming to grips with today's security challenges, and I am confident that it's a blueprint for keeping the Australian forces at the top of their game.

We believe that our Australian-American partnership is a foundation for

stability and peace not only in this region, but more broadly, and we are going to ensure between our forces that our diplomats' voices are always backed up by skillful, by ethical, and by fierce force of arms.

Thank you very much, and we look forward to your questions.

MODERATOR: David Wroe.

QUESTION: Thanks, everyone. David Wroe from the *The Age* and *Sydney Morning Herald* newspapers. Secretary Mattis, you have flagged a new – a different strategy, a different tactic, I should say, in the fight against ISIS: one of annihilation, which, among other things, is aimed at preventing the escape and return of foreign fighters. I just wonder if you could talk through for us what the practical endpoint of that tactic is. Are we talking about going into these areas and systematically killing people who may pose a future threat? What happens if that involves a greater risk to civilian casualties or some other unforeseen outcome which would complicate your military tactics? We've always been told that you can't bomb an ideology into submission. Are you concerned at all that by focusing on individuals, you might inadvertently strengthen the ideology?

And just for the Australian side, could you tell us please, either Minister Bishop or Payne, what Australia's view of this new tactic is? What does it mean for our involvement, our military involvement in the Middle East? Does it mean we need to change our rules of engagement or are they covered by the current rules?

SECRETARY MATTIS: Well, the – President Trump, when he came into office, wanted an accelerated campaign against the enemy. This is an enemy against all civilization. It's the reason there are 66 nations that have joined the campaign besides the Arab League, the European Union, Interpol, and NATO, and in this campaign where before we were shoving them from one town to another and just falling back, we now take the time to invest now and to make certain that foreign fighters cannot escape for return to Paris, France, to Australia, to wherever they came from, and bring their message of hatred and their skills back to those places and attack innocent people.

But I would also add that in the midst of all this, we have changed not one bit of our rules of engagement. We have relented not one bit in terms of trying to do everything humanly possible to protect the innocent on the battlefield, because the battlefield the way the enemy has chosen to fight is also a humanitarian field from our point of view, and it is indeed ISIS that forces innocent people to stay where they choose to fortify.

So our intent is to do everything possible to keep them alive, to protect them, but at the same time we're going to have to take that caliphate down or the attacks that you've seen going on around the world that you all have reported on will continue. This is not the end state. The end state is where we work together for a reconciliation, for what the diplomats will have to do, but clearly, the enemy has got to be taken out by military means where they are powerful enough to cause these attacks on others, and we can't sit idly by and let them hold it.

I think that answers your question.

FOREIGN MINISTER BISHOP: The Australian Government has made it clear that any Australian citizen that supports in any way terrorist organizations such as ISIS or al-Qaida or any of their franchises is breaking Australian law, and if they seek to travel to conflict zones in the Middle East, in Iraq and Syria, then not only are they breaking Australian laws but putting their own lives at risk as well as adding to the misery and suffering of the people of Iraq and Syria.

We have (inaudible) forces supporting, advising, assisting Iraqi Security Forces and others, and they are essentially fighting against the coalition if they continue to support terrorism. Should they survive and seek to return to Australia, they will be monitored, they will be tracked, and they will be subjected to the Australian laws should they return to Australia. And I'd ask Senator Payne to add to that.

DEFENSE MINISTER PAYNE: Thank you very much, and (inaudible), thank you for the question. We absolutely support the approach that the international coalition led by the United States is taking. Our absolute preference is, as far as possible, to make sure that those who have left their countries to fight in the name of Daesh or ISIS in the Middle East are not able to return to those countries and perpetrate any of their atrocities in those areas.

So as far as possible, if we can ensure that, that is our preference. But we don't – we have to be prepared to deal with the eventuality that – if those returning foreign fighters, if that arises. We would be negligent if we did not turn our attention to that, as the foreign minister has said, under Australian law, and the preparations that we have made during recent months and in fact the last year. We will use all the force of Australian law to deal with those people.

Importantly, however, one of the things that we have also discussed today is the challenge that is faced as to other countries in our region – for Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, for the Philippines, and so on. And in the context of that discussion, we have indicated to our counterparts both individually and over the weekend at Shangri-La that we will support them in their efforts to address the prospect of returning fighters as well. They are – we're – you have the world's most populous Muslim nation to our north. President Widodo and his cabinet have exemplified a sensible, moderate approach to Islamic terrorism in our neighborhood. Similarly Malaysia; similarly the Muslim communities of a number of our other – of those other countries in our region. We need to be able to engage with them in a constructive way and make sure that where possible, we insist and provide tools that enable them to challenge this threat too.

MODERATOR: Gardiner Harris, *New York Times*.

QUESTION: Gardiner Harris from *The New York Times*. Secretary Tillerson, the Australians have spent years of diplomatic effort negotiating pacts to address their deep concerns over trade and climate, but the Trump administration tossed those pacts aside. Now, after rejecting their

priorities and work, you're here asking Australians to make specific and concrete sacrifices for your priorities in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, and North Korea. What specific promises have you brought on trade and climate to ensure that Australians do not interpret "America first" to mean America the selfish, America the boorish, or America the go-it-alone?

And for the Australians, Mr. Trump yelled at Prime Minister Turnbull in their first conversation. He pushed aside the Montenegrin prime minister at a NATO meeting. He launched a Twitter attack on Germany, one of the U.S.'s closest allies. He just insulted the mayor of London after a terror attack on that city. Do these tactics give you pause in your efforts to improve relations with the U.S., or do the President's words and behavior not matter in international relations?

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Are you sure you don't have more? (Laughter.)

QUESTION: No.

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Okay. The fact that the Trump administration has examined agreements that were entered into by the prior administration but never taken to the American people or taken to our Congress to get an assessment of their view of those agreements does not define the trading relationships between the United States and Australia nor other relationships on issues that are of mutual importance: climate change, certainly national security (inaudible) for us today. We have a very strong trading relationship with Australia today. I think if you look at the total of foreign direct investment by the United States in Australia, as well as our actual trade, we are the largest trading partner by those two measures with Australia. My expectation is that's not going to change, and we look forward to continue strengthening those relationships on trade with Australia, already a very important trading partner.

I think the President's decision to exit the climate accord – again, it was his judgment that that agreement did not serve the American people well and it did not serve their future economic interest. I have – but I think the President indicating his desire to reexamine, enter into discussions with others, perhaps a new construct of an agreement indicates his recognition that the issue is still important and that he wants to stay engaged on the issue. He's not walking away from it, he's simply walking away from what he felt was an agreement that did not serve the American people well.

So again, I think in our relationship with Australia we will continue to have shared interests in addressing these daunting challenges that face us all, and so that, I think, is how we see the relationship going forward, and there are so many other areas of such strong mutual interest and cooperation that there's no doubt that we will continue to address the two issues that you raised in a very cooperative way.

FORIGN MINISTER BISHOP: I should point out that Australia has its own views on our priorities and our interests. As it happens, they align so often with those of the United States. We have a similar worldview. We have shared values, shared interests. But Australia always takes our own national

interest into account when we, for example, respond to the terror threat that is so (inaudible) in Syria. We take our own interests into account when we're dealing with regional threats and risks, like the behavior of North Korea. We see North Korea as a threat to our region as much as we see it as a threat globally. And we certainly are absolutely aligned with the United States in supporting the rules-based order, and we make up our own mind about when Australia should act, when Australia should be involved in defense and security operations. As it happens, the United States and Australia share similar views.

In relation to Twitter, I understand that it has a maximum of 140 characters. So we deal with the President, with his cabinet, and with the U.S. administration on what they do, what they achieve, what their strategies are, and how we can work together in close and deep cooperation to uphold that international rules-based order and to bring peace, stability, and prosperity to our part of the world as the United States has guaranteed and assured for the last 70 years.

In relation to the Paris Agreement, Australia took a decision in August of 2015 that we would put forward targets in accordance with the Paris Agreement that were environmentally and economically sound for Australia, and we will continue to, I believe, meet our targets under the Paris Agreement. And again, it is a decision taken by our cabinet in the interests of our economy and our citizens. And I believe that through meeting our targets – environmentally and economically sustainable measures – we will be on the path to ensuring affordable, reliable, low-emissions energy for the Australian people. But we certainly appreciate the United States' innovation and ingenuity that allows us to embrace the technologies and the innovative approaches the United States brings to the area of environmental and energy policy.

MODERATOR: Greg Jennett, please.

QUESTION: Greg Jennett from the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. I direct this primarily at the visiting secretaries, and it's somewhat broader than Gardiner's question. Can you explain or reconcile to Australian audiences an apparent contradiction in the administration? Your business here today is to build alliances and relationships, and at least there is an impression abroad of isolationism expressed, some would argue, through the climate change decision or even through statements made by the executive at the NATO gathering.

So Secretary Tillerson, do you acknowledge that there are in this region pockets of doubt about U.S. consistency, and what do you do to address them?

And Secretary Mattis, you do seem to have convinced the Australian prime minister at least on matters relating to the South China Sea. He made comments in Singapore about finding new sources of leadership to help the United States. So the question is what forms of leadership relating to the South China Sea do you seek from Australia?

SECRETARY TILLERSON: First, let me respond in terms of those concerns. That's

why we're here. That's why we traveled to the region and that's why we engage with our counterparts. I've had two direct engagements already with members of ASEAN in Washington, D.C. We're going to be very active in the East Asia Conference, also in APEC. The President's already indicated he intends to participate.

So in terms of addressing those concerns, this is how we address it, is to travel to the region and to meet with our counterparts and to talk about all the issues that are important to them and hear from them the concerns they may have about where the administration is positioned relative to whether it be security issues or economic and trade issues. And we have had very good dialogue in all of those contacts.

So I think – I hope – the fact that we are here demonstrates that that is certainly not this administration's view or intention to somehow put an arm – put at arm's length those important allies and partners in the world.

SECRETARY MATTIS: As far as your question to what form of leadership are we looking for from Australia, I would put it in traditional Australian terms. It's adherence to international law. It's the normal leadership by example that Australia has demonstrated over – really since its founding as a modern nation. It's the sort of thing where people work together to solve problems, where we sit down and define problems and then look at what are the rules of the road, and then we abide by them. It's a matter of finding common cause and then finding a way to address everyone's interests in the most effective manner possible. And Australia has proven its ability to do this and be a beacon of hope for people and the world; I would add, to be a contributor to security in the region, to stability in the region, from the Solomon Islands effort a few years ago to all the other humanitarian operations that they've been engaged in. It's mostly a matter of leadership by example, would be the short answer to your question.

MODERATOR: Bob Burns with the last question, please.

QUESTION: Thank you. Bob Burns, Associated Press. A question for Secretaries Tillerson and Mattis, something that's – I'm told that today while you were here for these discussions, which is that the UAE, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt have announced they are cutting diplomatic ties with Qatar, and I wonder if you could explain what you believe are the implications of this for the fight against Islamic extremism and also for solidarity in the coalition against Iran?

And if I could also ask you about something that's related to the Central Command region, to all four of you, which is Afghanistan, which you all mentioned. Secretary Tillerson, as the administration reviews its options for how to turn things around in Afghanistan, what is your view on the wisdom of committing more U.S. troops and other resources to a conflict that has been a stalemate for years? And I'd like to ask the same question of Secretary Mattis.

And for your Australian counterparts, you've said that you're willing to contribute more troops in Afghanistan. I think you got quoted as saying

perhaps 30, and I'm wondering whether you would consider going beyond that in other ways and (inaudible) in Afghanistan?

Thank you.

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Well, let me just make a brief comment on the late breaking news that you just referred to in terms of diplomatic relations between GCC countries and Qatar. I think, as I understand it from what I've read since the actions were taken, I think what we're witnessing is a growing list of some irritants in the region that have been there for some time, and obviously they have now bubbled up to a level that countries decided they needed to take action in an effort to have those differences addressed. We certainly would encourage the parties to sit down together and address these differences, and we – if there's any role that we can play in terms of helping them address those, we think it is important that the GCC remain unified. I do not expect that this will have any significant impact, if any impact at all, on the unified – the unified fight against terrorism in the region or globally. All of those parties you mentioned have been quite, quite unified in the fight against terrorism and the fight against Daesh and ISIS, and have expressed that most recently in the summit in Riyadh.

As to the Afghanistan policy which is still under development and review, so there is no conclusion and I will leave it to Secretary Mattis to answer more directly what the military plans are for this year to stabilize Afghanistan. I think clearly, though, what we do understand is we can never allow Afghanistan to become a platform for terrorism to operate from. And so our commitment to Afghanistan is to ensure that it never becomes a safe haven for terrorists to launch attacks against the civilized world or against any other part of the world or any of their neighbors. And so this is really a question of what is the end state and how do we reach that end state, and that's part of the policy review that is still under development so I don't want to go further than I would say the thinking currently in the administration is, but other than to say we are committed to ensuring Afghanistan does not become that platform from which terrorist activities can be launched. And let me turn to Secretary Mattis to respond.

QUESTION: But I was asking in your view –

SECRETARY MATTIS: In regards to the implications for the counter-ISIS fight, I am positive there will be no implications coming out of this dramatic situation at all, and I say that based on the commitment that each of these nations that you just referred to have made to this fight. As far as the situation vis-a-vis Iran, I believe Iran's actions speak louder than anyone's words, and they are going to incite the international community in that region to try to block them in the various destabilizing efforts that they are undertaking right now, from Syria, where Assad remains in power today because of Iran's actions, to Yemen, where they have been contributing in an unhelpful way to a war that is marooning millions of people and leaving them vulnerable to starvation and health problems and violence. So I think it's Iran's actions that will speak most loudly, and the diplomatic situation, it will probably take some time – I don't know how long – but it will be resolved.

As far as Afghanistan goes, as Secretary Tillerson said, the policy is under review, but at the same time we're up against an enemy that knows that they cannot win at the ballot box, and you think – we have to sometimes remind ourselves of that reality. That's why they use bombs, because ballots would ensure they never had a role to play, and based upon that foundation, that they cannot win the support, the affection, the respect of the Afghan people. We will stand by them. They've had a long, hard fight, and Australia has been in this one from the very beginning, and the fight goes on. But the bottom line is we're not going to surrender civilization to people who cannot win at the ballot box.

QUESTION: Thank you.

DEFENSE MINISTER PAYNE: Thank you. Thank you very much for that. I think Jim put that particularly well, if I might say, at the end there. Australia does currently have 270 personnel both in (inaudible) and the NATO mission, and Australia is particularly a (inaudible) of the Australian – Afghan national officer academy, and that is from our perspective the continuing – continuation of our longest contribution to any military campaign in Australia's history. So we regard it as a very significant one, and I want to acknowledge and pay tribute to the Australian men and women of the ADF who are in Afghanistan now dealing with – no matter what their task is – what is a very complex security environment, as we have seen evidenced again in the last few days. They continue a contribution which – of which we are very proud.

In terms of the enhancement of that contribution of 30 personnel, as you have indicated, that is in general accord with the nature of the request that we received from NATO, which was indeed supported by the United States, and we are very comfortable with that. As a nation, we make the second largest non-NATO contribution to the people of Afghanistan, and we are in the top 10 financial contributors to Afghanistan through the (inaudible).

So these are a strong indication of Australia's preparedness to be engaged in what is an ongoing international fight against violent extremists and against terrorists. I agree completely with Jim: they can't win a ballot, so they use weapons to try and fight their way out. That's not something we are ever prepared to see take hold in Afghanistan again. As Secretary Tillerson also says, it must never be allowed to be a platform for terrorism as it was in the past, and we will continue to make that contribution. It's why we made the announcement that we made last week.

As the United States and the NATO support mission develop their approach, we will engage in those discussions, as we always do, and we will play our – we will make our own views known, play our part, and any further decisions are a matter for time – consideration at that time.

QUESTION: Can I follow up my question to Secretary Tillerson? I actually asked you what your view was on the wisdom of adding more U.S. troops and resources to Afghanistan. I'm aware of the fact that the policies are under review, but what is your view on that?

SECRETARY TILLERSON: I would reserve my answer until the policy review is completed. It needs to be thought of in that context.

MODERATOR: Thank you, ladies and gentlemen.

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