

Press Releases: U.S.-India Maritime Security Dialogue

Media Note
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
May 11, 2017

The second round of the U.S.-India Maritime Security Dialogue (MSD) was held May 9-10, 2017 at the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island. The MSD is a unique bilateral forum that brings together civilian and military representatives from both governments.

The U.S. delegation was led jointly by Mr. David Helvey, Performing the Duties of Assistant Secretary of Defense for Asian and Pacific Security Affairs and Mr. Sean Stein, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs. The United States was represented by officials from the Department of State, the Department of Defense, the U.S. Navy, and the U.S. Coast Guard. The Indian delegation was led jointly by Dr. Pankaj Sharma, Joint Secretary for Disarmament and International Security Affairs at the Ministry of External Affairs; Mr. Manu Mahawar, Joint Secretary for the Americas at the Ministry of External Affairs; and Ms. Devika Raghuvansh, Joint Secretary for the Navy at the Ministry of Defence.

During the Dialogue, the two sides exchanged views on maritime developments in the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean region and considered steps to further strengthen bilateral maritime security cooperation.

The next round of the MSD will be held in India on mutually convenient dates.

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Press Releases: Secretary Tillerson's Meeting With Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov

Readout
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
May 10, 2017

The below is attributable to Department Spokesperson Heather Nauert:

Secretary Tillerson met with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov today in Washington for more than an hour to discuss a range of issues including Ukraine, Syria, and bilateral concerns.

The Secretary and Foreign Minister discussed the importance of defeating ISIS, de-escalating the violence in Syria, and ensuring that humanitarian assistance reaches hundreds of thousands of civilians throughout the country. Additionally, the Secretary and Foreign Minister restated support for the UN-led political process in Geneva, which is central to international efforts to bring about an enduring resolution to the conflict.

On Ukraine, Secretary Tillerson stressed the need for progress toward full implementation of the Minsk agreements. Sanctions on Russia will remain in place until Moscow reverses the actions that triggered them.

The United States and Russia agreed to continue discussions to resolve other issues of bilateral concern, including strategic stability.

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Press Releases: Statement on the President's Intent to Nominate Mark Green to Lead the U.S. Agency for International Development

Press Statement
Rex W. Tillerson

Secretary of State

Washington, DC
May 10, 2017

I welcome President Trump's announcement of his intention to nominate Mark Andrew Green as the new Administrator for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

Mark brings vast experience to this position, having served as a U.S. Ambassador to Tanzania, a Member of the House of Representatives from Wisconsin, and a board member of the Millennium Challenge Corporation. He currently serves as the president of the International Republican Institute, an organization dedicated to building strong and lasting democracies across the globe. Mark will help us prioritize where America's future development investments will be spent so that we can ensure every tax dollar advances our country's security and prosperity.

USAID plays a vital role in protecting U.S. national security by fostering stability, resolving conflict, responding to humanitarian crises, and ending infectious diseases. He will serve as an outstanding leader for the men and women of USAID, and will work to build a more safe and prosperous global community.

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Press Releases: Rewards for Justice – Reward Offer for Information on al- Nusrah Front Leader Muhammad al- Jawlani

Media Note
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
May 10, 2017

The U.S. Department of State's Rewards for Justice Program is offering a reward of up to \$10 million for information leading to the identification or location of Muhammad al-Jawlani, leader of the al-Nusrah Front (ANF) terrorist group.

This is the first Rewards for Justice reward offer for a leader of al-Nusrah Front, the Syrian branch of al-Qaida.

In April 2013, al-Jawlani pledged allegiance to al-Qaida. and its leader Ayman al-Zawahiri after he had a public falling out with ISIS. In July 2016, in a video posted online, al-Jawlani praised al-Qaida. and al-Zawahiri and claimed the ANF was changing its name to Jabhat Fath Al Sham ("Conquest of the Levant Front").

In May 2013, the U.S. Department of State, under the authority of Executive Order (E.O.) 13224, named al-Jawlani a Specially Designated Global Terrorist, blocking all his property and interests in property subject to U.S. jurisdiction and prohibiting U.S. persons from dealing with him. On July 24, 2013, the UN Security Council ISIL (Da'esh) and al-Qaida. Sanctions Committee placed al-Jawlani on its list of sanctioned terrorists, making him subject to an international asset freeze, travel ban, and arms embargo.

Under al-Jawlani's leadership, ANF has carried out multiple terrorist attacks throughout Syria, often targeting civilians. In April 2015, ANF reportedly kidnapped, and later released, approximately 300 Kurdish civilians from a checkpoint in Syria. In June 2015, ANF claimed responsibility for the massacre of 20 residents in the Druze village Qalb Lawzeh in Idlib province, Syria.

In January 2017, ANF merged with several other hardline opposition groups to form Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS). ANF remains al-Qaida. 's affiliate in Syria. Jawlani is not the leader of HTS, but remains the leader of ANF, which is at the core of HTS.

ANF has been designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) under the Immigration and Nationality Act and a Specially Designated Global Terrorist entity under E.O. 13224. The UN Security Council ISIL (Da'esh) and al-Qaida. Sanctions Committee has also added ANF to its sanctions list.

More information about al-Jawlani is located at www.rewardsforjustice.net. We encourage anyone with information about al-Jawlani to contact the Rewards for Justice office via e-mail on the website, (info@rewardsforjustice.net), by phone (1-800-877-3927 in North America), or by mail (Rewards for Justice, Washington, D.C., 20520-0303, USA). All information will be kept strictly confidential.

The Rewards for Justice Program is administered by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Diplomatic Security. Since its inception in 1984, the program has paid in excess of \$125 million to more than 80 people who provided actionable information that helped bring terrorists to justice or prevented acts of international terrorism worldwide. Follow us on Twitter: @Rewards4Justice.

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[Press Releases: Briefing on Nigeria](#)

Special Briefing
Nathan Holt

Deputy Director, Office of West African Affairs, Bureau of African Affairs

Via Teleconference
Washington, DC
May 9, 2017

MS NAUERT: Thank you so much. Well, good afternoon, everyone, and thanks for joining us today for the call on Nigeria. We're joined by Nathan Holt, the deputy director of the Office of West African Affairs in the Bureau of African Affairs. Thank you, sir, for joining us.

As a reminder, today's call is on the record and it will be embargoed until the conclusion of the call. And with that, I'll turn it over to our speaker, Deputy Assistant Secretary Murphy.

MR HOLT: Thank you.

MS NAUERT: Excuse me, Holt. (Laughter.) Pardon me.

MR HOLT: Murphy is a fine name. Thank you very much, Heather, and it's a pleasure to be here. The title of our discussion is Nigeria, a critical U.S. partner. Nigeria is indeed a critical U.S. partner. Nigeria matters to us because it's Africa's most populous country, and depending on the price of oil, it's either the biggest or the second biggest economy on the continent. With a current population of 182 million, Nigeria is projected to grow to over 400 million over the next few decades, which will leave it by the middle of this century as the fourth-largest country in the world. About half the population is Muslim. Nigeria has influence, as many of you know, not only as an economic power, as a military power. It's got a vibrant emerging, entrepreneurial class which is the future of that country's economy. It has also got a vibrant film and music industry which has influence well beyond its borders. And I'd like to point out it has traditions of democracy and free press and religious tolerance, all of which contribute to its resilience and its strength.

In 2015, Nigeria had a very important election. It elected Muhammadu Buhari as president. This represented the first time in Nigerian history that there was a peaceful, democratic transfer of power from one party to an opposition party. It was a milestone not only for Nigeria, but really for Africa as a whole. President Buhari's electoral platform was that he wanted to fight insecurity, particularly the depredations of Boko Haram and other forces in the northeast. He wanted to grow the Nigerian economy, create jobs for its growing population, and he wanted to fight corruption.

Well, the nice thing about that agenda is that it meshes very well with our own. That is – those are areas of focus that very much are consistent with U.S. interests in Nigeria. We too want to partner with Nigeria and its neighbors to fight terrorism. We too support private-sector-led economic growth. And we are very much in favor of President Buhari's campaign against corruption. With that as kind of an overview, I'd like to open it up to questions.

MS NAUERT: Okay, let's take the first question, please.

OPERATOR: And once again, to ask a question, please press * then 1 on your touchtone phone at this time. The question and answer session is open. Once again, to ask a question, please press * then 1 at this time.

MR HOLT: As we wait – as we wait for further questions, a couple of additional points to make to sort of frame the conversation and set a little bit of the context. Nigeria is a very important place for us and it faces enormous obstacles, enormous challenges moving forward. I don't want to give the impression that any of this is going to be easy. In fact, one of our ways of approaching this country is to point at that perhaps nowhere else on the continent, and maybe few places on the planet, is the gap between the upside potential and the downside risk greater. The future of Nigeria matters not just for Nigeria, but very much for its neighbors and I would argue for this planet. The good news is that on issue after issue, we've gone from a place where we were often not on the same page with Nigeria to a place where we see things very much in the same terms.

Some folks may be aware of the humanitarian situation in northeastern Nigeria and its neighboring countries in the Lake Chad Basin. We are a leading donor of humanitarian assistance there, as the countries involved struggle to deal with a food crisis, which is itself a consequence of the Boko Haram and ISIS West Africa insurgency. Many of you will have also followed the news of the release of the Chibok girls over the weekend. Obviously, that was a heartwarming and positive development for the young women involved and for their families. We'd like to point out that they're among thousands of victims of Boko Haram and its offshoot, ISIS West Africa.

We are engaged with Nigeria and its neighbors not only to provide humanitarian relief to the victims of this insurgency, but to help them as security partners and as intelligence partners to address the security dimensions of this problem and to get at some of the drivers of insecurity. Because at the end of the day, I think we and our partners all recognize there's no purely military solution. The end of the day, the hopes and aspirations of the people need to met; education and water and basic governance needs to be provided in areas where it has not been provided before. And it's a joint effort. There are no easy solutions, but we're in this for the long haul.

That's a little bit of additional context. I'd like to point out that United States has worked closely with Nigeria. We provide a range of assistance to Nigerian authorities in their efforts to combat Boko Haram and ISIS West Africa. That includes intelligence sharing, training, advice on strategic communications, and various services to support victims of Boko Haram. And as I said, we've provided close to \$500 million in humanitarian assistance over the last two years to those affected by the conflict in northeastern Nigeria and its neighbors – neighboring countries of Cameroon, Niger, and Chad.

Again, that's an overview of where we are in a very important bilateral relationship for us. I'd like to point out as well that we've worked together closely in the United Nations. We've worked together on issues of arms proliferation, nuclear questions. So Nigeria has a voice in Africa that is quite influential. And I've worked on Africa for most of my professional

career, and it's very good to be in a good place with this group.

One of the critical consequences of the Boko Haram and ISIS West Africa insurgency, which has been going on since 2009, is that it has produced terrible, terrible consequences for the population. As the militaries have begun to coordinate their activities more effectively, they and other not just military authorities but civilian authorities have gained access to areas previously under the control of Boko Haram. And as that happens, we have all come to understand more clearly the true dimensions of the humanitarian crisis.

So the United Nations has pointed out that there are more people facing famine-like conditions in northeastern Nigeria and in neighboring regions. We're working as hard as we can and as fast as we can to deliver food assistance and other support to those people. I've quoted the numbers on our own humanitarian assistance a couple of times. I think I would add that just on April 28th the United States announced an additional \$30 million to support the people of northeast Nigeria through contributions to the World Food Program. The World Food Program, I would add, has expanded the numbers of people it is feeding by tenfold over the last two to three months. So the numbers have gone from roughly 200,000 to close to 2 million. The World Food Program needs additional assistance; we're working with other donors and partners to get that assistance to them. It's a collective effort, and none of it's going to get fixed until the insurgency is defeated and the specter of terrorist violence is eliminated from that area.

I believe there are people online for questions, and I'm happy to answer.

MS NAUERT: And with that – thank you, sir. With that, we'll take our first question, please.

OPERATOR: Then we go to Matthew Lee with the Associated Press. Please, go ahead.

QUESTION: Yeah, hi. Thanks for this. I realize you probably won't be able to give an exact answer on this, but with all the discussions about cuts coming to foreign aid, cuts coming to U.S. assistance, U.S. payments to UN programs. Are you able to commit to the continued – continued robust U.S. assistance to Nigeria and other countries in West Africa?

MR HOLT: We're, again, very – we are very pleased that we are the lead humanitarian donor in the Lake Chad Basin region. We've got a vigorous bilateral development assistance program that's dominated by health assistance, including the PEPFAR program, which has really helped turn back the tide of HIV/AIDS not just in Nigeria but across the African continent.

You're absolutely right, Matt; I'm not the person who can answer your questions about the future of the U.S. Government budget. We follow that process with great interest. But for now, the focus not only here at State but in partner agencies is to deliver the assistance that we do have available smartly and effectively so that it achieves the results that we intend.

QUESTION: Thank you.

MS NAUERT: Next question, please.

OPERATOR: And ladies and gentlemen, if you wish to ask a question, please press * then 1 at this time.

There appear to be no further questions at this time.

MS NAUERT: Okay. Thank you, everyone, for joining us today, and Nathan Holt, the deputy director of the Office of West African Affairs in the Bureau of African Affairs. Sir, thank you for joining us.

MR HOLT: Thank you, ma'am.

MS NAUERT: Thank you, everyone.

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