

Press Releases: Remarks en Route to Paris, France

Remarks

Rex W. Tillerson

Secretary of State

En Route to Paris, France

January 22, 2018

QUESTION: Great. So you want to talk about your trip to Paris?

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Yeah, I thought just a little bit of background on why we're going to Paris. We're going obviously for this meeting that's being hosted by the French on the chemical weapons accord – what can we do to better prohibit the use of chemical weapons, hold people accountable for the use of chemical weapons. And so we'll have an exchange of views. Obviously, we know chemical weapons are being used in Syria. We've seen it. We know they've been used by the North Koreans. Exchange of information and mechanisms we'd have to bring this to a stop. So that's what we'll be spending the session tomorrow on.

QUESTION: Is there – was there some reports of chemical weapons use in Afrin?

SECRETARY TILLERSON: I've heard of none at this point.

QUESTION: Okay. I saw something crossing the wire right before we took off, so I maybe misread it.

SECRETARY TILLERSON: If it has, it hasn't caught up with me yet anyway. But no, I'm not aware of any.

QUESTION: And do you have a sense of what – you talked about the – you called for restraint on both sides. It seems like we're kind of in a proxy war now where you have two NATO allies kind of facing off in Syria, and it seems like a sort of dangerous situation.

SECRETARY TILLERSON: No, I don't think you're going to find two NATO allies facing off at all. This is – as I said in the press avail there in London, Turkey has legitimate concerns about terrorists crossing the border into Turkey and carrying out attacks, and we – we appreciate their right to defend themselves. But this is a tough situation where there's a lot of civilians mixed in, so we've asked them to just try to be precise, try to limit your

operation, try to show some restraint, let us see if we can work with you to create the kind of security zone you might need. So we're in discussions with the Turks and some of the forces on the ground as well as to how we could bring this – stabilize this situation and meet Turkey's legitimate concerns for their security.

QUESTION: You mentioned working groups on Iran, so who – is that E3 plus U.S.? And they're starting to meet, or they've met so far?

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Yes. No, it's E3 plus the U.S., and we've had informal talks with the E3 members for quite some – and we've had informal talks with the EU going all the way back to the UN General Assembly. I hosted a working dinner of the E3 plus the EU. So this is just a continuation of the exchange of views on how we can address these flaws in the nuclear agreement, what kind of mechanisms could we use, but also how can we cooperate more on countering Iran's activities that are not related to the nuclear program, our concerns about their arms exports to Yemen and elsewhere. So we're formalizing – I think maybe what we're doing is we're formalizing these groups to put a little bit more of structure around our working together to see what we can do together.

QUESTION: Is there like a timetable on that? I mean, is May a – is it –

SECRETARY TILLERSON: No, I mean, obviously we – we're in a bit – the U.S. is under a bit of a timetable to deliver on what the President is looking for, but we don't – we can't set timetables for others. I mean, they're sovereign governments so –

QUESTION: The President laid out that – four concerns: sunsets –

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

QUESTION: – ballistic missiles, malign activity – what was the fourth one – but is it like one working group per concern? Is it – like how are you orienting these conversations?

SECRETARY TILLERSON: No, we're working – it's all being worked as – in a package because that's the way we'll have to deal with it ultimately.

QUESTION: And at what level is this happening? (Inaudible.)

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Well, it's being led from the State Department.

QUESTION: Okay. Then – so like when you say they're meeting in a week, like someone from State will travel to Vienna or something?

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Yes. Yeah, we have a team. We have a team traveling, actually. They're coming to Europe.

QUESTION: Okay.

SECRETARY TILLERSON: A team that will meet with counterparts. So we'll see what we can get done.

I think they're going to make us all sit down.

QUESTION: All right. Yeah.

QUESTION: Thank you, sir.

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[Press Releases: Remarks With United Kingdom Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson at a Press Availability](#)

Remarks

Rex W. Tillerson

Secretary of State

London, United Kingdom

January 22, 2018

FOREIGN SECRETARY JOHNSON: Hi. Good afternoon, everybody. Thank you very much for coming, and it's a great pleasure, once again, to welcome Rex as part of a pretty intense rhythm of contacts and discussions that we have nowadays between the U.S. and the U.K. Last week I was in Vancouver, where Rex was building up a pretty big international consensus about how to deal with the North Korean nuclear ambitions.

Today, we've been having – we've really been having discussions about Syria and Iran. We'll have lots more to talk about in just a few moments. Tomorrow, in principle at least, we are meeting again in Paris to talk about chemical weapons and Syria and other matters.

So great to see you, Rex. And never forget it, it goes without saying it's

always worth saying that the relationship between the U.S. and the U.K. is absolutely fundamental to diplomacy, but also to our economy. And as you know, there are a million people who go to work in the United States every day who are employed by British companies, as there are 1.2 million who go to work every day in this country who are employed by American companies. There is no other economic relationship like it and we're very glad to welcome you here today, Rex. Secretary.

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Thank you, Boris. And first, let me thank Boris for making the trip all the way to Vancouver. It was a really important and I think it achieved many of our objectives, and in many ways exceeded what I had hoped for out of the discussions with our counterparts around the world, the common view around the threat that North Korea poses to the entire world, and a common resolve, just how we want to respond to that threat.

We also view this as the special relationship that it has been and will be, it is an enduring relationship. And I was commenting earlier that we spend a lot of time talking about the world's problems, whether it's North Korea, Syria, or Yemen, and sometimes we forget about the importance of our own relationship. And I think the foreign secretary just touched on many elements of it, both from a security standpoint, but also from an economic standpoint. And we need to pay attention to that relationship and the importance of this relationship on a bilateral basis as well while we work together in common cause to address some of these serious conflicts around the world that confront both of our nations.

But we treasure this relationship, and I treasure Boris's relationship with me personally, and the work that we do together on these many issues. And I'm delighted to be here again. Thank you, Boris.

FOREIGN SECRETARY JOHNSON: Thanks, Rex. Good, I think we're going to take a couple questions, folks. (Inaudible.)

QUESTION: Secretary Tillerson, could I ask you about the fast-moving situation on the ground in Afrin, in northern Syria? Whilst you've been in discussions with the foreign secretary, some of the Syrian Kurdish groups have appealed for help. There are reports now that Turkish troops and allies have moved beyond Afrin, east of that town in military operations. What are you going to do to help these groups if the U.S. has armed and helped train in the fight against the so-called Islamic State? Are you going to help them?

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Well, as you know, the U.S. is in Syria to defeat ISIS, and we've done that with a coalition of partners, and the Syrian Democratic Forces in particular, which are comprised of Kurdish and Arab, but also elements of Christian forces. It is truly a multiethnic group of fighters who are defending their home territory. And so we are concerned about the Turkish incident in northern Syria.

Having said that, in a statement as of yesterday, we recognize and fully appreciate Turkey's legitimate right to protect its own citizens from terrorist elements that may be launching attacks against Turkish citizens and Turkish soil from Syria. We're engaged with Turkey, and we are engaged also

with the leadership of our coalition, and are asking that both sides show restraint, please minimize the impact on civilian casualties, which – who've already suffered too many civilian casualties, and see what we can do to work together to address Turkey's legitimate security concerns in a way that's satisfactory to Turkey, and get back to the process of defeating ISIS, securing a peaceful, stable Syria, and working towards a unified Syria through the Geneva peace process that all of us are committed to.

QUESTION: Thank you. May I ask one final question?

FOREIGN SECRETARY JOHNSON: And just to add to that, obviously, that this is something where – it's a very broken current situation. And we understand that the Kurds have clearly been instrumental in taking the fight to Daesh, and everybody appreciates that and understands it. On the other hand, Turkey does have a legitimate interest in protecting its own borders and its own security, as Secretary Tillerson has just said, as Rex just said.

So I think, really, I would underscore what Rex has just said in calling for restraint on both sides, and an absolute minimum of casualties, low incidence of casualties.

MODERATOR: All right. We'll go to Vaughn Hillyard from NBC.

QUESTION: Secretary, what progress has been made on the supplemental agreement to the Iran deal at this point? And were you given any assurances by your counterparts here in the U.K. that they would sign on to such an agreement?

And Foreign Secretary, for you, why not announce support for an additional agreement at this point? Have you engaged with your other European counterparts on such a deal? Is one possible by May?

And if I can add, we –

FOREIGN SECRETARY JOHNSON: On the JCPOA?

QUESTION: Yes, correct. And we've learned the Trump administration intends to announce an accelerated move of its embassy to Jerusalem. Did you express any concern to Secretary Tillerson about naming Jerusalem the capital of Israel?

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Well, with respect to working jointly with, in particular, the E3 members of the JCPOA, we have a working group that's been established. And I think there is a very – I think there's a common view among the E3, certainly, that there are some areas of the JCPOA, or some areas of Iran's behavior, that should be addressed. And most particularly, their ballistic missile programs and our concerns over the expiry of the JCPOA and the provisions around the expiry. So we're engaging in a working group, we've designated individuals that are going to be meeting to talk about what are the principles around how we might approach Iran to address our concerns with the JCPOA, and how might we fix those, the flaws as the – as President Trump has described them, through some type of another side agreement perhaps or a mechanism that would address the concerns that we have. So we're – we will be discussing that through working groups beginning

as early as next week and we'll see what progress we can make.

FOREIGN SECRETARY JOHNSON: Yeah, and just to add to that, a couple of weeks ago, again, Rex was over this side of the Atlantic with the – at a meeting with Sigmar Gabriel in Geneva, my German and French counterparts. And I'd say there was a pretty wide measure of agreement on the European side about the need to look at what Iran is doing on the ballistic missile front and to work out what we can do collectively to constrain that activity and to make a big difference there.

And we think we can do that; we think we can do that together. But as Rex says, it's important we do that in parallel and don't vitiate the fundamentals of the Iran nuclear deal, and we're sure we can do that.

QUESTION: What about Jerusalem?

FOREIGN SECRETARY JOHNSON: Oh, sorry. And on – I think the – the world is really waiting to see with great interest what the United States is going to produce by way of a proposal on the Middle East peace process, and clearly, that decision feeds into that. Let's see where we get to. I think it's that there is – funnily enough, there is a moment of opportunity here. A process that has been stalled for years, if not decades, could see some progress. And everybody is very interested to see what the United States comes up with. And clearly, Jerusalem now having been recognized by the United States as the capital of Israel, one would expect some sort of symmetrical movement in the other direction to get things moving. So that's what we're interested in.

QUESTION: Does – does the U.S. decision –

QUESTION: Prime Minister –

QUESTION: Does the U.S. decision hurt that process?

FOREIGN SECRETARY JOHNSON: Well, I think, as I said, it – it's possible that it could help to push things along if there is symmetrical movement in the other direction, as I said.

MODERATOR: Thank you very much. That's all we have time for.

FOREIGN SECRETARY JOHNSON: (Inaudible), last one.

QUESTION: Just one more. Do you support more funds for NHS? Do you want to see more funds for the NHS? And if so, are you happy to see them got from the savings in the defense budget?

FOREIGN SECRETARY JOHNSON: The best way to fund our National Health Service, as I'm sure Rex will agree, is to have a strong economy (inaudible). Thank you.

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Press Releases: Attack at Kabul Intercontinental Hotel

Remarks

Rex W. Tillerson

Secretary of State

Washington, DC

January 21, 2018

The United States strongly condemns yesterday's attack at the Intercontinental Hotel in Kabul. We mourn all those who lost their lives in the attack, whether Afghans or citizens of other countries. We offer our deepest condolences to the families and friends of those who were killed and wish for the speedy recovery of those wounded. The United States applauds the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces for their bravery in responding to the attack. We are in contact with Afghan authorities regarding their investigation of the incident. We have seen the Taliban's claim of responsibility and condemn terrorist groups for their violent campaign against Afghan and foreign personnel working to improve Afghanistan.

The United States stands with the government and people of Afghanistan. We remain firmly committed to supporting Afghan efforts to achieve peace, security, and prosperity for their country. Violence like what we witnessed yesterday has no place in Afghanistan, or anywhere else in the world.

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Press Releases: The Situation in Northwest Syria

Press Statement
Heather Nauert

Department Spokesperson

Washington, DC
January 21, 2018

As expressed by Secretary Tillerson in calls to his Turkish and Russian counterparts yesterday, the United States is very concerned about the situation in northwest Syria, especially the plight of innocent civilians who are now faced with an escalation in fighting. We continue to be supportive of addressing the legitimate security concerns of Turkey as a NATO Ally and critical partner in the effort to defeat ISIS. However, we urge Turkey to exercise restraint and ensure that its military operations remain limited in scope and duration and scrupulous to avoid civilian casualties. We call on all parties to remain focused on the central goal of defeating ISIS. Now is the time for great nations to work together to secure a peaceful stability for the people of Syria.

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Press Releases: U.S. - Canada High-Level

Policy Review Group Meets in Washington, D.C.

Media Note
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
January 19, 2018

Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Thomas Shannon and Canadian Assistant Deputy Minister for International Security and Political Affairs Mark Gwozdecky co-chaired the eleventh U.S.-Canada High-Level Policy Review Group on January 19, in Washington, D.C. The Review Group, which last met in Ottawa on June 1, 2017, discussed a broad range of bilateral, regional, and global issues on which the United States and Canada cooperate.

The United States welcomes the opportunity to further enhance cooperation and collaboration through the High-Level Policy Review Group. Such meetings advance the United States' and Canada's common objectives around the world. The United States looks forward to further strengthening the relationship between the United States and Canada through global partnership.

For further information, please email WHAPress@state.gov.

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