

# Press Releases: Secretary Tillerson Participation in ISG on Lebanon

Press Statement  
Heather Nauert

Department Spokesperson

Washington, DC  
December 7, 2017

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U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson will participate in the International Support Group (ISG) for Lebanon ministerial on Friday, December 8, 2017 in Paris, France.

The Secretary's participation in the ISG demonstrates the United States' strong support for the sovereignty, stability, and independence of the Republic of Lebanon and of its political institutions. Secretary Tillerson will re-emphasize the United States' continued commitment to the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and our partnership in the fight against terrorism. The Secretary will also encourage the Lebanese government and other nations to move more aggressively in limiting Hizballah's destabilizing activity in the region, which will help make for a stronger, more stable Lebanon.

The Secretary will meet with Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri and other international leaders during the course of the ministerial.

Follow Secretary Tillerson's travel via @StateDept on Twitter and go to the Department's Flickr account for the latest trip photos. Stay connected at <https://blogs.state.gov/engage>, and keep track of all of the Secretary's travels at <https://www.state.gov/secretary/2017travel/index.htm>.

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# Press Releases: Briefing With Acting Assistant Secretary David M. Satterfield

Special Briefing  
David M. Satterfield

Acting Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs

Press Briefing Room  
Washington, DC  
December 7, 2017

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**MS NAUERT:** Good afternoon, everybody. Hope you are all doing well. As you can see, I brought a guest with me today. The President's decision on Jerusalem has been briefed to you all by the White House, the NSC, and also the State Department, so we won't repeat that today, but we've brought our Acting Assistant Secretary for Near East Affairs David Satterfield, who has served here at the State Department for just about 40 years, first as a civil servant and then as a Foreign Service officer. And so he's going to start out taking some of your questions.

I know all of you. He does not, so I'll help facilitate and call on people. And then after he's done with the Q&A, I will gladly take your questions on any other issues.

So Acting Assistant Secretary David Satterfield, thank you so much, sir.

**AMBASSADOR SATTERFIELD:** Thanks, Heather. I'll take your questions.

**QUESTION:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** Yes. I have –

**QUESTION:** All right. Yeah, so I've got –

**MS NAUERT:** Oh, I'm sorry. Matt, you can go ahead.

**QUESTION:** I've got what are going to sound like a couple softballs, but they were questions that your predecessors and Heather's predecessors weren't able to answer very easily. So just bear with me. They're two very brief ones.

What is the capital of Israel?

**AMBASSADOR SATTERFIELD:** The President announced yesterday, issued a proclamation declaring the United States recognizes Jerusalem as the capital of the state of Israel.

**QUESTION:** So the answer to the question is Jerusalem, correct?

**AMBASSADOR SATTERFIELD:** That's exactly right.

**QUESTION:** What country is Jerusalem in?

**AMBASSADOR SATTERFIELD:** The President recognized Jerusalem as the capital of the state of Israel.

**QUESTION:** Does that mean then that the U.S. Government officially recognizes that Jerusalem municipality lies within the state of Israel?

**AMBASSADOR SATTERFIELD:** There has been no change in our policy with respect to consular practice or passport issuance at this time, which is what I think you are raising.

**QUESTION:** Well, that's what – I wanted to know what the practical implications of this decision are not in terms of necessarily broad policy, the peace process, whatever, but things like maps. Will they be withdrawn? Will the passport issue – will passports now identify Jerusalem as being within Israel if the person was born there? What about official documents? Will they say Jerusalem, comma, Israel? What about the mailing address of the consulate or the street address of the consulate?

**AMBASSADOR SATTERFIELD:** I've already commented that on consular practice there is no change at this time. With respect to maps, we are, of course, examining that issue, and when we have a decision we will announce it with respect to how we will treat Jerusalem for official USG-produced mapping

purposes.

**QUESTION:** Okay. So that sounds to me like within these areas there is no practical impact.

**AMBASSADOR SATTERFIELD:** Well, in consular practice there is no impact.

**QUESTION:** Right. Okay. Thank you.

**QUESTION:** So on –

**MS NAUERT:** Hold on, hold on.

**QUESTION:** On the issue of East Jerusalem –

**MS NAUERT:** Excuse me, Said.

**QUESTION:** On being from East Jerusalem –

**MS NAUERT:** Excuse me, Said. I'll just call on the questions, okay, since he doesn't know anybody. Elise, go right ahead.

**QUESTION:** Hi, Assistant Secretary. Could I just put a finer point on it? The President said and you just said that Jerusalem is the capital of Israel. But he also said that the borders are yet – that there's no change in the –

**AMBASSADOR SATTERFIELD:** The boundaries of sovereignty.

**QUESTION:** The boundaries of sovereignty.

**AMBASSADOR SATTERFIELD:** Border questions have not been addressed.

**QUESTION:** So what he's – so you're essentially saying that Jerusalem is the capital of Israel, but you're not saying that the entire municipality of Jerusalem falls into that capital?

**AMBASSADOR SATTERFIELD:** I will restate what the President said, which is we recognize Jerusalem as the capital of the state of Israel. We are not changing or taking a position on the boundaries of sovereignty in Jerusalem –

**QUESTION:** Well, could you explain what that –

**AMBASSADOR SATTERFIELD:** – including geographic boundaries. And I will not elaborate beyond that –

**QUESTION:** Well –

**AMBASSADOR SATTERFIELD:** – except to note a further comment which the President made. Which is that we regard those issues – the specifics, the boundaries of sovereignty, borders – as a matter for permanent status or final status negotiations between the party. And I think that addresses just about everything that could fall in the basket you're raising.

**QUESTION:** If I might, if I might. I think that's very parse language and kind

of a very legal – kind of diplomatese definition.

**QUESTION:** (Off-mike.) (Laughter.)

**QUESTION:** And if you could –

**AMBASSADOR SATTERFIELD:** Thank you.

**QUESTION:** – kind of put it into a – which you're very good at, by the way, after many years. If you could put it into layman's terms what does that mean that you call Jerusalem the capital of Israel but then you say that the boundaries of sovereignty – I think that people would like a little bit more of a layman's definition.

**AMBASSADOR SATTERFIELD:** I think the way the President presented it yesterday in his remarks and in the proclamation does a pretty good job of that, which is to say we're acknowledging a reality, something practical; Jerusalem is currently, historically, capital of Israel. That's the decision he announced.

With respect to boundaries of sovereignty, borders, geography, those are matters for final status negotiations between the party, and we're not going to touch on those at this time. And I think that speaks for itself. And I'll use –

**QUESTION:** So there's –

**AMBASSADOR SATTERFIELD:** – his words rather than my own diplomatese.

**QUESTION:** Yes. My –

**MS NAUERT:** Said, go right ahead.

**QUESTION:** My name is Said Arikat. I just want to follow up on East Jerusalem because it is really – it's not clear at all. Not in my mind. So what happens to the Palestinian population of East Jerusalem? Do they now become automatically Israeli citizens, would have full rights, and so on? What happens to 300,000 Palestinians?

**AMBASSADOR SATTERFIELD:** Said, the President's proclamation yesterday, his decision, have no impact on those issues. He is recognizing a practical reality. Jerusalem is the capital of Israel. And all of the other aspects – boundaries of sovereignty – we're not taking a position. It's for the sides to resolve.

**QUESTION:** So if you'll just bear with me for a second. So why not say West Jerusalem? I mean, the Russians have done that. It did not cause any problem and so on. Or why don't you say that this part, East Jerusalem, as been negotiated as you yourself have been involved for so many years, this portion is designated to become the capital of the Palestinian state?

**AMBASSADOR SATTERFIELD:** Said, the President's decision speaks for itself. There are many words that are in his statement, in his remarks; there are words that aren't. We recognize Jerusalem as the capital of the state of

Israel. He didn't go beyond that, and I'm not going to go beyond that.

**QUESTION:** Can you – can you share with us –

**MS NAUERT:** We need to move on (inaudible).

**QUESTION:** – just one last thing?

**MS NAUERT:** Said, (inaudible).

**QUESTION:** Could you share with us, sir –

**MS NAUERT:** Said, (inaudible).

**QUESTION:** – one national security interest of the United States that this recognition has served? Can you identify one national security interest of the United States that this recognition has identified?

**AMBASSADOR SATTERFIELD:** The President is committed to advancing a peace process between Israel and the Palestinians. In his view upon reflection, this step, he believes, assists in that process. Full stop.

**MS NAUERT:** Nick, go right ahead.

**QUESTION:** Can you explain that further, because –

**QUESTION:** Can I just ask, Mr. –

**QUESTION:** – that's exactly what we're trying to – or what I'm trying to figure out is –

**MS NAUERT:** Nick, go right ahead. Hold on, Dave.

**QUESTION:** Can you – just to Matt's point, can you explain why a decision-making process needs to be made about maps and things like that, and consular services? I mean, you said yourself, the President declared Jerusalem the capital of Israel. Why does there need to be a further decision-making process on those other issues?

**AMBASSADOR SATTERFIELD:** It's a very simple answer, and it's wholly technical. What phrasing do you place upon government-issued maps? There are different word choices that can be used. To be clear, there will be a decision made. When the decision is made, you'll have it and you'll have the maps.

**QUESTION:** And can you just explain why now? Why did he make this decision now?

**AMBASSADOR SATTERFIELD:** Because December 4th was the trigger date for the next waiver required under the Jerusalem Act of '95. That was the proximate timing issue. Full stop.

**QUESTION:** So there was no strategic – this – it was solely based on –

**AMBASSADOR SATTERFIELD:** The President had to make a decision. He did. But

he's –

**QUESTION:** Why didn't he do it on the 4th?

**AMBASSADOR SATTERFIELD:** That's the legal requirement of the act. Every six months –

**QUESTION:** No, but he –

**QUESTION:** But he didn't.

**QUESTION:** But he didn't.

**AMBASSADOR SATTERFIELD:** – a waiver has to be issued.

**QUESTION:** He didn't do it on the 4th. He did it on the 6th.

**AMBASSADOR SATTERFIELD:** We believe – and I believe the White House has spoken to this – technically, we were in compliance. We'll leave it to the Hill on whether 48 hours constituted a problem or not. But the 4th was the trigger date.

**QUESTION:** Wow. I wish my editors had your sense of deadline. (Laughter.)

**QUESTION:** Michelle with CNN. Thanks. Can you just say how – how this furthers the peace process?

**AMBASSADOR SATTERFIELD:** The President believes taking this issue – that is the fact of U.S. recognition, acknowledgement of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel – an issue that's been pending out there since '95, since the act was initially passed – was appropriate to make and that it helps in the process to no longer have that issue, which is the U.S. acknowledgement of the simple fact that Jerusalem is the location of the supreme court, the Knesset, the president and the prime minister's residences, that that is a useful clearing of an issue that has been part of, grown as part of, this process for many decades.

**QUESTION:** So it's setting us up for what? To – if you're saying that that gets that out of the way and it's been a reality, how does that set the stage?

**AMBASSADOR SATTERFIELD:** The President and his peace team have been engaged, as you all know, for many months now in discussions with the two parties, with regional states, with other key actors, to try to advance a peace. This is not an easy process; it's a difficult one. But he believes this step assists in that process. I am not going to elaborate on that further.

**QUESTION:** And how would you –

**MS NAUERT:** (Inaudible.)

**QUESTION:** The Palestinians said that the U.S. cannot anymore be a mediator in this peace process, so how do you think this presidential team can go forward

and broker a deal with – if one of the two main actors doesn't want him as a mediator?

**AMBASSADOR SATTERFIELD:** It will not surprise you to hear after all these years, my response is we will judge parties by their actions rather than by statements.

**MS NAUERT:** All right. (Inaudible.)

**QUESTION:** Thanks.

**MS NAUERT:** Sorry. Rich. Thanks.

**QUESTION:** As a veteran diplomat and representative of NEA, do you personally agree with the President's decision?

**AMBASSADOR SATTERFIELD:** Oh, now. I am an employee of the U.S. Government. I am a Foreign Service officer. We all – and I speak of my boss, the Secretary, and the other principals in the U.S. Government – we are all part of this team. This is a decision which we will work our best to execute and advance.

**QUESTION:** How long did NEA consult with the administration on this?

**AMBASSADOR SATTERFIELD:** I'm not going to get into a tick-tock on this.

**MS NAUERT:** Arshad.

**QUESTION:** Do you believe that this decision in any way impairs the pursuit of peace by the United States?

**AMBASSADOR SATTERFIELD:** We've made clear, the President has made clear, that he hopes it helps advance this process, helps move it forward.

**QUESTION:** But, that's not my question.

**AMBASSADOR SATTERFIELD:** But it was an issue.

**QUESTION:** My question is: Do you think it in any way impairs the pursuit of peace? I know what you hope; I want to know if you think it has impaired your efforts.

**AMBASSADOR SATTERFIELD:** I can't make that judgment at this point.

**QUESTION:** Not even given the negative reactions that you have seen in Arab capitals among some of your allies, let alone the Palestinians?

**AMBASSADOR SATTERFIELD:** No. Again, we will judge by what actually happens with those parties as we deal with this process, as we carry on discussions with them. Again, we're not going to be driven by statements.

**QUESTION:** And one other question. Do you regard those portions of East Jerusalem that were occupied by Israel in 1967 as occupied territory?

**AMBASSADOR SATTERFIELD:** The decision of the President is to recognize



Jerusalem as the capital of the state of Israel. The President has stated that that decision does not touch upon issues of boundaries, of sovereignty, or geographic borders. Full stop.

**QUESTION:** So it is still occupied territory, in your view?

**AMBASSADOR SATTERFIELD:** I have stated what the President's decision does and does not do.

**MS NAUERT:** Kylie from CBS.

**QUESTION:** Thank you. What is the current policy of the U.S. administration towards Israeli settlements in East Jerusalem?

**AMBASSADOR SATTERFIELD:** As – this decision had no impact on any issue other than the recognition or acknowledgment of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.

**QUESTION:** No. But so could you –

**AMBASSADOR SATTERFIELD:** I've answered your question.

**QUESTION:** Could you follow up what the policy therefore is, even though it has not been enacted?

**AMBASSADOR SATTERFIELD:** I'm not going to restate the policy at this point.

**QUESTION:** Well, can I just ask you then are you accepting the premise of the question that construction in East Jerusalem is settlement activity? I don't believe that it's (inaudible).

**AMBASSADOR SATTERFIELD:** What I am stating is an affirmative. The President's decision was a recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. The President made clear issues that touch upon the boundaries of sovereignty or final status issues are not addressed by his decision.

**QUESTION:** I get it. The question is one of terminology.

**AMBASSADOR SATTERFIELD:** Fine.

**QUESTION:** You called construction in the West Bank settlement activity, but not necessarily construction in East Jerusalem. That's just construction. It hasn't traditionally –

**AMBASSADOR SATTERFIELD:** The President's decision did not touch on those issues.

**QUESTION:** I have just –

**MS NAUERT:** Final question. Elise.

**QUESTION:** Could you explain the distinction between recognizing the capital and it not – and not deciding anything on borders as it refers to a deal? Because if you're saying that this is a final status issue to be negotiated at the table, how does either (a), this not prejudice a deal when Jerusalem

is a final status issue, or (b), how is it not a meaningless declaration that could be negotiated at the table? It has to be one or the other.

**AMBASSADOR SATTERFIELD:** Elise, final status negotiations are going to deal with those boundaries of sovereignty, border questions that the President spoke to as not addressed by his recognition. The President thought it was the right thing to do for the United States, after all these years, to acknowledge the fact, the reality, that Jerusalem is the seat of government of the state of Israel, the capital of the state of Israel. That's it.

**QUESTION:** But it's – respectfully, it's inconsistent with the idea that you would also be negotiating at the table unless you can acknowledge what we're all trying to get you to say, which you artfully are not –

**AMBASSADOR SATTERFIELD:** Thank you, Elise. You may well think that. Thank you.

**QUESTION:** Well – but the idea that it may – that is – that Jerusalem is the capital, but perhaps in final status negotiations that it might be not the united capital.

**AMBASSADOR SATTERFIELD:** Elise, I will only address one more point on this. What were the words the President used? It was a very simple statement: recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. There are words you might want to put in there; he didn't. There are words you might want to take out; he didn't. That statement was very carefully made, as was the comment we are not prejudicing addressing by this decision final status issue.

**MS NAUERT:** All right. Thank you, everybody.

**QUESTION:** Thank you.

**AMBASSADOR SATTERFIELD:** Thank you.

**MS NAUERT:** Acting Assistant Secretary David Satterfield, appreciate it, and your expertise, sir. Thank you.

**AMBASSADOR SATTERFIELD:** Thank you. Thanks.

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# Press Releases: Remarks to Marines, Scouts, and Tri-Mission Personnel

Remarks

Rex W. Tillerson

Secretary of State

Bristol Hotel

Vienna, Austria

December 7, 2017

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**MR YOUNG:** Good afternoon, good evening, everybody. All right. So let me give you my best “So let’s introduce the Secretary of State speech” I can possibly give. So one day, you’re a high school social studies nerd in Lockport, New York, and suddenly, the next day, you’re a 55-year-old Foreign Service officer introducing the Secretary of State in Vienna, Austria. You’ve gotta love that about America.

So I am thrilled on behalf of Harry, Nicole, and myself to see a great Tri-Missions Vienna turnout this evening. And Mr. Secretary, a big American-Austrian welcome to you and your team from all of us. Incredibly excited that you’re here to boost our efforts on multiple fronts in Vienna and honored that you’re spending time with our crew tonight.

Mr. Secretary, this is a room full of families and staff, Austrian and American, from a wide range of U.S. Government entities, every one of whom, from the littlest guys down in the front here has made – to the biggest folks in the room, is making major contributions toward reaching America’s goals at the UN, IAEA, and other international organizations, at the OSCE, and with our Austrian partners.

So traditionally, I’m supposed to now give your entire bio and tell everybody everything they’re ever going to – (laughter). But common sense and the look on your face says that’s probably a –

**SECRETARY TILLERSON:** Wise move.

**MR YOUNG:** – probably just (inaudible). Sufficient to say I think you’ve had a hell of a successful run and we’re fortunate now to have you heading the State Department. Tri-Mission Vienna, I’m going to stop talking now. Our leader, our boss, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson. Thank you. (Applause.)

**SECRETARY TILLERSON:** Well, thanks. And it’s a – it is a real pleasure to be

in Vienna. Tough location for me to come to, but – (laughter) – I swam through it all; I got here. But in all seriousness, it's my seventh trip to Europe this year, so obviously, Europe's pretty important in our portfolio. And a lot of Europe finds itself, obviously, coming and going through Vienna as well due to the mission that – the missions that all three of you are engaged in. And that is what's unique about this. So you see a lot of elements of our foreign policy that's maybe occurring someplace else, but it makes its way through here because of the agencies that are located here, and how we execute against the policy as well. So what you do here is very important to our not just what happens here, but to our broader foreign policy elsewhere. And we appreciate all that you're doing for us.

I want to also recognize our three charge d'affaires, Young, Kamian, and Shampaine, and thank them for their leadership of all three of these missions. I know, as I've said many times, and I want to say this because a lot of stuff gets written out there in the media about the hollowed-out State Department and the empty hallways that I'm walking in, where all I can hear are the echoes of my footsteps. (Laughter.) And it's not true. And I tell people everywhere it's not true. We have great, competent, capable career people that have stepped up in leadership positions while we're working to fill those roles, and we haven't missed a beat. Not one. And I want to thank all three for their leadership at the missions here. I know it's not the easiest thing to do when you're put in an acting role like that, but we have not missed a beat on the leadership. The three charges here are very competent with the team we have.

And that's true elsewhere. We have great career people and individuals that are helping us develop the policy, carry out the policy, execute the policy, and we've achieved a lot in the probably 10 months – 10 and a half months now, I guess, that I've had to work with this department and the great people in the department. And all of you are so important when you're here in these posts overseas. You are the face of the American people. You represent our values, you represent who we are. And people see that American face.

But equally important to us here is the locally employed staff, and I say this at every mission I go that, yes, all of us kind of come and go on our postings and our assignments. The locally employed staff are the continuity. They help us on board, they help us keep those connections in place, they solve our problems for us, and allow us to be effective. And so really appreciate the role that all of our locally employed staff plays as well.

So thank you. Thank you, thank you with your families. I know being employed overseas means you miss some things back home with family there. Hopefully when it's all said and done, you rack up the pluses and the minuses, there's going to be more things in the plus side for foreign deployment than there are on the minus side. That was my experience in my own life elsewhere in my foreign deployments. So again, thank you for that as well.

I want to say a real quick word, and I'm not going to talk long because you don't want me to talk long – (laughter) – but I want to say a little bit of a word about the redesign at the State Department because there's been – a lot of other people seem to want to say a lot about it, whether they know

anything about it or not. And so I want to tell you what's going on. And we are moving – we've completed phases one and two now, and this is an entirely employee-led effort. Your colleagues are the ones doing all the work, they're the ones making the recommendations, they're the ones developing the various projects that we're going to be undertaking.

And as you know, this all started in phase one, was the listening exercise where we had over 35,000 people respond to our early survey. And we had over 300 sit-down, face-to-face, lengthy interviews, and then we kept these portals open for people to throw their ideas or point of contact through those portals. And those have been very active areas of engagement with your colleagues and hopefully a lot of you as well to really feed this entire redesign effort. And so now we've allowed these teams have had many, many ideas and inputs from people and develop a very lengthy list of projects that we can undertake – over 170. Obviously, we've got to kind of whittle that down and prioritize.

But what it fundamentally comes down to – and we're going to start holding some town halls now that we're moving from phase two to phase three, which is execution, and share with you exactly what is being done. It's all around leadership and modernization of the State Department. And there are a lot of things that fall under those two categories, but some of it is process-type activities – how do we get duplication, how do we get at efficiencies, and it's just how do people get their work done? And this is, again, your colleagues are the ones that are fueling this. They're identifying areas where they say, "If we did it this way, it would save a lot of time." If you save time, one of two things happen: either you save money or you get more output because people have now time to do other things that are important to us.

So some of it is programmatic and some of it are projects. And on the project side, it's things like a modernized IT system. One of the priority actions is try to take the system we have and make it work better, but fundamentally longer term, we're going to have build a complete new platform because we're just not in the 21st century. And I'm preaching to people who already know this. I have experienced it now coming from a system that was in the 21st century to one that's not, and I understand your frustration. That's a long-term project. It ought to be a multi-year project. But we are going to do some things in the interim to try to make the system we have run better or run more smoothly, things like updated HR processes and HR systems that allow people to get the information they need much more quickly and much more efficiently with a lot less frustration, whether it be booking travel to understanding what postings are available and how do I understand what I want to pursue in my career.

So some of this, they're kind of – it takes some work. But they're very distinct projects, and they're things that we hear overwhelmingly through the portal and heard through the listening exercise. And I confirm a lot of these. When I'm back at the State Department, I try to have lunch with a group of about eight, a mix of Foreign Service officers and civil servants, and what it's really allowed me to do is understand at another level down what all this coming through the portal is really about. But it just

reconfirms that we're working on the things that are most important to you.

At the end of it, the entire objective is to make the department – and allow you – to be more efficient, more effective, and have a much more rewarding career, have a more satisfying career. If we do that, we're going to move our game up. I just know that because I – one thing I do know is I have a quality of people that if you unleash their talents, the quality of what we do moves up, and I don't have to have a bunch of consultants tell me that. I just know that's true.

And so some of this when – a lot of concern people have about we're going to reduce the staffing by X amount, or we're going to close this office or that office – there's nothing planned to close any embassies, and there's nothing planned in terms of a specific target for the staffing levels. What we did say is to the OMB, because we owe them a number and the reason we put the hiring freeze in place, is – and we said, look, we're going to at least capture what normal attrition would be through these efficiencies, and that's about 8 percent over the next few years.

And the reason I chose that approach is because we'll just let our numbers kind of go down naturally with normal retirements, people that are normally leaving to go do other things; I don't want to have a big layoff. I don't want to have to do a bunch of things to where we have to force the numbers down. Let's just get there naturally. Now, what will come out of some of the work are likely redeployments because we're going to find that we have too many people here and we need a lot more over here because our problems around the world, or the issues, are moving around faster than we're able to redeploy.

So there may be redeployments of talent, but we're going to use the talent, and we're going to use it and provide a system of how we do that that makes people say, we need to modernize our policies and recognize the amazing working families today. Our policies are stuck in about the 1980s, as I look at them. So we need to recognize it. In today's world, there's a lot of two-career families, and we need to have our policies that are responsive in recognizing both members of that couple are very talented and they have a lot they can do. So a lot of what we're getting at is capturing all that talent as well.

Let me just say, lastly, on the hiring freeze, just to correct a few numbers that are out there that scare people, I've approved over 2,400 exceptions to the hiring freeze for EFMs. I've approved a number of exceptions for promotions. We're hired 300 new Foreign Service officers this year already. The total number of Foreign Service officers in the department is within 10 of what it was in October 2016, and that's out of a base of about 1,080. We've actually had fewer people retire this year than we had last year.

So a lot of the statistics that – I don't know where they're getting them, but they're just wrong. And so we are providing that information out to certainly people on the Hill and others to know that this whole narrative that, somehow, people are leaving in droves is simply not true, and the numbers don't bear that out. But more importantly to me, the quality of the

work doesn't bear it out, because what we're doing in terms of policy development, in terms of executional policy, in terms of you meeting your mission every day, all elements of the mission – from consular affairs to policy to whatever it is, our DOD relationships – nothing is not getting done. It's all getting done because all of you are dedicated, and I know that.

So I appreciate your dedication to the mission. We're going to try to give you some tools and capabilities that are going to allow you to be more effective at it. That's really what the redesign is about. So you'll see some coming out of town hall meetings, and we'll be talking specifically now about what is it, what is the it, and we'll start sharing more of that with you. And again, all of this are – these are employee teams that are pushing these things out. And so for any of you that have been engaged in any of that, thank you. For the people that have been working on those teams, a lot have been doing that while doing their day job. To actually move into phase three, we're going to have to put some people on it full-time now. And we're going to – we're going to push this thing on through.

So I'm very excited about it. They've got great ideas. They're your ideas. We want to just unleash all of that. So lastly, thank you again. Thanks for what you do for us here day in and day out. And I appreciate every one of you. Thanks. (Applause.)

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## **[Press Releases: Continued Violence in the Central African Republic](#)**

Press Statement  
Heather Nauert

Department Spokesperson

Washington, DC  
December 6, 2017

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The United States remains concerned about ongoing violence in the Central African Republic (CAR), and condemns in the strongest terms the continued targeted attacks against civilians, peacekeepers, and humanitarian actors. We further emphasize our strong support to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), in its efforts to protect civilians from violence, prevent atrocities, and help stabilize the country.

Fourteen UN peacekeepers have been killed in CAR since 2017 while providing support and protecting the CAR population from predatory armed groups that target, exploit, and kill civilians. These deaths are a tragic reminder of the high cost of violence and the price that peacekeepers, civilians, and humanitarian actors continue to pay.

We call on armed groups to put down their weapons and engage, without preconditions and in good faith, with the CAR government. We firmly oppose impunity for human rights violations, and support the Special Criminal Court to promote justice for victims and accountability for those responsible for atrocities.

The United States stands with the CAR Government, MINUSCA, and all Central Africans, as they strive for peace, justice, accountability, and the prevention of future atrocities in CAR.

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## **[Press Releases: The Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations Announces the Final Selection for the Worldwide Design Services IDIQ Contract](#)**

Media Note  
Office of the Spokesperson



Washington, DC  
December 6, 2017

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The Department of State's Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO) selected 16 Architecture/Engineering (A/E) firms for its Worldwide Design Services Indefinite Delivery/Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) contract. The firms selected for the IDIQ provide comprehensive design services for both new construction and modernization projects at U.S. diplomatic facilities worldwide. The selected firms are:

Mark Cavagnero Associates

SHoP Architects

Diller Scofidio + Renfro

Krueck & Sexton Architects

Ennead Architects

Richard + Bauer Architecture

Morphosis Architects

Robert A.M. Stern Architects

Kieran Timberlake

Marlon Blackwell Architects

1100 Architect

Allied Works Architecture

Ann Beha Architects

Studio Ma

The Miller Hull Partnership

Machado and Silveti Associates

OBO received 136 total submissions for the design services IDIQ solicitation and 26 firms were shortlisted to provide technical team submissions and make presentations to OBO. The final 16 selected firms presented the most highly qualified technical teams and demonstrated exemplary past performance, strong management and project delivery experience, a well-defined approach to public architecture, and a commitment to sustainability and integrated design.

OBO's mission is to provide safe, secure, and functional facilities that represent the U.S. government to host nations and support our staff in the achievement of U.S. foreign policy objectives. These facilities represent American values and the best in American architecture, engineering, technology, sustainability, art, culture, and construction execution.

For further information on the selection please contact Brian Mulcahy at [MulcahyBF@state.gov](mailto:MulcahyBF@state.gov).

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