

Press Releases: Press Availability With Chadian Foreign Minister Mahamat Zene Cherif

Press Availability
Rex W. Tillerson

Secretary of State

Presidential Palace
N'Djamena, Chad
March 12, 2018

FOREIGN MINISTER CHERIF: (In French.)

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Well, thank you very much, Foreign Minister Cherif, and I am pleased to return to Chad and to be making my first trip as the Secretary, the first such visit to Chad by any American Secretary of State.

I have known President Deby for many years and I appreciate him receiving me and his hospitality that he extended today. My visit follows the dedication of a new U.S. embassy building here in N'Djamena last October. This dedication and my visit both demonstrate the United States commitment to deepening our relationship with Chad. As I told President Deby, the United States values Chad as a strategic partner in this region.

We know that Chad faces many security threats on each of its borders. We appreciate Chad's important role in providing security for its own citizens and its contribution to the security of its neighbors as well. Chad plays a vital role in countering terrorism and violent extremism in the Lake Chad Basin and the greater Sahel. Chad contributes more than 4,000 troops to regional forces who are protecting Chadians and other partner nations. And we honor the many sacrifices of many Chadian soldiers who have served with the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali and the Multinational Joint Task Force as well as their commitments to the G5 Sahel Joint Force. These are all significant efforts to counter terrorism in Africa and promote greater stability.

Conflicts in the region have brought domestic demands on Chad as well as Chad hosts many refugees and internally displaced persons as a result of the regional instability. During our conversations, President Deby and I discussed the importance of Chad's continued engagement in counterterrorism

efforts across the region and the United States commitment to strengthening our partnership with Chad.

We also discussed the United States commitment to democratic reforms. The Chadian constitution provides for freedom of speech and assembly. Peaceful gatherings and nonviolent protest allow citizens to share their concerns with their government. This type of citizen engagement should be allowed. We also encouraged Chad to take proactive steps to join the international fight against the trafficking of persons. We look forward to greater cooperation with Chad on every front including counterterrorism, encouraging democratic reforms, and strengthening economic ties between our countries.

Thank you again, Minister Cherif, for welcoming me to your country, and I want to thank President Deby again for his generous provision of the time for our important discussions. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Secretary Tillerson. I don't know if there are some questions from the press (inaudible).

QUESTION: (Inaudible.)

MODERATOR: (In French.)

QUESTION: (In French.)

SECRETARY TILLERSON: With respect –

MODERATOR: (Inaudible.)

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Yeah, with respect to the travel ban, we had a very good exchange between President Deby and myself, and first I wanted to ensure that the people of Chad understand they are welcome in the United States. The steps that have been taken are necessary because of all of the conflict that exists on Chad's borders, and we recognize the challenges this presents to Chad and the Government of Chad in ensuring that Chad has full control of people who are traveling in and out of its own borders.

We had a very good trip from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the State Department late last year – visited Chad – and we had a very good exchange and many, many important positive steps have been taken by the Government of Chad to strengthen the control over its own passports, to strengthen the information sharing around people who are of concern, potential terrorists. And these steps, I think, are going to allow us to take actions to begin to normalize the travel relationship with Chad. There will be a report prepared in the United States later this month and that will be reviewed with the President in April and we're hopeful – we're hopeful that we can return things to a normalization of travel status, but we'll have to wait for the final report.

QUESTION: (In French.)

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Well, I think as I just indicated in response to the prior question, the impetus for the action taken on the travel ban – and Chad

was not singled out as the only country – had to do with an assessment of the ability of Chad to ensure that passport issuance, passport cancellation, tracking passports that have been lost, that there was a very sound process within the Chadian Government to ensure that it was keeping control of passports. The second was in issuing new passports and ensuring that the latest technologies were being used in issuance of new passports. And then the third was the sharing of information around individuals of concern.

And I think these steps actually are all in Chad's interest as well, because this strengthens the internal security for Chad as well as meeting some of the security concerns that the United States has more broadly. And again, as I indicated, all of these areas have been addressed by Chad and significant progress made in our most recent engagement late last year.

So that – there was no other impetus behind the action that was taken than to improve security in both of our countries.

FOREIGN MINISTER CHERIF: (In French.)

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, the President's authorized the department to spend 120 million to counter Russian meddling in Western democracies. But more than a year later, we have not spent any of this money. Why? And isn't this failure part of the broad set of (inaudible) on your watch, including a paralysis – specifically (inaudible) and (inaudible) inability to get even close to a full leadership in place by now?

And Mr. Foreign Minister, were you at all insulted when you heard that President Trump described Africa as shithole countries (inaudible)?

SECRETARY TILLERSON: The funds that you're referring to, some of those funds were in the Department of Defense's budget and the Congress authorized the transfer of funds, and a memorandum of understanding was developed in order to transfer those funds. That memorandum was actually requested in March of last year. We only received DOD's concurrence in the last couple of months, so a large portion of those funds were tied up over at DOD.

In terms of the use of the funds, now that we have our confirmed under secretary for diplomatic relations – for public diplomatic relations [\[i\]](#), there is a very active effort underway through the Global Engagement Center now using social media and other tools to begin to respond to Russia's – in particular Russia's meddling and interference in elections not just here but abroad. So we're in the early stages of developing that effort and those programs, and some of those funds are being used – very small amounts at this point – as we staff up to be able to respond more proactively.

Having said that, there have been other actions taken through interagency processes to respond already, so it has not gone without a response.

FOREIGN MINISTER CHERIF: (In French.)

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, (inaudible) that the foreign minister, how concerned are you about the threat of ISIS in Libya, as well as in the Sahel (inaudible)? And what reassurances did you give (inaudible)?

And Mr. Foreign Minister, were you reassured (inaudible)? And (inaudible) your desire (inaudible) the U.S. (inaudible)?

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Well, as we anticipated, as we have had success in defeating ISIS in Iraq and Syria, we knew that fighters would flee that area, and we knew that Africa is a place they would come. Now they have established themselves in various regions and they are – they have actually recruiting efforts underway. So we are concerned about the presence of ISIS in Libya but also the presence of ISIS elements elsewhere in the Sahel. It's the reason we strongly support the G5 Sahel forces, but also the forces in Mali as well, to control the spread of ISIS in this region. As we've said many, many times, this is a global fight to defeat ISIS, both on the battlefield but also ideologically, and that fight goes on here very actively in Africa, with our important partner Chad contributing significantly to that effort.

FOREIGN MINISTER CHERIF: (In French.)

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[i] Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs

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[Press Releases: Assistant Secretary Mitchell to Travel to Pristina, Skopje, Belgrade, Athens, and Nicosia](#)

Media Note
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
March 11, 2018

Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Wess Mitchell will travel to Pristina, Kosovo; Skopje, Macedonia; Belgrade, Serbia; Athens, Greece; and Nicosia, Cyprus March 12-17.

On March 12 in Pristina, he will meet with senior Kosovo officials, including President Thaci, Prime Minister Haradinaj, and other political and civil society representatives to reaffirm the close ties between Kosovo and the United States. He will encourage the government of Kosovo to advance normalized relations with Serbia, strengthen the rule of law, foster economic growth, and overcome regional challenges in favor of stability and Western integration.

In Skopje on March 13, he will meet with Macedonian Prime Minister Zaev and Foreign Minister Dimitrov. He will reaffirm U.S. support for Macedonia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations, offer support for Macedonia's on-going negotiations with Greece, and urge the Macedonian government to implement reforms to enhance democratic governance, the rule of law, and a free media.

On March 14 in Belgrade, he will meet with senior Serbian officials, including President Vucic and Prime Minister Brnabic, and opposition leaders. He will reaffirm the strong relationship between Serbia and the United States, and urge the Serbian government to push forward to normalize relations with Kosovo, make the reforms needed to attain its goal of European Union membership, and actively support regional stability.

In Athens on March 15, Assistant Secretary Mitchell will meet with senior Greek officials to discuss deepening U.S.-Greek strategic ties and strengthening bilateral cooperation, including in the areas of defense, energy, trade, and investment.

Finally, in Nicosia on March 16, he will meet with senior Republic of Cyprus officials to discuss bilateral and regional issues, including the development of energy resources in the Eastern Mediterranean. He will also meet with Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders, as well as with representatives of the United Nations.

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Press Releases: Remarks at a Wreath-Laying Ceremony at the August 7th Memorial Park

Remarks

Rex W. Tillerson

Secretary of State

Nairobi, Kenya

March 11, 2018

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Please, take a seat. Well, good afternoon and thank you for being here. I just have some very brief remarks.

As all of you well know, 1998 terrorists thought they could demoralize and destroy the Kenyan and American people by attacking the U.S. embassy here in Nairobi. Of course, they were wrong. Nearly 20 years later, we meet here to honor those who we lost and those who were injured. Hundreds of lives were taken and hundreds if not a thousand more were changed forever. Some of our current embassy colleagues who survived this tragedy, including Ambassador Godec and his wife Lori and our current locally employed staff at the embassy that day of the bombing, are with us as well. And it's an honor to meet all of you, and I appreciate you being here.

To the survivors present, please know that the American people remember your service and your sacrifice as well as those who are not with us today and have been forever lost. Our hearts are with the many who lost family, friends, and colleagues on that tragic day.

Today we remember them and their bravery, the compassion, and the sacrifice, as well as many who without hesitation that day and at risk to themselves rushed into action to save lives and help others. We honor those heroes and the courage they displayed as well. They are all examples to us.

As our work continues to end terrorism, those who sought to divide us here have failed. Our commitment to work together as Americans and Kenyans is steadfast, it is enduring, and we will build on the shared values and our shared future, which remains very strong. We will never forget the names on this wall. Thank you.

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Press Releases: The Secretary's Meeting with Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta

Readout
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
March 10, 2018

The following is attributable to Spokesperson Heather Nauert:

Secretary Tillerson met with Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta yesterday in Nairobi and highlighted long-standing U.S.-Kenya cooperation on counterterrorism, regional security, and trade. He welcomed the joint announcement between President Kenyatta and opposition leader Raila Odinga as a positive step toward healing Kenya's ethnic and political divisions. The Secretary emphasized strong U.S. support for democratic institutions, including the judiciary, civil society, and the media, and expressed concern about restrictions to political space. Secretary Tillerson and President Kenyatta also discussed the shared goal of defeating al-Shabaab in Somalia, strengthening AMISOM, and the need for a viable political process on South Sudan. They also agreed to identify opportunities to expand commercial and business ties.

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[Press Releases: The Secretary's Meeting with Djiboutian Foreign Minister Mahmoud Ali Youssef](#)

Readout
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
March 10, 2018

The following is attributable to Spokesperson Heather Nauert:

Secretary Tillerson met with Djiboutian Foreign Minister Mahmoud Ali Youssef in Djibouti on March 9 to discuss the U.S.-Djiboutian partnership, and exchanged views on bilateral concerns, security threats, and economic reforms. The Secretary expressed appreciation for the Djiboutian government's support for refugees fleeing regional conflicts, and its role in providing humanitarian relief. The Secretary thanked Foreign Minister Youssef for Djibouti's troop contributions to the AU Mission in Somalia, which advances regional peace and stability. The Secretary conveyed the United States' appreciation to Djibouti for hosting U.S. military personnel.

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