

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
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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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Remarks

Rex W. Tillerson

Secretary of State

Secretary of Defense James Mattis
Intercontinental Hotel
Sydney, Australia
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SECRETARY TILLERSON: (Applause.) You can try to hide, Mr. Secretary. It's not going to work. (Laughter.)

Well, first, thanks to all of you for joining us. I know it's the end of the workday for all of you, but appreciate the opportunity to at least have a moment to say a few words. I want to thank Charge' Carouso, Consul Fowler, for the leadership they're providing both in the mission and here in the consular office as well in Sydney.

Secretary Mattis and I have had a really great day of discussions with the AUSMIN, and appreciate the work that all of you did. It helped prepare the way when we come down here for these visits. But very good, substantive discussions. Again, just a reaffirmation of how strong the relationship is with ourselves and with Australia, the important role that all of you play as well.

Also, of course, you had Vice President Pence came through and I know he had a great visit as well. I think, hopefully, what everyone is getting a sense of is how important this region to the administration – a number of visits here, a number of visits throughout the region. And that's a lot of what our message has been to folks on these trips, is that this is important to us. These relationships are important, and we want to remove any doubt, if there's any doubt in anyone's mind, as to how important these relationships are to the United States and to this administration. The best way we know to show that is by coming here and listening – doing a lot of listening – and then hopefully a lot of clarification about where our mutual interests are. And certainly, we have a number of areas of mutual interest with Australia – longstanding and those are going to continue.

So very strong relationships here. The meetings were fantastic. I want to thank all of you again for what you do for us, your colleagues at the mission and what you do for us here in Sydney as well, what your family members do in supporting you in carrying out our mission, and your colleagues around the world. And I know all of you have served elsewhere, served in your careers, and we appreciate that service and the sacrifice that you make and that your families make on our behalf as well. It's important to us that you have their support. So I'm always pleased to see family members here.

I do want to give my colleague, Secretary Mattis, an opportunity to at least greet you. He can say whatever words he'd like to. We have just a terrific

Secretary of Defense here with us, and he's such a wonderful partner to the State Department, and we work closely on a lot of these issues together.

So please, Secretary Mattis. (Applause.)

SECRETARY MATTIS: I just want to assure you, ladies and gentlemen, that not one week goes by when we're not face to face. There's not two days that go by, we're not on the phones together. And the whole point that I want to give him is I want to buy time. I want to give reinforcing fires and reinforcing efforts. I want to tell him the military factors, but when he's done, our foreign policy is in the hands of the State Department and carried out for the President with our full support over at DOD.

So we're with you all the way and my first stop whenever I go into any country – I've been to about 15 already – my first stop is with the ambassador and my first question is: What can we do to support you? And we'll stay in that mode, and if you ever see the DOD not doing that, you let me know because I don't add stress, I create it. (Laughter.) (Inaudible) from the Secretary of State. No problem – we have the technology to do that. (Laughter.)

(Inaudible) to the Secretary's point, just to thank you for what you do. In this age, we're in a constant war of ideas. That's all there is to it. And our ideas matter, and you represent them well, and there's a lot riding on your shoulders, so you're helpful.

But thank you very much for what you do. Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Thank you all. (Applause.)

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[Press Releases: Overseas Schools Advisory Council Meeting Thursday, June 15, 2017](#)

Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC

June 5, 2017

The Overseas Schools Advisory Council of the Department of State will hold its summer meeting on Thursday, June 15, 2017, at 9:30 a.m. in conference room 1482, Marshall Center, in the Harry S. Truman Building at 2201 C Street NW, Washington DC. The meeting will last until approximately 12:00 p.m. and is open to the public with limited seating available. This meeting will discuss the work and the support Overseas Schools Advisory Council provides to American-sponsored overseas schools. Topics will include the World Virtual School and the Child Protection Project. In addition, the Regional Education Officers will present on various activities and initiatives in American-sponsored overseas schools.

Public access to the Department of State is controlled and space is limited. Members of the public who wish to attend the meeting should telephone Dr. Keith Miller, at (202) 261-8200, by June 8, to make arrangements to attend and, if necessary, request reasonable accommodations. The public may take part in the discussion, time permitting and at the discretion of the chairman. All attendees must use the 21st Street entrance to the building.

Media Contact: Rich Barbacane, BarbacaneRF@state.gov, 202-261-8208.

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[Press Releases: On the Occasion of Denmark's National Day](#)

Press Statement
Rex W. Tillerson

Secretary of State

Washington, DC
June 5, 2017

Greetings on behalf of the United States on the occasion of the 168th anniversary of the adoption of the Danish constitution.

The United States and Denmark have enjoyed a close partnership since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1801. Denmark's strong support of NATO, and its valuable contributions in the fight against terrorism, promotes stability and security in Europe and around the world.

We are proud to call Denmark an ally and friend. Best wishes to all Danes as you celebrate this special day.

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[Press Releases: Joint Statement AUSMIN 2017](#)

Media Note
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
June 5, 2017

On 5 June, Minister for Foreign Affairs Julie Bishop, and Minister for Defence Senator Marise Payne, hosted U.S. Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson, and Secretary of Defense James Mattis in Sydney for the annual Australia-United States Ministerial (AUSMIN) consultations.

AUSMIN 2017, the 27th AUSMIN meeting and the first under the Trump Administration, builds on the meeting between our leaders on May 4 in New York that demonstrated the continued closeness of the Australia-U.S. relationship. The strength and vitality of our Alliance is based on a shared commitment to freedom and democracy and has enduring importance in our respective national security, foreign and strategic policies.

Bilateral defense, security, and intelligence cooperation under the Alliance is as important today as it was when the ANZUS Treaty was signed in 1951. 2017 marks the 75th anniversary of the Battle of the Coral Sea and the 50th anniversary of the Joint Defense Facility Pine Gap, with the 100th anniversary in 2018 of Australian and U.S. forces first fighting together at the World War I Battle of Hamel. Today, both countries are working side by side in Iraq and Syria as part of the global coalition against ISIS, and continue to make military contributions to Afghanistan's security.

Australia and the United States reaffirmed their commitment to the Alliance at AUSMIN 2017, and decided to further expand defence and security cooperation, including: a commitment to further strengthen the interoperability of our armed forces; and continued close collaboration on capability development and defence technology. We confirmed our commitment to full implementation of the U.S.-Australia Force Posture Initiatives.

Australia and the United States underlined their shared, deepening commitment to the security, stability and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific region, and to strong regional organisations, especially the East Asia Summit, APEC, and the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting-Plus. They urged all parties to refrain from further militarisation of disputed features, including in the South China Sea (SCS). They emphasised the importance of upholding lawful freedom of navigation and overflight and adhering to the rules-based order. They considered the 2016 award by the Arbitral Tribunal under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea as a useful basis for further efforts to peacefully resolve disputes in the SCS. They decided to increase bilateral collaboration in relation to the Indo-Pacific, with a number of activities to be taken forward ahead of AUSMIN 2018.

Both countries condemned North Korea's ongoing development of nuclear and missile programs and expressed their deep concern at the unacceptable threat this posed to the region and the world. They committed to working closely together and with regional partners to implement sanctions and impose costs on the regime for its destabilising behaviour and dangerous and unlawful pursuit of nuclear weapons.

Both countries discussed the importance of working with regional partners to address regional security challenges, including terrorism and the threat of returning foreign fighters, cyber threats, and maritime security, and to support regional stability and prosperity. Australia and the United States

pledged to continue to strengthen their trilateral cooperation with Japan, and to enhance their engagement with our regional allies and partners. In the wake of recent terrorist attacks in the UK, the Philippines, Indonesia, and elsewhere, the United States and Australia discussed ways to work together to counter terrorism, in the region and globally.

Australia and the United States discussed our shared interest in the strength, growth and economic future of our Pacific neighbourhood. Both countries resolved to deepen bilateral dialogue on the Pacific and to strengthen cooperation with Pacific Island countries, including in the areas of maritime security, combatting trans-national threats to a secure Pacific, and APEC 2018 in Papua New Guinea.

The United States will host the next AUSMIN meeting in 2018.

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