

# Press Releases: Statement on Russia, Turkey, and Iran's De-Escalation Zones Plan for Syria

Press Statement  
Heather Nauert

Department Spokesperson

Washington, DC  
May 4, 2017

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Russia, Turkey, and Iran, at the conference in Astana, announced agreement today on an effort to reduce the violence in certain areas of Syria. The United States was represented at the Astana conference by Acting Assistant Secretary Stuart Jones. We were not a direct participant in the negotiations and are not, at this point, a party to the agreement.

The United States supports any effort that can genuinely de-escalate the violence in Syria, ensure unhindered humanitarian access, focus energies on the defeat of ISIS and other terrorists, and create the conditions for a credible political resolution of the conflict.

We appreciate the efforts of Turkey and the Russian Federation to pursue this agreement and have encouraged the Syrian opposition to participate actively in the discussions despite the difficult conditions on the ground.

We continue to have concerns about the Astana agreement, including the involvement of Iran as a so-called "guarantor." Iran's activities in Syria have only contributed to the violence, not stopped it, and Iran's unquestioning support for the Assad regime has perpetuated the misery of ordinary Syrians.

In light of the failures of past agreements, we have reason to be cautious. We expect the regime to stop all attacks on civilians and opposition forces, something they have never done. We expect Russia to ensure regime compliance.

The opposition must also live up to its commitments, with Turkey as the guarantor, to separate from designated terrorist groups, including Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham, which continue to hijack the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people for a representative and accountable government.

We nonetheless hope that this arrangement can contribute to a de-escalation

of violence, end the suffering of the Syrian people, and set the stage for a political settlement of the conflict. We look forward to continuing our dialogue with the Russian Federation on efforts to that can responsibly end the Syria conflict. We continue to strongly support the UN-led process in Geneva, under the stewardship of Staffan de Mistura, as the center of international efforts to bring about a negotiated settlement.

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## [Marking a Milestone for School Choice](#)



Yesterday, the President welcomed advocates, administrators, teachers, parents, and students to the White House to mark a milestone for school choice.

This week, Congress is poised to pass legislation that President Trump will sign into law, a spending bill that will give new life and funding to the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program – the only federally funded voucher program in the nation and a case study in school-choice success.

Since its creation in 2004, the Opportunity Scholarship Program has given parents and families hope by giving them a pathway to take their children out of failing public schools and put them in a private school instead.

Over the past 13 years, nearly 20,000 students have applied to the program, and more than 7,500 students have been accepted. And more than 1,150 children are participating in the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program at this very moment – including many of the students who joined us today.

It's no surprise why this program is so wildly popular.

While only 69% of D.C. public-school students graduated from high school last year, a stunning 98% of scholarship recipients walked across the stage to receive their diploma. And 86% of those graduates were accepted into college to continue their education and to continue climbing the ladder of opportunity.

The D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program proves that school choice works. President Trump could not be more proud to extend this crucial program. But

his commitment to school choice doesn't end there.

On January 26th, only a few days after we took office, President Trump declared National School Choice Week for 2017. He called on federal and state lawmakers to expand school choice for "millions of additional students." And now he's fighting every day to make this vision a reality.

President Trump believes that a child's future shouldn't be determined by his or her parents' income or area code. And the next generation shouldn't be trapped in a broken system that puts the status quo ahead of students' success.

Rest assured, President Trump will work tirelessly to ensure that wherever an American child goes to school – whether it's a public school, a private school, a parochial school, a charter school, or at home – that they go to a great school and get a world-class education.

Yesterday, we celebrated a historic achievement – but I know that it's only the first of many.

Under President Donald Trump, we are entering a new era of opportunity, choice, and excellence in America's educational system – and our nation's children will reap the rewards for generations to come.

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## **Press Releases: Notice of Meeting: U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy**

Media Note  
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC  
May 3, 2017

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The U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy will hold a public meeting from 10:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., Tuesday, May 9, 2017, at George Washington

University's Elliot School for International Affairs (Lindner Commons, 1957 E Street, NW Washington, DC 20052).

The meeting will discuss "Echo Chambers, Artificial Intelligence, and Bot-Driven Disinformation: New Challenges in Public Diplomacy." This session will examine how public diplomacy practitioners need to adjust strategies and tactics for modern information ecosystems, including automated disinformation campaigns, algorithmic bias, and the proliferation and diversity of foreign propaganda efforts.

Congressman Mike Rogers, former Chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence (2011-2015), will offer the keynote address, followed by a panel of experts:

- Matt Chessen, Foreign Service Science, Technology, and Foreign Policy Fellow at George Washington University
- Tom Cochran, former White House, State Department Technology Lead and Acquia's Vice President and Chief Digital Strategist
- Markos Kounalakis, J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board and visiting fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution
- Ethan Porter, Assistant Professor, George Washington University's School of Media and Public Affairs
- Ory Rinat, State Department Transition Team Digital Lead

*Can Public Diplomacy Survive the Internet?*, the Commission's latest report, will be available at the event.

This meeting is open to the public, Members, and staff of Congress, the State Department, Department of Defense, the media, and other governmental and non-governmental organizations. To attend and make any requests for reasonable accommodation, e-mail Michelle Bowen at [BowenMC1@state.gov](mailto:BowenMC1@state.gov) by 12:00 p.m. on Monday, May 8, 2017. Please arrive for the meeting by 10:15 a.m. to allow for a prompt meeting start.

The United States Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy appraises U.S. Government activities intended to understand, inform, and influence foreign publics. The Advisory Commission may conduct studies, inquiries, and meetings, as it deems necessary. It may assemble and disseminate information and issue reports and other publications, subject to the approval of the Chairperson, in consultation with the Executive Director. It also may undertake foreign travel in pursuit of its studies and coordinate, sponsor, or oversee projects, studies, events, or other activities that it deems desirable and necessary in fulfilling its functions.

The Advisory Commission consists of seven members appointed by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate. The members shall represent the public interest and shall be selected from a cross section of educational, communications, cultural, scientific, technical, public service, labor, business, and professional backgrounds. Not more than four members shall be from any one political party. The President designates a member to chair the Advisory Commission.

The current members of the Advisory Commission are: Mr. Sim Farar of California, Chairman; Mr. William Hybl of Colorado, Vice Chairman; Ambassador Lyndon Olson of Texas; Ambassador Penne Korth-Peacock of Texas; Ms. Anne Terman Wedner of Illinois; and Ms. Georgette Mosbacher of New York. One seat on the Commission is currently vacant.

To request further information about the meeting or the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, please contact its Executive Director, Shawn Powers, at [PowersSM@state.gov](mailto:PowersSM@state.gov).

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## [Press Releases: Public Schedule: May 3, 2017](#)

May 3, 2017

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### **DEPARTMENT OF STATE PUBLIC SCHEDULE MAY 3, 2017**

#### **SECRETARY REX TILLERSON**

**10:30 a.m.** Secretary Tillerson addresses State Department employees, at the Department of State. Please click [here](#) for more information.  
**(OPEN PRESS COVERAGE)**

*Pre-set time for videographers: 8:15 a.m. from the 23<sup>rd</sup> Street Entrance. Final access time for journalists and still photographers: 9:30 a.m. from the 23<sup>rd</sup> Street Entrance.*

**12:15 p.m.** Secretary Tillerson participates in President Donald Trump's meeting with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, at the White House.  
**(MEDIA DETERMINED BY WHITE HOUSE)**

**5:30 p.m.** Secretary Tillerson meets with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, in Washington, D.C.  
(POOLED CAMERA SPRAY AT TOP)

**ACTING ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR ECONOMIC AND BUSINESS AFFAIRS PATRICIA HASLACH**

**1:30 p.m.** Acting Assistant Secretary Haslach participates in the economic session of the U.S.-Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Dialogue, an annual senior officials' dialogue between the U.S. and ASEAN, hosted by Department of State, at the White-Meyer House Meridian International Center, in Washington, D.C.  
(MEDIA DETERMINED BY HOST)

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## **[Press Releases: State Department Honors Global Emerging Young Leaders](#)**

Notice to the Press  
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC  
May 3, 2017

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The U.S. Department of State will host the annual Emerging Young Leaders Award at 10:00 a.m. on Thursday, May 4, in the Burns Auditorium of the Marshall Center at the U.S. Department of State. Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs Mark Taplin will present the awards.

The Emerging Young Leaders Award program recognizes ten youth (ages 18-25) from around the world for their courage in resolving conflict, promoting security, and creating economic opportunity in challenging environments.

Biographies and photos of the 2017 honorees are available [here](#). Learn more about the award and exchange program at [exchanges.state.gov/eyl](http://exchanges.state.gov/eyl).

Please follow the conversation online using #EYLeaders, and specifically on Twitter using [@ECAatState](#) and [@ECA\\_AS](#).

*Pre-set time for cameras is 9:15 a.m. from the 21<sup>st</sup> Street entrance. Final access time for writers and stills is 9:30 a.m. from the 21<sup>st</sup> Street entrance. Honorees might be available for brief interviews following the ceremony.*

*Media representatives may attend this event upon presentation of one of the following: (1) A U.S. Government-issued identification card (Department of State, White House, Congress, Department of Defense or Foreign Press Center), (2) a media-issued photo identification card, or (3) a letter from their employer on letterhead verifying their employment as a journalist, accompanied by an official photo identification card (driver's license, passport).*

For more information, please contact the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs at [eca-press@state.gov](mailto:eca-press@state.gov)

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