

Press Releases: Department Press Briefing – July 18, 2018

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Index for Today's Briefing

- [NICARAGUA](#)
- [DEPARTMENT](#)
- [RUSSIA/DEPARTMENT](#)
- [DPRK](#)
- [DEPARTMENT](#)
- [DPRK](#)
- [MONTENEGRO/REGION](#)
- [RUSSIA/DEPARTMENT](#)
- [DPRK/DEPARTMENT](#)
- [RUSSIA/DEPARTMENT](#)
- [IRAQ](#)
- [TURKEY](#)
- [AFGHANISTAN](#)
- [RUSSIA/DEPARTMENT](#)

TRANSCRIPT:

3:13 p.m. EDT

MS NAUERT: Hi, everybody. Good afternoon.

QUESTION: Hello.

MS NAUERT: Hope everyone's doing well. Let me start out with a couple of announcements this afternoon. By the way, it's a little chilly in here. I can see that.

QUESTION: Noticed.

MS NAUERT: I know. I see you all have your blankets on and everything. Okay.

First, I'd like to start off talking about Nicaragua, and yesterday the Ortega government sent police and government-aligned armed groups to the town of Masaya in a deadly attack on its own citizens. Reports suggest that at least three people have been killed and dozens have been wounded. The Ortega government's brutal campaign of violence against their own people must stop immediately. Yesterday's assault on Masaya is another glaring example of Ortega's efforts to cling to power no matter the cost to the people of Nicaragua. Since April, attacks on university students, journalists, clergy, have killed hundreds and the international community is uniting in its condemnation of the heinous act.

We welcome recent statements by the United Nations, the Organization of American States, and well over 100 – excuse me, well over a dozen countries condemning the government-sponsored violence. We urge others to join the international call for peace. We continue to support the Episcopal Conference of Nicaragua's efforts to advance negotiations to resolve the current conflict, restore respect for human rights, and achieve a better, more democratic future for all Nicaraguans. We appreciate the church's critical role as a mediator. However, we are

concerned that those officials seeking to bring an end to the crisis are coming under physical and reputational attack by the Ortega government and its supporters. The path to peace for the Ortega government remains through early, free, fair, and transparent elections. We urge the Ortega government to take concrete actions now and to negotiate in good faith.

Next, I'd like to mention that today, USAID Administrator Mark Green is wrapping up his visit to Colombia, and that's where he met with President Santos and President-elect Duque, as well as members of the Colombian congress, to reaffirm our strong partnership with the people and the Government of Colombia. Administrator Green also visited the Colombia-Venezuela border during his trip to the region to meet with some of the more than two million Venezuelans who have fled the crisis in their home country, which was created by the Maduro regime. While there, Administrator Green announced an additional \$6 million in U.S. funding to provide food and health assistance to the thousands of Venezuelan migrants crossing the border every day, and for the Colombian communities that are hosting them.

Lastly, I'd like to announce that Secretary Pompeo will travel to New York on Friday, July the 20th, to meet with Ambassador Nikki Haley and members of the United Nations Security Council, the Republic of Korea Foreign Minister Kang, and Japanese Ambassador to the United Nations Koro Bessho, to discuss the latest on North Korea. The Secretary will also meet with UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to discuss a range of issues, including preparations for the UN General Assembly high-level week in September and also UN reform.

The Secretary will then travel to Simi Valley, California, on Sunday, July the 22nd, to deliver remarks on supporting Iranian voices at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Center for Public Affairs as part of his visit with members of the Iranian-American community in the United States. Secretary Pompeo will travel to Simi – from Simi Valley to Palo Alto, California, where he and Secretary of Defense James Mattis will host the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs Julie Bishop and also the Minister for Defense Marise Payne for this year's Australia-U.S. Ministerial Consultations, otherwise known as AUSMIN. That takes place at the Hoover Institution at Stanford on July 23rd and 24th. This AUSMIN celebrates 100 years of mateship. It marks the U.S. and Australian forces fighting side by side in a battle for the first time. It's been 100 years.

QUESTION: I think you have to say mateship with an Australian accent.

MS NAUERT: (Laughter.) I don't think I could pull that off very well. That dialogue will focus on deepening our strategic alliance and developing initiatives to promote our shared vision of peace, stability, and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific and beyond. The United States and Australia have held strategic talks annually since 1985.

And with that, I would be happy to take your questions.

QUESTION: Thanks, Heather. I want to start with some stuff that comes out of Helsinki.

MS NAUERT: Okay.