

# [Press Releases: Creation of the Cuba Internet Task Force](#)

Media Note  
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC  
January 23, 2018

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As directed in the June 16, 2017 National Security Presidential Memorandum "Strengthening the Policy of the United States Toward Cuba," the Department of State is convening a Cuba Internet Task Force composed of U.S. government and non-governmental representatives to promote the free and unregulated flow of information in Cuba. The task force will examine the technological challenges and opportunities for expanding internet access and independent media in Cuba.

The Task Force's first public meeting will take place Wednesday, February 7, 2018, at the Harry S. Truman Building. Information for those wishing to attend will be provided in a [Federal Registry Notice](#).

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# [Press Releases: U.S.-Mongolia Annual Bilateral Consultations in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia](#)

Media Note  
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC  
January 23, 2018

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On Saturday, January 20, 2018, the United States and Mongolia met for bilateral consultations at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. These talks are an important opportunity to review the bilateral relationship between the United States and Mongolia and our shared interests and goals, both in the region and globally.

Acting Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Susan A. Thornton and Mongolian Ministry of Foreign Affairs State Secretary D. Davaasuren co-chaired the meeting, which was also attended by U.S. representatives from the Department of State, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Agency for International Development, and U.S. Embassy Ulaanbaatar.

During this year's talks, the two sides discussed cooperating on the international response to the threat posed by the DPRK's illicit nuclear and missile programs, bilateral trade and investment, and the finalization of the second Millennium Challenge Corporation compact for Mongolia. In addition, they discussed working together on a shared vision of rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific, and other areas of political, security, health, educational, cultural, and consular cooperation, which includes the recent addition of Mongolia to the list of countries eligible for the H-2A/B visa program.

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## **[Press Releases: State Department Terrorist Designations of Siddhartha Dhar and Abdelatif Gaini](#)**

Media Note

Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC  
January 23, 2018

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The Department of State has designated two ISIS members, Siddhartha Dhar and Abdelatif Gaini, as Specially Designated Global Terrorists (SDGTs) under Section 1(b) of Executive Order (E.O.) 13224. E.O. 13224 imposes sanctions on foreign persons determined to have committed, or pose a significant risk of committing, acts of terrorism that threaten the security of U.S. nationals or the national security, foreign policy, or economy of the United States. These designations seek to deny Dhar and Gaini the resources they need to plan and carry out further terrorist attacks. Among other consequences, all of Dhar's and Gaini's property and interests in property subject to U.S. jurisdiction are blocked, and U.S. persons are generally prohibited from engaging in any transactions with them.

Siddhartha Dhar was a leading member of now-defunct terrorist organization Al-Muhajiroun. In late 2014, Dhar left the United Kingdom to travel to Syria to join ISIS. He is considered to have replaced ISIS executioner Mohammad Emwazi, also known as "Jihadi John." Dhar is believed to be the masked leader who appeared in a January 2016 ISIS video of the execution of several prisoners ISIS accused of spying for the UK.

Abdelatif Gaini is a Belgian-Moroccan citizen believed to be fighting for ISIS in the Middle East. Gaini is connected to UK-based ISIS sympathizers Mohamad Ali Ahmed and Humza Ali, who were convicted in the UK in 2016 of terrorism offenses.

Today's action notifies the U.S. public and the international community that Dhar and Gaini have committed or pose a significant risk of committing acts of terrorism. Terrorism designations expose and isolate organizations and individuals, and deny them access to the U.S. financial system. Moreover, designations can assist the law enforcement activities of U.S. agencies and other governments.

A list of State Department-designated FTOs and SDGTs is available here: <https://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/other/des/index.htm>.

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# Press Releases: U.S. Congratulates India on Joining the Australia Group

Press Statement  
Heather Nauert

Department Spokesperson

Washington, DC  
January 23, 2018

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The United States congratulates India on becoming the newest member of the Australia Group, an informal forum that seeks to prevent the proliferation of chemical and biological weapons, and which now counts 43 members.

This latest accomplishment underscores the Indian government's excellent nonproliferation credentials and commitment to preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, including by regulating the trade of sensitive goods and technologies. Its accession bolsters the effectiveness of the regime's nonproliferation efforts.

India is a valued nonproliferation partner. We look forward to continuing our work with India in the Australia Group in furtherance of our shared nonproliferation goals.

More information about the Australia Group, its work, and membership can be found at: <http://www.australiagroup.net/>.

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# Press Releases: State Department Terrorist Designation of Khalid Batarfi

Media Note  
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC  
January 23, 2018

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The Department of State has designated al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) leader Khalid Batarfi as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT) under section 1(b) of Executive Order (E.O.) 13224. E.O. 13224 imposes sanctions on foreign persons determined to have committed, or pose a significant risk of committing, acts of terrorism that threaten the security of U.S. nationals or the national security, foreign policy, or economy of the United States. This designation seeks to deny Batarfi the resources he needs to plan and carry out further terrorist attacks. Among other consequences, all of Batarfi's property and interests in property subject to U.S. jurisdiction are blocked, and U.S. persons are generally prohibited from engaging in any transactions with him.

Khalid Batarfi is a senior member in AQAP, a designated Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) and SDGT. Batarfi was the top commander for AQAP in Abyan Governate, Yemen, and was a former member of AQAP's shura council. In April 2015, Batarfi was released from the Central Prison of al-Mukalla in Yemen when AQAP militants attacked the prison.

Today's action notifies the U.S. public and the international community that Khalid Batarfi has committed or poses a significant risk of committing acts of terrorism. Terrorist designations expose and isolate organizations and individuals, and deny them access to the U.S. financial system. Moreover, designations can assist the law enforcement activities of U.S. agencies and other governments.

A list of State Department-designated FTOs and SDGTs is available here:  
<https://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/other/des/index.htm>.

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