

Press Releases: Secretary Tillerson's Call with Burma's Armed Forces Commander-in-Chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing

Readout
Office of the Spokesperson

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The below is attributable to Spokesperson Heather Nauert:□

Secretary Tillerson spoke by phone with Burma's Armed Forces Commander-in-Chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing on October 26 to express concern about the continuing humanitarian crisis and reported atrocities in Rakhine State. The Secretary urged Burma's security forces to support the government in ending the violence in Rakhine State and allowing the safe return home of those displaced during this crisis, especially the large numbers of ethnic Rohingya, in accordance with the 1992 Joint Statement with Bangladesh and without further conditions. At the same time, he urged the military to facilitate humanitarian aid for displaced people in affected areas, allow media access, and cooperate with the United Nations to ensure a thorough, independent investigation into all allegations of human rights abuses and violations and to ensure accountability. Secretary Tillerson also condemned the August 25 deadly attacks by militants on security forces in Rakhine State.

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Press Releases: Remarks to the Staff and Families of U.S. Mission Geneva

Press Availability
Rex W. Tillerson

Secretary of State

U.S. Mission Geneva
Geneva, Switzerland
October 26, 2017

MR ALLEGRA: Thank you. Good afternoon, everyone. As many of you know, this is the Secretary's final stop of a very impressive journey. Over the past week he has navigated the substantive and the logistic challenges of Riyadh, of Doha, of Baghdad and Kabul the very same day, and of Islamabad and Delhi, all in a single trip. And today he has added Syria to the mix here in Geneva, which of course has had a long tradition of hosting world leaders to confront the toughest issues of the day. Mr. Secretary, our platform for visiting secretaries, presidents, and the like is part of this mission's DNA. It is itself testimony to the agility, the flexibility, and the know-how of our American and our local staff.

In fact, to best describe this team – and especially with a Scout troop in the house – I did not need to look too far to find the characteristics that matter most. We are trustworthy and we are loyal. We are helpful and friendly to a fault. We are courteous and kind even in the face of provocation. We are obedient and cheerful even as we lack of sleep. We are thrifty in our own work and that which we expect from others. We are brave in confronting our adversaries. We are clean because, well, this is Switzerland. (Laughter.) And we are reverent to the calling of public service, and we are all very, very glad to have you here today.

With that, Mr. Secretary, thank you for taking the time to spend a few moments with us, and welcome to Geneva. (Applause.)

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Well, thank you, and it is a real pleasure to have a few minutes to spend with you. It's – that's the high point of each of those stops along the way. I didn't quite get to make it to the mission in Afghanistan. There were some logistical challenges there, but I look forward to going back.

I really appreciate the work of Charge d'Affaires Allegra, and we found we

have a common bond that we didn't realize, or I didn't realize. As it turns out we were both at the Boy Scout Jamboree in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho back in 1969, if I'm remembering right – somewhere in there. (Laughter.) So here we are standing on the same turf a half a world away – and I won't tell how many years later, but anyway.

And I think that recitation of the Scout law as a guiding set of principles – I've used that in my former career. I did a lot of speaking to groups of business leaders and graduate business schools, and they would always say, "Well, what's the best way to build an organizational values system around?" I said, "Just get the Boy Scout handbook out. It's all right there. Everything you need to create the proper culture for an organization are right there in those 12 points of the Scout Law." And that has always governed my values system having grown up with that. And I also have told people that everything I learned about leadership I learned in Boy Scout junior leader training. It was all just downhill from there. (Laughter.)

But again, a real pleasure to be here with the mission here in Geneva. And as Ted was saying, you have a very different role than most of the missions I visit. Most missions, of course, it's country-focused, country-specific, heavy in development and aid programs on the ground, so a very different kind of work than you do here. Here you have a very diverse set of requirements, and you have people like me and others kind of parachuting in and out on you at all times, and your need to be prepared to facilitate the important work that we have to do here that's so vital to moving these – some of our most challenging issues forward. So it does take a different kind of mindset and it takes a different skillset, and we recognize that each of you provide that unique capability for us, and it's so vital to our success here in Geneva.

So we appreciate all of you and we appreciate the families that are here. Our families are so important to our success – our spouses supporting us. I know Geneva's not a real hardship duty place, but it's a long way from home, and so all of the same sacrifices when you miss some family events back home. I know from having been deployed overseas myself on an unaccompanied basis you miss some birthdays, you miss some weddings, you miss some graduations, and that's a sacrifice on everyone's part. Hopefully down the road you'll reflect back on that time that you had here – and many of you, I know, have been in postings elsewhere – and the richness of what you experienced is going to more than outweigh the sacrifice that went with it. But we know it doesn't come free. It does come with a sacrifice, and we appreciate that.

So again, I'm really pleased to be here. I'm going to talk about three important values that I articulated the first day I walked into the State Department and gave my remarks on the steps. There were three things I said that were important to me coming to an organization that I do not know. I don't know the culture of the organization. I certainly know its reputation and its history and patriotism.

But there were three things that I told people that this is – these are three things I want everyone to try to work hard to do. And the first is safety and security, that we simply have to take care of ourselves first and you have to take personal responsibility for that. And then once you do that, take

responsibility for those around you. Many of the assignments – and many of you have been in those assignments – involve a great deal of risk. We feel an obligation to ensure that every day you are protected and taken care of, but you own a part of that as well.

So we are very committed to the safety and security of each of you. We want you to be committed to each other as well. As some of the folks back at the State Department will tell you, every meeting I have starts with, “Are all of our people safe?” And we go around the room in case anybody’s got any concerns. If they have any worries whatsoever, they get dealt with that day. That’s how serious I take it.

The second thing is that we wanted to be accountable. I say we have to hold ourselves accountable for what we do, for what people expect of us. And when we deliver, we’re accountable. When we fail or we have shortcomings or mistakes, we own those as well. And that’s okay. We learn from them. We understand how to fix it the next time. But we hold ourselves accountable. And if we do that, we can hold others accountable. And in particular, we can hold our foreign counterparties accountable, because we can’t hold them accountable if we don’t hold ourselves accountable.

And the last thing is respect. Every human being has an important role to play in this department. It doesn’t matter what role they may be playing, whether they’re in the mail room, driving a vehicle, or they’re at one of the most complex Foreign Service officer desks. Every one of those roles is important, because everything everyone does enables someone else to get their job done. So we should treat each other with that respect. And if we treat each other with respect, it becomes just a practice, a habit. We will treat others externally with respect as well, and that projects the best of America – a compassionate, caring people. And you’re that face of America on this – in this mission here, and so I’d ask you to be safe, take care of yourself, be accountable, own your responsibilities and hold yourself accountable, and treat each other and everyone with the respect they deserve. We’re all just human beings trying to do our job the best we can.

So it’s a pleasure to be with you and a pleasure to see the faces that are here. It connects me when I get back home that out here it’s not just a bunch of action memos and info memos. (Laughter.) There’s real people out there working hard every day on behalf of the American people, and I want you to know I appreciate it. I appreciate it very much. So great to see you. (Applause.)

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[Press Releases: Briefing by Deputy Assistant Secretary Scott Busby On the Release of the Report on Human Rights Abuses and Censorship in North Korea](#)

Special Briefing
Scott Busby

Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor

Press Briefing Room
Washington, DC
October 26, 2017

MS NAUERT: Next, I would like to introduce you to one of the – our other deputy assistant secretaries. Come on up here. This is Scott Busby. Scott works for our DRL Bureau, which is Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. He's here to talk about the DPRK, North Korea. Today, consistent with the North Korea Sanctions and Policy Enhancement Act of 2016, the State Department has

released its third report on North Korea human rights abuses and also censorship. In conjunction with the report, the Department of Treasury sanctioned persons and entities identified in this report. And our Deputy Assistant Secretary Mr. Busby will talk a little bit about that and take a few of your questions, and then I'll start the regular briefing.

Sir, go ahead.

MR BUSBY: Well, thank you, Heather. And good afternoon, everyone. Today, as part of our continuing efforts to promote accountability for North Korean officials, as Heather said, we're releasing our third report on serious human rights abusers from the DPRK. And this report identifies seven individuals and three entities as responsible for serious human rights abuses or censorship in North Korea.

In conjunction with the report, the Treasury Department has added these 10 North Korean individuals and entities to the Specially Designated Nationals and Blocked Persons List. Both actions are consistent with the North Korean Sanctions and Policy Enhancement Act of 2016. Like the two prior reports, this report shines a spotlight on serious human rights abuses committed by the DPRK regime, including extrajudicial killings, forced labor, torture, prolonged arbitrary detention, as well as rape, forced abortions, and other sexual violence.

In particular, this report focuses on the many human rights abuses that underwrite the regime's weapons program, including forced labor, re-education through labor camps, and overseas labor contracts. Thousands of North Koreans are sent abroad every year to work in slave-like conditions, earning revenue for the regime. The government also deploys security officials abroad to monitor the activities of North Korean citizens and to forcibly repatriate individuals who seek asylum. This report includes individuals and entities responsible for these types of abuses.

With these efforts, we aim to send a signal to all DPRK Government officials, particularly prison camp managers and mid-level officials, that we can and we will expose human rights abuses and censorship in the DPRK and that these individuals will suffer consequences for such actions. Thank you very much.

MS NAUERT: Any questions?

MR BUSBY: Yes, ma'am.

MS NAUERT: Go ahead. Kylie, go right ahead.

QUESTION: I have a quick question. There's one individual on the list who's based in China at the consul general in Shenyang. I'm not sure how to pronounce that. But what do you expect China to do as a result of the U.S. pointing to this individual? Do you expect them to take action against them? What's the expectation?

MR BUSBY: This individual was included in the report because of his responsibility for facilitating the return of North Korean asylum seekers to North Korea. His case has been raised with China. I don't want to speak for

what China may or may not do with his case, but we've brought it to their attention.

QUESTION: What are the possibilities for what they might do?

MR BUSBY: The range of possibilities, right, including expelling from the country.

MS NAUERT: Janne.

QUESTION: Thank you very much. Regarding North Korean human rights abuse, do you expect North Korean leader Kim Jong-un putting into ICC, International Criminal Court, for abuse?

MR BUSBY: Well, a decision like that is obviously not one that the U.S. Government takes. That's a decision that can be taken by any number of other entities. So again, I don't think I can speak for what those entities may or may not do with regards to Kim Jong-un.

QUESTION: Can you give us an estimate of what assets are actually frozen as a result of the sanctions that were announced by Treasury today? Are there any significant assets falling under U.S. jurisdiction that have actually now been frozen as a result of their acts?

MR BUSBY: I'd have to refer you to our Treasury Department for that sort of information. I don't have those sorts of details.

QUESTION: And just one follow-up on the question about potential sanctions: If you don't know or can't tell us what kinds of action China might take, and you don't know, in fact, whether China will actually take any action, why is there any reason to believe that there will be any accountability for the individual that you've identified, or any consequence?

MR BUSBY: Again, the report is just out today. We have communicated the results of this report, the data in this report, with the Chinese and with other governmental authorities in the region. It's now up to China to decide what to do with it.

QUESTION: Have they ever previously acted against a North Korean official who has been similarly identified?

MR BUSBY: This is the first such individual mentioned in a report like this, but –

QUESTION: But surely you've raised other issues with them in the past, or other individuals.

MR BUSBY: Yeah. I don't know off the top of my head. I couldn't tell you.

QUESTION: You don't know –

MR BUSBY: I could tell you off the top of my head, but we could get back to you.

QUESTION: Great. It'd be interesting to know if they ever have acted.

MS NAUERT: Abbie from NBC News, final question.

QUESTION: Hi. I wanted to ask – I believe that this is not the first time you have decided to target mid-level officials within the North Korean Government, and I believe the philosophy was the idea that people would feel a different level of responsibility in that mid-level position. Have you seen any effect by undertaking that – targeting that particular level of people within the North Korean Government?

MR BUSBY: So very hard to get information out of North Korea, but we have heard from defectors that there – they have seen policy changes and in some cases the harshness of their treatment has been lessened, they have said, as a consequence of sanctions such as these. So we have heard that from defectors.

MS NAUERT: Thank you so much. Deputy Assistant Secretary Scott Busby, thank you for coming in.

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[Press Releases: Briefing by Deputy Assistant Secretary Jim Walsh On the State Department's Role in Combating the Opioid Crisis](#)

Special Briefing
Jim Walsh, Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Narcotics And Law Enforcement Affairs
Press Briefing Room
Washington, DC
October 26, 2017

MS NAUERT: Glad to have you here. Everybody, thanks so much for coming. I brought a few extra guests with me today as a part of our effort to try to bring more of our experts into the room to provide you information on timely issues. I just want to add on a personal note to that my colleagues who are joining us have served at the State Department for 15 and 17 years, respectively. They are both Civil servants who have done tremendous work on behalf of the department and the American public.

We have a tremendous amount of respect for both our functional and regional bureaus, our Foreign Service officers, our career Civil servants, and I want to highlight some of the excellent work that they are doing. They are tremendous patriots. They have served all around the world – many of them have – and are really example of State Department’s best and brightest.

I’d like to start by introducing you today to Jim Walsh. He is the deputy assistant secretary for a bureau which is called INL. You probably heard the President a short while ago talk about the opioid crisis here in the United States. The President talked about how, through a whole-of-government approach, we will aggressively fight the addiction throughout the administration – the addiction crisis in the United States.

The President said we can be an end – a generation to end this epidemic. The State Department is also doing its part in trying to do away with the problem of drug addiction and all of that. We play a key role in combatting the deadly epidemic. Our bureau dedicated to drugs and law enforcement, INL, is leading efforts around the globe related to the opioids crisis, so to provide some details on this and answer your questions on the issue, I’d like to welcome to the podium our Deputy Assistant Secretary Jim Walsh from the INL Bureau. That stands for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement. He has a quick address for you. We’ll take a few questions, and then I’d like to introduce you to another one of our deputy assistant secretaries.

MR WALSH: Thank you, Heather. Good afternoon, everyone. With the President and First Lady just speaking about our nation's drug crisis, I'd like to share a few comments about how the State Department is addressing the opioid epidemic. With heroin and synthetic opioids fueling this crisis produced overseas, transnational criminal organizations moving this deadly product, our national strategy to respond to this crisis must include an international component. Responding to this crisis is a top priority for the administration, and here at the State Department we're leveraging our partnerships across the globe to stem the flow of these killer drugs. We're pulling diplomatic levers both bilaterally and multilaterally, and using foreign assistance to protect U.S. communities.

Effective October 18th, criminals now have a tougher time producing fentanyl because two major ingredients needed to produce this dangerous drug are now internationally controlled. The State Department led a robust diplomatic campaign to advocate for this result, which culminated in a unanimous international vote to impose the new restrictions. This is just one important step in our efforts to reduce the supply of deadly synthetic opioids and ultimately help save American lives.

On the other side of the globe we are working with China. We are encouraging China to continue to crack down on illegal production and trafficking of synthetic opioids. We have made notable progress on this front to date. In March and July 2017, in response to U.S. requests, China agreed to establish new controls on five dangerous synthetic drugs, including carfentanyl, which you may know is a hundred times more deadly and potent than fentanyl. Next week the State Department, along with our interagency partners at the Department of Justice, will travel to China to take part in a recurring experts-level counternarcotics working group meeting to further expand this cooperation.

We are also using foreign assistance to strengthen Mexico's ability to stop illicit drugs from reaching our border. The INL Bureau efforts on the ground, including building Mexico's capacity to interdict illegal drugs, improves security along our southwest border and reduced production of heroin and synthetic drugs, and we will take down clandestine drug labs. On December 1st we'll gather again with not only Mexico but our northern partner, Canada, who is facing its own serious fentanyl challenge. This will take place at the next North American Drug Dialogue.

Beyond the supply work – supply-side work, our international drug demand reduction programs are discovering new approaches that are being adopted by U.S., state, and local prevention and treatment professionals. INL has developed a scientifically grounded, evidence-based, universal curriculum for both treatment and prevention. This will head off and break the chain of addiction in a more effective manner. Our overseas demand reduction tools and global research will also help address the opioid crisis domestically.

The bottom line is this: We at the State Department are moving forward and are full aware of the gravity of this crisis. With over 64,000 Americans dead from overdoses in 2016, with drug traffickers taking advantage of new ways to move and sell their product, including through the dark web, and rogue

chemists developing assiduous new synthetic drugs at an alarming rate, we must constantly be adapting our approach in responding to new and deadly realities.

This challenge is a dire one, and it will continue to be a top priority for the department.

Thank you. I'll take a few questions.

MS NAUERT: Who would like to start? Come on, no one's curious in this room? You're reporters.

QUESTION: I'll do it.

MS NAUERT: Okay.

QUESTION: All right.

MS NAUERT: Said, is that you?

QUESTION: I'll take a shot at it. How are you coordinating your effort with, let's say, countries such as your allies like Egypt and so on, where there is an emerging problem similar to yours?

MR WALSH: Sure. We – as I said, we work in the multilateral and bilateral arena. Through the international multilateral arena, we meet on a regular basis in the International Narcotics Control Board, and we also work in a bilateral through our embassies. Through our Drug Demand Reduction Programs, we're also collecting a lot of information to gather an appreciation of how dangerous this – fentanyl, in particular, is occurring throughout the world. Our statistics are not there, but it is – we are getting evidence that it is reaching a lot of other countries as well. And so through the collection of information and sharing of our techniques for drug demand reduction, we're working with them.

QUESTION: Would that be security agency-to-security agency coordination, or at the diplomatic level? How is –

MR WALSH: Mostly diplomatic, with Egypt in particular.

MS NAUERT: We'll take one more question. Go ahead.

QUESTION: Thank you so much. Regarding the – Carmen Ria Rodriguez, Radio Marti. Would you say that it's coming from abroad, or is this home-elaborated? What would the major supplier be?

MR WALSH: The major supply of the heroin, as you heard from our President, is coming from Mexico, in fact. DEA estimates about 90 percent. Of the fentanyl, the vast majority of it does come from China. And we – what we are seeing is that it's either being trafficked through Mexico and being combined with the heroin, or it's being directly shipped to the United States via mail.

MS NAUERT: Thank you so much.

MR WALSH: Thank you.

MS NAUERT: Thank you, sir. Appreciate it. And thank you for your expertise and your time. Glad to have you.

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[Press Releases: Press Availability in Geneva, Switzerland](#)

Press Availability
Rex W. Tillerson

Secretary of State

Geneva, Switzerland
October 26, 2017

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Well, obviously this has been a – although a number of days, not a long trip, but it's been a lengthy trip in terms of the number of stops. And so I have a number of, I think, observations I want to offer you. So I've put them down on paper here so I don't overlook some things. So I'm going to go through that and then welcome your questions at that point.

So as you know, we're now at the last stop of this weeklong trip to important capitals in the region, many of which are still in broad and significant conflict. At each stop, we have reaffirmed the United States will continue to provide global leadership, promote security, stability, and prosperity for all people. And in doing so, obviously we will deliver the same to the American people.

That was evident in Riyadh, where we began the trip. I was very honored to take part in the inaugural Joint Coordination Committee alongside His Majesty King Salman and Prime Minister Abadi. That event highlighted the strength of

the United States bilateral relationship with both Saudi Arabia and Iraq and how we continue to promote greater cooperation between them. We believe a deepening Saudi-Iraqi relationship is not only vital for stabilization and reconstruction of Iraq but also for the stability of the entire region.

In the spirit of the Riyadh summit earlier this year, the United States continues to work closely with Qatar and our Gulf partners to crack down on terrorists and those who finance them. All of our Gulf partners are putting forward a renewed effort to counterterrorism. We must expand those efforts through greater cooperation, coordination, and information-sharing among all.

The United States remains troubled and concerned about the far-reaching consequences of the Gulf dispute. Our message is clear: The GCC is strongest when it is united. We will continue our efforts to open lines of communication to pursue that unity, and as President Trump has said, we remain ready to assist with any mediation efforts.

U.S. leadership has been and continues to be instrumental and necessary in Iraq, and I welcomed the opportunity to meet with Prime Minister Abadi separately on the heels of the Joint Coordination Committee meeting. Under the prime minister's leadership, ISIS is in retreat. In the words of President Trump, "the end of the ISIS caliphate is in sight." With the coalition's support, the Iraqi Security Forces have successfully liberated now more than 90 percent of the territory ISIS once held in Iraq, allowing more than 2 million Iraqis to return home. And today, Iraqis are rebuilding their communities. More than 360 Iraq-led, UN-implemented, coalition-funded stabilization projects are underway and will continue.

We know these victories on the battlefield are not sufficient to create a stable, prosperous Iraq, so we continue to seek greater international support to shore up the Iraqi economy and bolster ongoing humanitarian and stabilization efforts. We are glad to see expanding connections between Iraq and its neighbors, as the Coordination Council meeting in Riyadh clearly illustrates.

The tensions that have played out in northern Iraq over the past month are concerning. The United States is a friend to all Iraqis, including our friends in Baghdad and our friends in Iraq's Kurdish region. We are disappointed the parties have not yet been able to reach an entirely peaceful resolution of the recent tensions.

Subsequent to my meeting with Prime Minister Abadi, I had a very lengthy telephone call with Kurdistan President Barzani. The United States stands ready to assist Baghdad and Erbil to chart a positive course forward in support of a unified, federal, and democratic Iraq through peaceful, political means. I called upon both sides to avoid all conflict between Iraq and Peshmerga forces, and I encouraged Prime Minister Abadi to accept Erbil's overtures for talks on the basis of the Iraqi constitution.

The remainder of the trip focused on South Asia and the President's new strategy for the region and Afghanistan's future. As President Trump made clear, achieving peace, stability, and prosperity in Afghanistan requires the

involvement of regional partners – most importantly, Pakistan and India. Our goal is to work with our regional partners to root out terrorist safe havens in Afghanistan and Pakistan so that South Asia can enter a period of peace and prosperity. The road to a stable, sovereign, unified, and democratic Afghanistan requires the Afghan Government to advance their commitment to reform. President Ghani assured me that he and his government are working towards reforms, particularly anticorruption efforts to achieve real progress for the Afghan people.

Pakistan is a key partner for the stability of the region. We have a long history of positive partnership with Pakistan, but Pakistan must do more to eradicate militants and terrorists operating within its country. The people of Pakistan have much to gain from a stable, peaceful Afghanistan, and a region that denies safe haven to terrorists. This was my principal message to Prime Minister Abbasi, Chief of Army Staff Bajwa, and the Pakistani leadership.

In India, I continued to share our message about the President's South Asia strategy and India's role. We're grateful for India's generous contributions to the development of Afghanistan, and we hope to see greater involvement from them. As I outlined last week in Washington, we will work to make the U.S.-India Strategic Partnership the foundation for greater peace, stability, and growth of the Indo-Pacific region. We support India's responsible rise and want to find new ways to partner with them and other likeminded countries in Asia. I had a very comprehensive discussion on economic and security links with Prime Minister Modi, National Security Advisor Doval, and Foreign Minister Swaraj. It is essential that our two democracies work together to address the challenges facing both of our peoples.

And I just completed a few moments ago a fruitful discussion with UN Special Envoy de Mistura regarding ongoing developments in Syria. With ISIS on the brink of defeat, we continue our efforts to de-escalate the violence in Syria and support the Geneva process called for under UN Security Council Resolution 2254 to allow the Syrian people to chart a new political course. As we've said many times before, the United States wants a whole and unified Syria with no role for Bashar al-Assad in the government.

The United States remains committed to providing leadership in every region of the world. And as we lead, we will continue to ask more of others to take up their responsible roles as well so that they can ultimately provide for their own people and uphold their own sovereignty. As we do, we'll provide greater security and prosperity for the American people.

MODERATOR: Thank you. For questions, we'll start with Nick and go down the table.

QUESTION: The statement on Assad seems to differ but – from what you had said in Turkey this summer, I mean, a clear call for him to leave. Does that reflect a change in position that we've been – you had indicated it was really up to Syrians to decide themselves.

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Well, it's our view that – and I've said this many times

as well – that we do not believe there is a future for the Assad regime, the Assad family. I think I've said it on a number of occasions. The reign of the Assad family is coming to an end, and the only issue is how should that be brought about. And we believe it can be brought about and will be brought about as part of the UN Security Council – implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 2254, which, as you know, has a very specific prescribed procedure for elections and the development of a new constitution.

I think what – the only thing that changed is when this administration came into office, we took a view that it is not a prerequisite that Assad go before that process starts, rather the mechanism by which Assad departs will likely emerge from that process.

QUESTION: I've heard European diplomats describe Syria as a triumph of Iran, because Iran has been so essential for the Assad government. How do you make sure that's not the case? And did you get any assurances from de Mistura as he – is there a timeline for these negotiations to start?

SECRETARY TILLERSON: I do not see Syria as a triumph for Iran. I see Iran as a hanger-on. Iran has not particularly been successful in liberating areas. The Russian Government, providing significant air support for Syrian regime forces, have been successful. They've had their successes. We've had our successes, enormous successes, with our coalition forces. So I don't think that Iran should be given credit for the defeat of ISIS in any way in Syria. Rather, I think they have somewhat taken advantage of the situation with their presence there.

In terms of Iran's future influence in Syria, again, I think that will ultimately emerge from the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 2254, through the new constitution, the elections, and whatnot.

QUESTION: Sir, talk about your meeting with the Pakistanis. Their official news agency has talked about how the United States has presented them with a list of 75 terrorists that the Pakistanis claim they're – that none of them are Pakistanis, that the head of Lashkar-e Tayyiba is not on that list, and that they provided you with a list of 100 terrorists that they would like the United States to go after. Could you talk about what you specifically laid out for them when you talked to them the other day?

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Well, I think what you just described is a very healthy exchange of information on terrorists, which is what we really hope to achieve with Pakistan. We have provided them specific asks, beyond just names of individuals. We've provided them specific asks. But we've also invited greater sharing from them as well. So we expect to receive information from them that will be useful.

And the specific location on any given day of where certain individuals or certain cells may be located – they do move around. As you know, the Pakistan-Afghan border is quite porous; in fact, it's ill-defined. And so we're less concerned about are they in Pakistani territory, in Afghanistan territory, or – as we are obtaining information so that we can eliminate them.

QUESTION: I'll stay on the Pakistan theme. The reaction that we are reading from Pakistan today is that your visit did not go over well, that there was a sense that you were lecturing Islamabad from Delhi and from Kabul. I want to ask you if you think – what practically you think you've accomplished that you would not have accomplished without being there.

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Well, I would not have characterized my direct discussions with them as lecturing at all. It was a very good and open exchange. In fact, we probably listened 80 percent of the time and we talked 20 percent. And it was important to me, because I have not engaged with Pakistani leadership previously. And so my objective was to listen a lot, to hear their perspective.

We put our points forward. We put our expectations forward in no uncertain terms. There has been significant engagement prior to my visit, and there'll be further engagement in the future, as we work through how we want to, as I said, exchange information and achieve the objective of eliminating these terrorist organizations, wherever they may be located. We had – it was very frank, very candid. We had the joint meeting with Prime Minister Abbasi and the full leadership team. And then I had a second meeting with Army General Bajwa and a couple of his close advisers, so we could have a more thorough discussion about some of the specifics.

But I think it was a very open, candid, and frank exchange, and it's – there's nothing to be achieved by lecturing, but we should be very clear about expectations and what we're asking. And either people will step up and meet those expectations or they won't. We're going to chart our course consistent with what Pakistan not just says they do but what they actually do.

QUESTION: Can I – I'm curious about the first two, first three – several stops, but in terms of the Saudi and Iraq rapprochement. I think it's pretty clear that since almost the – very early on, February or March, that there has been significant progress or – in bringing the two closer together. But I just wonder how hopeful or how realistic it is for them to – Riyadh and Baghdad to come together in such a way that it does, in fact, achieve the purpose of not just helping to rebuild Iraq but also blunting the Iranian influence, when just a couple days after your meeting in Riyadh and your going to Baghdad Abadi is in Tehran.

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Well, I think – and I think Prime Minister Abadi, in fact, commented – or at least I read some comments he made on that – on the visit to Iran. I think we have to be realistic and understand and recognize Iraq has a very long border with Iran. There are long – not just decades, centuries-long relations between Iran and Iraq, and we're not going to eliminate all contact between those two countries. There are legitimate contacts that should continue – economic, trade, things like that. What we're saying to Iraq is, "You must develop the capacity to stand on your own and resist that influence." And the way that we can help Iraq do that is to ensure the Iraqi people understand, because there has been – and I think Foreign Minister Jubair mentioned this in the press avail we had in Riyadh – there's been more than three decades of isolation almost between Iraq and the

GCC countries, long – and he explained why.

But historically, centuries-long, those are their tribal brothers in Iraq. These are all the same people. Iraqis are Arab. Iraqis are not Persian. So whether it's Iraqi-Sunni or it's Iraqi-Shia, it's Iraqi-Shia Arabs. They're not – they're not Persians. And one of the – I think the things that the Saudis are keen to achieve is a reconnection with their longstanding tribal brothers. And when we had early discussions back in February and I had one of my first meetings with Foreign Minister Jubeir in Hamburg, we talked about the importance of – that this is an opportunity for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: Take the lead and reconnect with their Arab brothers in Iraq.

And he very bravely – if you remember, he very bravely then, I think in early March, made that first approach by going to Baghdad and made the first visit. That then resulted in our encouraging Prime Minister Abadi to reciprocate by coming to Saudi Arabia. That began to open the doors. And so we've worked hard to facilitate and encourage that. They will do it on their own. We're there to encourage it and to the extent we can help facilitate that opening. And it's moved a long way in a short period of time. The kingdom is very committed to it. In my meetings with the crown prince, he's very committed to that rapprochement. The Kuwaitis have committed there's going to be a reconstruction conference jointly held with the Iraqis next year, early next year in Kuwait.

So I think these are – it's important to facilitate Iraq, again, standing on its own, that it doesn't have to look only to the east. It has important partners – security partners, but more importantly, economic partners – to the south. And I think this is how we strengthen Iraq as an independent country, and they can make their own decisions then.

QUESTION: Can I go back to Pakistan for a second? Is it accurate to say that the message you received from the Pakistanis was, "We will not be coerced," that they delivered to you a message of defiance in the face of the U.S. trying to pressure them? And did – that's kind of one question. And the second question is: Did they respond at all to you about the U.S.'s strategy of deepening relations with India?

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Well, in answer to your first question, that would be a complete mischaracterization of the meeting.

QUESTION: Okay, okay.

SECRETARY TILLERSON: It was a very open, frank conversation that began with a retracing of the history between the U.S. and Pakistan, which, by and large, has been a very, very positive history. We've had a deterioration in that relationship over the last 10 years, but prior to that we had very strong relations with Pakistan. Throughout the Cold War to the post-Cold War, the post-9/11, they were a tremendous partner in the post-9/11 years in terms of helping us apprehend a number of the individuals that were involved in the 9/11 attacks.

So what's happened has happened more recently, and I think what was important

to me is that let's reconnect and remember that it hasn't always been this way. So there was no lecturing and there was no lecturing of them back to me either. I view it as a respectful relationship. We have some very legitimate asks, some very legitimate concerns that we need their help addressing. I said to them, "You can do it or you can decide not to do it. And if you decide you don't want to do it, just let us know. We'll adjust our plans accordingly and we'll deal with it ourselves."

And it's not – that's not a threat. It's just a matter of fact. We have to deal with the conditions on the ground. And as you know, the entire South Asia strategy is a conditions-based strategy, and so the same message to Pakistan was: "Here's what we need for Pakistan to do. We're asking you to do this; we're not demanding anything. You're a sovereign country. You'll decide what you want to do, but understand this is what we think is necessary. And if you don't want to do that, don't feel you can do it, we'll adjust our tactics and our strategies to achieve the same objective a different way."

QUESTION: And what was their response?

SECRETARY TILLERSON: I think they share the same concern we have about the presence of terrorism. They are – they have been victims of terrorism. The Pakistanis have suffered significant losses fighting terrorism themselves. My conversation with them was about what we feel is important for Pakistan's future stability. And yes, what they can do will have an important impact on creating conditions for reconciliation and peace talks in Afghanistan, but it's not just about Afghanistan. It's about our concern for Pakistan's long-term stability as well.

MODERATOR: Gardiner.

QUESTION: And the India question – and the India question, whether that came up, the deeper relationship with India.

SECRETARY TILLERSON: There was not a lot of discussion about that, other than they clearly have their differences with India, they have their concerns along their border with India. I made the observation to them, "You have two very troubled borders. You have one in Afghanistan, you have one with India," and that we're willing to help on both of those borders, and we're not just here to talk about the situation on the Afghan border. We're also here to talk about how can we lower the tensions on the border with India, and there are legitimate concerns on both sides of that border as well.

QUESTION: Sir, as you know, your power rests in how closely you are seen to represent the President. There are significant doubts in the countries we visited when we talked to diplomats that you are the – the President's clear representative. They're worried about what they see as some chaos in Washington. How do you respond to that, and how do you reassure your interlocutors that you are indeed speaking for the President of the United States?

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Well, I reviewed this trip with the President prior to my departure. Every stop, I told him here's where I plan to go, assuming I

can get into certain locations, here's the objective, here's what I'm attempting to achieve, any guidance he wanted to give me before I left. So – and this is the normal way I do things when I go out on the road, is we sit and talk before I leave, and I spoke to him on Friday right before I headed to Andrews. So if something comes up along the way, obviously, then we can talk.

So far this week, I know that he's been getting readouts of all of my meetings as well. Nothing's come up because they've pretty well gone according to what we expected at this point, no real big surprises. So I'm out implementing the foreign policy that's been adopted by the President at the – through the interagency process of the National Security Council. We develop the policy, the President approves it, and then it's up to me. My responsibility is to go out and execute that policy. And so this trip was about executing against the South Asia policy, executing against the recent free and open Indo-Pacific policy.

MODERATOR: Okay. Felicia.

QUESTION: On that note, what was the reception at all? This new policy, did people understand the policy? That – people are saying now that ISIS is on the decline, there is no comprehensive U.S. policy, so we're kind of back to the beginning.

SECRETARY TILLERSON: For which – for which?

QUESTION: In Afghanistan and that – in Afghanistan primarily, it's –

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Well, no, I think the South Asia policy, which deals with Afghanistan, Pakistan, India – and as you recall, when that was released and described, we were very clear to people that this is not just about Afghanistan. That in fact, as we looked at past policy decisions that have been taken about Afghanistan, as I studied those and we began to formulate the essentials of this policy, the framework which then we flesh out through the interagency, my observation was we had always looked at Afghanistan in isolation and we kept trying to solve Afghanistan in Afghanistan. And that, to me, made no sense.

So we – as we began to think about it at the State Department, we zoomed it out and we said, well, what else is affecting this? And of course, immediately, Pakistan comes into the viewfinder, but then suddenly you realize India has an influence. And in fact, there's a Central Asian influence with the C5 countries and we've already had meetings with them in New York on the margins of the UN General Assembly to begin to talk about the situation in Afghanistan with them. You zoom out further and China has a role to play.

And so what we've done is really expand the elements that could lead to success in Afghanistan and build the policies and the strategies around incorporating what others could do. And maybe it's only a piece of it, but that piece could be critical to achieving the ultimate success. So what we've been doing is explaining everyone's role to them, and the receive – what

we've received in the region is enormously positive over the South Asian strategy. People have said this is the first time we've seen a strategy. I think many have said, yes, we've been fighting a war in Afghanistan for 16 years; when we've been fighting, it was 16 one-year strategies. There was never anything in mind as to how does this come to an end. And we have put in place a very comprehensive approach that lays out a roadmap of how we think we can achieve it. We now have to go execute.

QUESTION: When you say "When does this come to an end," when did the conditions-based requirements – like, what is the timeline on that? Conditions-based could mean another 16 years, couldn't it?

SECRETARY TILLERSON: No, it will not be another 16 years. As the President was clear, it's not an unlimited time, it's not a blank check, and it's not – we're not going to say, "Date certain here." That's the mistake everyone's made in the past. That's what – that's how you end up with 16 one-year strategies. It's conditions-based.

As I said, we have articulated specific role and responsibilities for regional players, and we need to see them delivering on their part of that solution. It is all built around creating conditions where the Taliban and the leadership of the Taliban that is – that has the will to do so is ready to say, "Enough is enough." And what we've made clear to the Taliban: You will never achieve a military victory. And this is the conversation we do have through backchannels to them and through the Doha office: Do you want your children and grandchildren fighting this same fight? Because that's the way it's going to be if you don't find a different way to go forward.

The Afghan Government has a specific responsibility to create the conditions that are inviting the Taliban to come to the table. And as I said in my remarks, I think, in Afghanistan, there is a role for the Taliban in this government. Please come. Please come and take up your role, but you must come on the condition that you renounce terrorism, you renounce violent extremism, and you will never take up those efforts again. So that's – there is a very specific strategy and we've never had one before.

QUESTION: Might you say –

QUESTION: Sir, would you say anything about North Korea? They've been threatening to blow up that bomb over the Pacific again.

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Yes, I've heard the threats. (Laughter.) I've heard the threats.

QUESTION: Just really, really briefly, in your speech – the CSIS speech – you talked about the anchors, the Indo-Pak region and the four anchors – U.S, Australia, Japan, and India.

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Japan – yeah.

QUESTION: And I'm just wondering – so the Indians are the first to hear this, I guess, directly from you post-speech – is this something that they're excited about? I presume they are, but I just want to – or were they –

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Yes, but it's an –

QUESTION: Are they a little bit nervous about –

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Yes, but I would be the first to acknowledge it is a new approach as well, and I think that we've had a – the U.S. has had positive relations with India for 70 years but it's never quite moved to that next level, and I think that's in part due to – on both sides. From time to time, the other side has taken a step back from the relationship for their own reasons. What we're trying to put in place is make the case that this needs to move to a different level and be sustained, as I said, for the next 100 years.

We have the standing trilateral with Japan, India, and the U.S., and actually, a lot of this – we began the early conversations around the corners of what this was going to be in that last trilateral just to get some reaction. I think Japan, they understand it probably better than anyone already, and we have talked to the Australians about participating as well. Everyone has to decide that's the right thing to do. So we're – this is week one –

QUESTION: Right.

SECRETARY TILLERSON: – of executing this one.

QUESTION: On the North Korea point, did –

MODERATOR: We got to go, guys, thanks.

QUESTION: Thank you.

QUESTION: Did India deny the U.S.'s request to close the North Korean embassy in India? I was just looking at the foreign minister's comments.

MODERATOR: Probably best to ask them.

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Yeah, I think they just indicated they think that office has value as a conduit for communications.

QUESTION: And do you agree?

QUESTION: Is this then –

SECRETARY TILLERSON: It could. It might. (Laughter.)

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