

Press Releases: Department Press Briefing – June 5, 2018

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TRANSCRIPT:

3:26 p.m. EDT

MS NAUERT: Hi, everybody.

QUESTION: Hello.

MS NAUERT: How are you all doing today? A couple quick notes, not the marathon notes I had for you last time, if you recall those. Just a couple quick announcements before we get started today.

USAID Administrator Mark Green wraps up his 50th Annual Tidewater Meeting of Development Ministers. USAID co-hosted this year's meeting with Charlotte Petri Gornitzka, who is the chair of the development assistance committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. This gathering, the first to be hosted in the United States since 2010, was an opportunity for representatives from donor governments, the private sector, and development banks to discuss the challenges that are facing the international development community.

This year's discussions focused on building developing countries' capacities to finance and manage their own development. The group also discussed deepening cooperation on the conflict prevention and stabilization, also combating sexual exploitation and abuse in the development and humanitarian sectors, mobilizing new resources for the humanitarian response to conflict, and reforming the multilateral development system.

Next, I am pleased to announce the selection of an organization called Big Things Group as our partner in the effort to fundraise, build, and operate the U.S. national pavilion at Expo 2020, which is to be held in Dubai. I want to thank everyone who responded to our February request for proposals. We had a terrific response.

QUESTION: Sorry, what's it called?

MS NAUERT: It's called Big Things Group and this is about the Expo 2020 which is being held in Dubai in 2020.

QUESTION: Big Things Group?

MS NAUERT: That's the name of the organization, yes.

QUESTION: Okay.

MS NAUERT: And they're going to be facilitating the private-public partnership fundraising.

QUESTION: Not huge things group? (Laughter.)

MS NAUERT: I didn't make up the name. Projected 25 million visitors at this expo and 170 participating countries, the six-month expo promises to be the largest public and economic diplomacy event of 2020. Current design plans based on the theme "What Moves You" consists of a U.S. pavilion that showcases the best of American culture, technology, and values, particularly in the field of mobility. With more than 6 million expected visitors, the U.S. pavilion will receive twice as many guests per day as the Smithsonian's Air and Space Museum. I was just there last weekend.

Over the next two years, the Department of State and its partner will engage companies, cultural organizations, and citizens interested in participating in or supporting the U.S. pavilion at Expo 2020 in Dubai. Once sufficient funds have been raised, then the department will sign a final participation contract with the Expo 2020 organizers confirming the United States participation. To learn more about the project, visit the Department of State's Expo website at state.gov/r/expo and subscribe to the listserv for any updates.

With that, I'd be happy to take your questions.

QUESTION: This – I know it'll sound kind of minor to start it out with, but just on that because previous expos, there's been some – I don't know if you can say "controversy," but – and there's been discussion of – about how the fundraising went for it, because, as you know, they're – your – the government isn't allowed to spend its own taxpayer money on this. So how much are they looking for?

MS NAUERT: I don't know the overall amount that they're looking for, but – and here's what's significant and what's new from previous times when there have been some questions surrounding the fundraising of that. Sufficient funds have to be raised first, and that is when the department will then sign its final participation contract with those.

QUESTION: Yeah, but what – can – could you find –

MS NAUERT: I don't have the –

QUESTION: My question is, I guess, what is the amount that is sufficient

for that to –

MS NAUERT: Yeah. I don't have the overall dollar amount in front of me right now. I've actually been briefed on it. I just don't have that number –

QUESTION: Okay.

MS NAUERT: – at the – my fingertips.

QUESTION: All right.

MS NAUERT: We can get back to you if you're interested.

QUESTION: On to more pressing of stuff of the day. The Secretary met with the Singaporean foreign minister.

MS NAUERT: Yes, he has. We have a readout that, if it hasn't been sent out in your inboxes just yet, it will shortly.

QUESTION: Okay. Does it talk about summit preparations at all?

MS NAUERT: Yes, it does. In fact, I have a copy right here.

QUESTION: Well, you can save us the suspense and just read the readout. How's that?

MS NAUERT: I'd be happy to read for you the readout. Bear with me one second, okay? I thought you would all be so excited to get an additional email in your inbox.

Yep, there we go.

QUESTION: Oh, all right.

MS NAUERT: Okay. Shall I read it or no?

QUESTION: Well, I guess for TV –

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

QUESTION: – they might want to have it –

MS NAUERT: Okay. We'll read it. And by the way, I had a chance to meet the ambassador to Singapore yesterday, and so we're certainly happy to have him –

QUESTION: From Singapore?

MS NAUERT: Yes, happy to have them over here at the State Department today. Here is the readout: Secretary Mike Pompeo met with Singaporean foreign minister on June the 5th, 2018, reaffirming the strong U.S.-Singapore strategic partnership. The partnership includes the U.S.-Singapore Free Trade Agreement, the first U.S. bilateral free trade

agreement in Asia. Secretary Pompeo and foreign minister discussed collaboration in multilateral forums during Singapore's 2018 chairmanship of the ASEAN, as well as ASEAN's central role in the Pacific – Indo-Pacific region. They also discussed continued bilateral cooperation and multilateral engagement on regional security challenges including the South China Sea and counterterrorism. Secretary Pompeo expressed appreciation for Singapore's willingness to host President Trump's meeting with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un on June the 2nd.

QUESTION: Well –

MS NAUERT: Singapore has been a tremendous help to the United States on this and we look –

QUESTION: Not June the 2nd.

MS NAUERT: Twelfth, thank you, June the 12th. Singapore's been a great help and so we're very grateful to that government for all the assistance that they provided.

QUESTION: I'll defer to others.

MS NAUERT: Okay.

QUESTION: I'm sure there's more North Korea, so –

MS NAUERT: Okay. All right. Janne, you want to start?

QUESTION: – other than that –

QUESTION: Yeah.

MS NAUERT: Okay.

QUESTION: Thank you.

MS NAUERT: You're in a new seat today.

QUESTION: On – yeah, thank you. On Singapore meetings, the problem is North Korea doesn't have any money for staying in hotels. So have they ever ask that the money pay for United States?

MS NAUERT: Yeah, I want to be clear about this, because this was something that swirling a lot over the weekend, and I think we tried to tamp this down. The United States Government is not paying for the North Korean delegation to stay. We're not paying for their expenses. The White House has spoken to this as well. The State Department isn't involved in – is not involved in every single technical detail of this meeting. This is largely being planned out of the White House with State Department support. So I'd have to refer you to the White House, but Sarah Sanders has been clear that they've not asked other countries to pay for this.

QUESTION: One more. The President mentioned about declaration of the end of the Korean War. And is this going to a peace treaty soon, or –

MS NAUERT: I don't want to speculate on the timing or what may or may not happen. I know that that's something that the President and this administration certainly supports.

QUESTION: Okay.

MS NAUERT: Okay? Thank you.

QUESTION: Can we move on? Can we move on?

QUESTION: Syria?

QUESTION: Still on North Korea.

MS NAUERT: Okay. Let's stick with anything North Korea related –

QUESTION: Yes.

MS NAUERT: – before we move on to next subject, okay. Hi.

QUESTION: Hey. Can you update us on the meetings between the U.S. and North Korean delegations in Panmunjom? Has there been any progress made in their negotiations? And also, will Ambassador Kim and his team be joining the U.S. delegation in Singapore?

MS NAUERT: So I can tell you we've had teams negotiating not only in the Demilitarized Zone every day – Ambassador Kim has been there, who has been our lead participant in that. As you all know, meetings are taking place in Singapore as well. The meetings are a little different. The ones in Singapore tend to focus more on logistics, negotiating security, protocol, all those types of things. Those meetings are ongoing. I can tell you Secretary Pompeo speaks sometimes multiple times a day to Ambassador Kim when he reports back to the Secretary about how things are going.

So those meetings are ongoing. All the details and the nitty-gritty – once again, I hate to repeat this, but I will: We're not going to get into all the nitty-gritty of that, but those meetings are ongoing.

QUESTION: But will they be joining the U.S. delegation in Singapore?

MS NAUERT: I'm not sure of that. I – we can double-check on that and let you know what we can.

QUESTION: And then one more, if you don't mind.

MS NAUERT: Okay.

QUESTION: There's been some talk of President Moon traveling to Singapore for a trilateral with President Trump and Kim Jong-un. Has the State Department discussed this possibility with South Korea?

MS NAUERT: I can just – I can tell you we constantly are in conversation with the Government of South Korea, as we are with Japan as well. A trip to Singapore, to my knowledge, has not come up, but I'd have to refer you back to the Government of South Korea on it.

Hey, Gordon.

QUESTION: Can we move on?

MS NAUERT: Yeah.

QUESTION: Just on North Korea still.

MS NAUERT: Yeah.

QUESTION: Just overall, this administration seems to have swung from one of the most hawkish positions on North Korea in decades to one of the most dovish positions on North Korea in decades. You started off with your maximum pressure campaign.

MS NAUERT: That continues.

QUESTION: But it doesn't really continue. Maximum pressure involved diplomatic isolation. That seems to have gone away.

MS NAUERT: Sanctions. Working with other countries –

QUESTION: Well, the sanctions are –

MS NAUERT: Those are all fully in place.

QUESTION: But they're not. The President just said that if Japan, South Korea, and China want to invest in North Korea, they can. The sanctions – of course, our sanctions still apply to us, but we have no economic activity with North Korea. All of the economic activity, as you have reminded us repeatedly from this platform, comes from – 90 percent from China and from Russia, and there's now all kinds of evidence that shipping from Vladivostok has increased, that all kinds of economic activity on the Chinese border has once again increased.

MS NAUERT: I think –

QUESTION: The President's comments on Friday were –

MS NAUERT: – I would just go back to the successive rounds of UN Security Council resolutions that have gone through that other countries have adhered to. When we talk about countries like China, we always say that more can certainly be done. Russia had also signed onto these things as well.

QUESTION: But you virtually lifted all that. Heather, this is –

MS NAUERT: We have not lifted sanctions. Those sanctions and the pressure campaign remains in place. Would we like to see diplomacy?

Absolutely. One year ago, we were standing here at this podium saying the exact same things. When folks were worried that things were going to go to the extreme, we said diplomacy is our first approach. Secretary Mattis said that, our former secretary said that here, and that is something that Secretary Pompeo –

QUESTION: But the Secretary –

MS NAUERT: – is committed to as well.

QUESTION: And Secretary Pompeo said just last week that we were not going to have a meeting unless you saw clear and convincing promises from the North Koreans that –

MS NAUERT: And we are having those conversations with the North Korean Government. We've been latched up, having those types of conversations. You're not going to hear from me exactly what has taken place in those conversations. We want to give Secretary Pompeo and the President as much space and as much room to have those negotiations as they need, as much space as they need.

We remain committed to the complete, verifiable, irreversible denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. If you want to call that a hawkish thing or a dovish thing, fine, so be it. But our policy remains the same.

Okay. Hey, Barbara.

QUESTION: Heather, just one – a quick follow-up on that.

MS NAUERT: Yeah.

QUESTION: So the President said he didn't even want to talk about maximum pressure anymore. And then in Singapore, Mattis was talking about we must have absolute pressure sustained. So again, you've got this mixed messages been going on.

MS NAUERT: I think – no. No, no, no. Don't read too much into this. I think you're all looking for –

QUESTION: We're reading everything –

MS NAUERT: Hold on. You're looking for labels and titles. And let's not get bogged in the details, because the fact of the matter is that our pressure campaign, whatever it is you want to call it, remains firmly in place. We will not pull back that pressure campaign until North Korea follows through on its pledge to denuclearize. That is something we have been consistent upon in this administration, whether it's Treasury, whether it's White House, NSC, State Department, since day one. The President also went on to say this last Friday: The campaign is going to, quote, remain what it is right now. So nothing has changed in that regard.

QUESTION: Can I move on?

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

MS NAUERT: Go right ahead. Yeah.

QUESTION: Yes. Just the Congress or the Senate from both the Republican and Democrat sides, they'd like to weigh in the talks with the DPRK. So I just want to ask that how much has the Senate already just been involved in these talks and will any deal that made by President Trump and Kim should be verified or just ratified by the Senate?

MS NAUERT: Yeah. I think we're getting ahead of ourselves. So the President, along with Secretary Pompeo, will meet with North Korea on the 12th. We're pleased to be having those discussions. The campaign that was launched a year ago clearly had an effect in bringing North Korea to the negotiating table. So we're not going to get ahead of those conversations or get bogged down by anything the Senate or the House – and they're certainly entitled to say that, but we're not going to get ahead of ourselves in that regard.

Okay. Anything else on North Korea?

QUESTION: Can I move on to – can I move to the Palestinian –

QUESTION: India.

MS NAUERT: Okay. All right. Let's move on.

QUESTION: Just very quickly, last Friday the Israelis shot and killed a young medic, a young woman, Rozan Najjar. Do you have any comment on that?

MS NAUERT: Yeah. Said, I certainly saw that story. We're watching the events, as we always do, very carefully and what is happening in Gaza. I want to say we are saddened by the loss of this woman's life. Certainly, reports that she was killed during demonstrations along the Gaza fence line –

QUESTION: She was meting out help to those who were injured.

MS NAUERT: That is my understanding.

QUESTION: Right.

MS NAUERT: I've not seen the video. I don't – have not read any reports, any official reports, related to what happened. My understanding is that the Israeli Defense Forces said that they are beginning an investigation. So I just have to wait for any investigation to come out, but I would refer you back to the Government of Israel.

QUESTION: But they have been investigating other similar incidents for the past couple months, and we have not seen any results thus far. Are

you convinced –

MS NAUERT: Said, I can't comment on that. I don't represent the Government of Israel.

QUESTION: I understand. I –

MS NAUERT: I think it's certainly a good thing when they announce that they're going to investigate, and we'll wait for that to conclude.

QUESTION: But would you call on the Israelis – I have a couple more questions, please.

MS NAUERT: Sure.

QUESTION: Would you call on the Israelis to at least not target medics and press people and journalists and so on? Because thus far, we have seen –

MS NAUERT: You're asking me to weigh in on exactly what happened. You used the –

QUESTION: No. I'm saying that you –

MS NAUERT: Hold on. You used the word "target." I don't have that information. I don't know if that was the case. And that is why the Government of Israel has said that they are conducting an investigation. I'm going to leave it to them to discuss what happened and pull out the – put out the facts.

QUESTION: How about this? How about if people are clearly marked as press or as medics, should they keep away from targeting them?

MS NAUERT: Said, you're using the word "targeting." I can't comment on that, because that's affirming the premise of the question that that was, in fact, done. I would just refer back to the Government of Israel and let them conduct their investigation, and we'll go from there, okay.

QUESTION: Who –

QUESTION: Can I ask you –

MS NAUERT: I'm not going to have anything more for you on that. But do you have another –

QUESTION: Can I ask you about Ambassador Friedman, also?

MS NAUERT: Yes.

QUESTION: He gave a personal interview yesterday with the *Times of Israel* in which he really criticized the American media for reporting on Gaza. He's saying that they ought to give ideas on how to mitigate a – sort of a tense situation. Is that the kind of thing that is really a normal kind of suggestion or paradigm by U.S. ambassadors –

MS NAUERT: I would encourage you and your colleagues to take a look at his comments in totality. Ambassador Friedman, my understanding is, was speaking to a group about the situation in Gaza and was also asked about press coverage related to what had occurred in Gaza. And he said something pretty clearly, and that is the media can do a better job of talking to both sides, talking to various representatives. And so I think he was clear in his statements about that. The importance – and nobody knows that better than all of you. You want to report a story, you want to get the facts. You talk to all sides and you come back and you present your story. Ambassador – the ambassador was explaining his opinion that some in the media – not all, but some in media organizations – have not done that balanced job of reporting. So I would encourage you to go back and listen to his comments.

QUESTION: He said it was *The New York Times*.

MS NAUERT: But he also talked about the importance of a free press.

QUESTION: Right. He was talking about – he said that I'm talking about the *New York Times*, but he also said that they ought to shut up. He said the media ought to shut up.

MS NAUERT: We believe in free speech, and I'm sure there are a lot of other people around the world who sometimes believe that as well.

QUESTION: Is the assertion his assertion or your assertion that there are news reports out there about the violence in Gaza that don't include the Israeli side?

MS NAUERT: Look, I think –

QUESTION: I think that's not – none of the reports that I've seen fit that description.

MS NAUERT: Matt, we go back and we talk about this again and again, and why the situation is so dire in Gaza. And I think a lot of people in this administration will look at the reporting on that. And I'm not singling out any of you, but in general, when you look at the situation in Gaza, let's look at the misery there and what has brought on that misery. Has it been brought on by the United States Government? No. Has it been brought on by Israel? We would assert no. Has it been brought on –

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

MS NAUERT: Hold on, hold on. Has it been brought upon the people of Gaza by Hamas? Yes, it certainly does. And Hamas has a responsibility to take care of its people, and it does not. It fails to do so consistently

QUESTION: I don't think anyone – no one –

MS NAUERT: And I think –

QUESTION: Heather, no one questions –

MS NAUERT: And look, I don't need to argue with you.

QUESTION: No one questions that Hamas is –

MS NAUERT: But I think –

QUESTION: – is not doing a good job –

MS NAUERT: Let me just – let me just finish this.

QUESTION: But to say that Israel has no responsibility for the situation in Gaza right now is just – that – I mean that's just wrong.

MS NAUERT: I think the situation is, when you look at reporting on the situation there, take a look at the root cause of the misery in Gaza and why people are frustrated and understandably so. And that goes back to Hamas.

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

QUESTION: Just still on Friedman's comments? I'm sorry. He said last week also that Republicans are more supportive of Israel than Democrats. You also had an ambassador this week in Germany, Rick Grenell, say comments that caused quite a firestorm in Germany. They were openly partisan, in which he is asking for conservatives to do well across Europe. Is it the policy of the State Department that ambassadors should be cheering particular political parties or movements in the places in which they're –

MS NAUERT: Ambassadors have a right to express their opinion. They're representatives of the White House, whether it's this administration or other administrations, and we hear them voicing their opinions. And they're sometimes opinions that people may or may not like. And there is a right to free speech as well, so I want to highlight that. Regardless of whether or not you all like it, sometimes these things are what ambassadors say.

When you talk about Germany, we have a very strong relationship with the Government of Germany. Looking back in the history books, today is the 71st anniversary of the speech that announced the Marshall Plan. Tomorrow is the anniversary of the D-Day invasion. We obviously have a very long history with the Government of Germany, and we have a strong relationship with the government, and so we want to reaffirm the strength of our relationship with Germany.

Let me go back to something that Ambassador Grenell had also said, that – essentially, look, we're not supporting any political party. That's

not what we do. We support democracy. We support countries figuring out for themselves who they want to vote in for office. I think what Ambassador Grenell was doing was merely highlighting that there are some parties and candidates in Europe who are doing well right now, and merely highlighting that. But beyond that, I'm just not going to have a lot more for you. Okay.

QUESTION: On Friedman's comments?

MS NAUERT: Yeah. What about it?

QUESTION: Just again, he repeated again that he believed that settlements were not illegal and that the West Bank should not be called occupied. So is that just his opinion, or is he reflecting U.S. policy? Can you just clarify?

MS NAUERT: I did not – I did not see the ambassador's comments in that regard, so I'm not going to comment on those.

QUESTION: But maybe you could just clarify again what the policy is with regards to whether settlements are illegal and whether the West Bank is occupied.

MS NAUERT: The President has spoken to settlements on numerous occasions, and one of the things that he said is unrestrained settlement activity does not advance the cause for peace. The President has also said that the Government of Israel has made – has spoken to him about this, and that they've had private conversations about that very matter. But we've been clear about the issue of settlements from day one here.

QUESTION: And just one more question about that. Is it – can you confirm that there is discussions about moving some of the authority over the consular office that deals with the Palestinians to the authority of the new embassy in Jerusalem, so that there would be not one office looking after Palestinian affairs, it would be subsumed into the Jerusalem embassy?

MS NAUERT: Yeah, and I'm really glad that you asked that question, because I'd like to clear up any misconceptions about that. The report that came out on that matter is simply inaccurate. We have run this down; there has been no discussion of the downgrading of the status of U.S. Consulate – U.S. Consulate General in Jerusalem. So let me just be clear about that, okay?

QUESTION: Sorry, that's not what the story said. That's a great denial, but that's not what the story said. No one said it was being –

MS NAUERT: Yeah. The story is inaccurate.

QUESTION: No one said it was being downgraded.

MS NAUERT: Yeah. It is not being downgraded at all.

QUESTION: I know. Well, that – okay.

QUESTION: But is it being moved?

MS NAUERT: Not to my knowledge.

QUESTION: Is it going under the –

MS NAUERT: Not to my knowledge, it's not.

Okay, shall we move on. Hi, Laurie.

QUESTION: No, yeah. On the – your understanding with Turkey that Secretary Pompeo –

QUESTION: I have a follow-up on Jerusalem.

MS NAUERT: Oh. Let's just – okay. Go ahead. Laurie, go ahead. We'll come back.

QUESTION: Is there – yesterday's understanding between Secretary Pompeo and Minister Cavusoglu on Syria and on Manbij, is there implicit in that an understanding that Turkey might accept an SDF presence east of the Euphrates? Otherwise, why should the SDF keep on fighting?

MS NAUERT: Yeah. So I'm not going to speak to what Turkey will or will not accept. I can tell you that the United States and the Government of Turkey, though those meetings between Secretary Pompeo and the foreign minister, arrived at an arrangement between the U.S. and Turkey to bring stability and self-rule to the area of Manbij. We believe that it will be acceptable to all parties, and importantly that includes the people of Manbij, those who live in Manbij. The YPG is set – and they spoke to this, so I'd refer you to YPG representatives – that they would move their parties to the east of the Euphrates as part of that agreement. I don't work for DOD, so I'm not going to get too into the specifics, but I can just tell you that we agreed to – or there was an arrangement that we came to – with the Government of Turkey in that regard and that overall roadmap.

QUESTION: And the YPG has accepted that?

MS NAUERT: I would refer you to the YPG, but my understanding is that, as part of the agreement, that is what they will be doing. But I don't want to –

QUESTION: They issued a statement today.

MS NAUERT: I don't want to speak for them.

QUESTION: They issued a statement today.

QUESTION: Yeah, I saw that.

MS NAUERT: Yes.

QUESTION: Yeah, I just –

MS NAUERT: And by the way, for those of you who didn't catch it, we did a background briefing call with some of our internal experts. We can certainly get that to you in our Press Office if you need it.

QUESTION: Okay. And on –

QUESTION: (Off-mike)

MS NAUERT: Yeah.

QUESTION: On Iran, Ayatollah Khamenei has ordered that preparations should begin for uranium enrichment in case this nuclear deal falls through, and he has also rejected any limits whatsoever on Iran's missile program. What is your comment on that?

MS NAUERT: Yeah. In terms of Iran, we've certainly seen that report. The Secretary, just a few weeks ago, gave his policy speech on the way forward with Iran. That took place on – I think it was May 21st. And he was clear that Iran has to stop its enrichment and never pursue plutonium reprocessing. Iran must have no path to a nuclear weapon.

In terms of what you're asking about, if the IAEA believes that that is taking place, we believe that the IAEA will report that back to its Board of Governors and also to the United Nations, so we'll just await – await that, if that has, in fact, ended up happening in Iran.

QUESTION: And there was a report that they were going to remove the inspectors and the cameras and what-have-you from Fordow. Do you –

MS NAUERT: Yeah. I've seen that report. We saw that report earlier today. We just can't confirm it right now. We're looking into it.

QUESTION: Since the withdrawal, since the President withdrew the U.S. from – you do not have a seat in the Joint Commission. Is there any concern that not having a seat in the Joint Commission will somehow impede your ability to get information from the IAEA?

MS NAUERT: I think we're in a better position than we were before. The United States has launched a global outreach campaign where we are having conversations and meetings with many of our partners and allies around the world. We have teams on the ground right now in Central and Eastern Europe who are talking with partner governments about the way forward on Iran and part of Secretary Pompeo's speech going forward and what we will collectively do together to address Iran's malign influence around the world.

QUESTION: I'm talking about getting information from the inspectors in Iran. (Inaudible.)

MS NAUERT: Yeah. Look, the United States remains a tremendous world power. I have no concerns about whether or not the United States will be

able to get the kind of information or intelligence that it needs to make its decisions. Okay?

Okay, we'll go back.

QUESTION: On Iran and the (inaudible).

MS NAUERT: Yeah.

QUESTION: Since the statement was issued by the Iranians, the French Government – I think the French president, actually – has warned of de-escalation – of escalation – sorry – in the region because of the enrichment. What leverage does the United States have after withdrawing from the deal?

MS NAUERT: What leverage do we have over –

QUESTION: On Iran. On Iran, now that it's saying that basically they intend to enrich and also to keep their ballistic missile program.

MS NAUERT: I think we have a lot of leverage. As –

QUESTION: But they already mentioned that –

MS NAUERT: As a world superpower and as an economic superpower, we can impose sanctions on Iran. Other countries are choosing not to do business with the Government of Iran, and that will reduce the amount of money that goes into that government and that does not go necessarily to its people, despite the fact that Iran had promised under the JCPOA that the money that would come in when sanctions were lifted, it would go to the people and it would support the people and the people would be better off after. Well, it appears that the people aren't better off after. So, we believe with a sanctions campaign that the U.S. could undertake, and we're discussing that with partners and allies right now, that that will reduce the amount of money that Iran would end up using for its nuclear program.

QUESTION: But Heather, that's already been declared by the Secretary when he spoke at the Heritage and he said we're going to impose the harshest sanctions in the history – I think he used the reference. But I'm talking about today, that the Iranians are challenge you further now and saying we're going to enrich.

MS NAUERT: You know what? Countries are going to say a lot. Countries around the world are going to threaten us, they're going to be bellicose, and we're just not going to be able to respond to everything that is said out of every government and every leader.

QUESTION: Okay, I just want to go back to the –

MS NAUERT: Okay. Okay, let me move on to some other people –

QUESTION: India, India.

MS NAUERT: – because we’ve got a lot of other things going on. Hi.

QUESTION: Can we go back to the – your comments that the ambassadors have freedom of speech and the right to express their opinions?

MS NAUERT: Don’t we all?

QUESTION: Well, the question is –

MS NAUERT: Don’t we all as Americans have the right to freedom of speech?

QUESTION: Well, but an ambassador occupies an – a position in which what he says has an impact on the country that he is – that he is sent to represent – to be based in. And when an ambassador talks about personally intervening to ensure the election of a specific, ultraconservative candidate –

MS NAUERT: I think you are – I think –

QUESTION: This is what he said.

MS NAUERT: Hold on, hold on.

QUESTION: This is a direct quote.

MS NAUERT: I don’t believe that those are the direct quotes. I can’t speak for the ambassador myself. I can refer you to the embassy to speak with him or to give you the exact quotes that were used, but I think that he clarified in saying that we support – we strongly support all voices, whether they be conservative, whether they be liberal, whether they be who knows what. That is what the United States Government supports as a policy and we stand behind that.

QUESTION: Yeah, but that’s not what he said in his interview. That is not what he said.

MS NAUERT: We stand behind that. I would encourage you to look at the full quotes in the entire context, okay?

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

QUESTION: Heather, this is – as Gardiner mentioned, though, this is – he mentioned Friedman and – Ambassador Friedman and Ambassador Grenell in the same question, but this is not – these are not the first two times you’ve had issues with this. Your ambassador to Holland had a similar issue, and I’m just wondering, is this something – this issue – because whether you think it is a big deal or a problem at all, certainly it has raised eyebrows in – one, in Germany, amongst the German Government and German lawmakers. It’s also raised eyebrows in Israel, people who watch Israel, and it certainly raised eyebrows and problems in the Netherlands when Ambassador Hoekstra made the comments that – or when he was asked about the comments that he had made previously.

So I'm just wondering, is this of a concern enough that the Secretary might consider sending a cable or something to all ambassadors –

MS NAUERT: Look, I – excuse me.

QUESTION: – reminding them of the lessons that they learned at ambassador school over across the river, that they represent the United States Government – the President, of course, and his policies – but they are not to inject personal views into – and represent them as the views of the U.S. Government?

MS NAUERT: Look, I can tell you that the Secretary is certainly aware. He does not miss a beat. He is aware of the things that are being said on behalf of the U.S. Government. He reads the news, he watches all of these things closely, so I can just tell you that he's aware.

QUESTION: Okay, but – so in the case of just, say – just picking one out – Ambassador Grenell's comments, you're saying that they were personal comments, not –

MS NAUERT: Look –

QUESTION: – the position of the U.S. Government? Even if you disagree with John Landay's characterization of them, and you say that that's not the quote that he said, but whatever it was that he said, that was not representative of the U.S. Government position?

MS NAUERT: We believe that more voices – and we talk about this – whether it's Egypt or Saudi Arabia or any other country around the world, that more voices should be heard rather than fewer voices, and that is important. And that is up to those countries to determine, as we do all around the world, who should best represent their population, and that's what those countries do. I think Rick was pointing out a fact that some conservatives have done better in other countries, and I'll just leave it at that, okay?

All right.

QUESTION: India.

MS NAUERT: All right. And then –

QUESTION: On Turkey.

MS NAUERT: Yeah.

QUESTION: India.

MS NAUERT: Dave, did you have something? Dave Clark.

QUESTION: Yeah. Which socialist voices should we hear more from around the world?

MS NAUERT: Look, we encourage – we certainly allow governments around the world – we don't allow; governments around the world are entitled to speak. We have seen what Venezuela has done and the erosion of democracy and how terrible that has been there. We've heard Maduro's words and how he has continued with sham elections and all of that. Doesn't mean that we stop free speech just because we don't like it, okay?

QUESTION: But if an American ambassador was to endorse the Venezuelan election, that would be –

MS NAUERT: Look, Dave –

QUESTION: – a sacking moment, right? That wouldn't be a personal opinion.

MS NAUERT: Dave, look, I'm not going to get into all these hypothetical word games about like if somebody in Israel talked about Venezuela. I mean, that's just silliness. If you guys want to ask me about real world issues, that's fine.

QUESTION: All right, then I'll ask you about what he said. He said he wanted – Grenell said that he wanted to empower conservative voices.

MS NAUERT: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

QUESTION: "I [absolutely] want to empower," he said personally.

MS NAUERT: Okay. Well, then, you know what? I think I've commented on this. I think I've given you as much as I am, if you – as much as I'm going to. If you have any additional questions, I'd refer you to –

QUESTION: He also said that Sebastian Kurz was a rock star.

QUESTION: In a country that is not his –

QUESTION: His –

QUESTION: – his turf.

MS NAUERT: Okay. Okay. So that is what he said.

QUESTION: So let me clarify. You're saying that – you're defending his right – Ambassador Grenell's right to say he – to express his determination to see ultraconservatives elected in Europe?

MS NAUERT: No, no. I am –

QUESTION: But that's what he said.

MS NAUERT: No, I am not. I am saying that as an American, we believe in the right to free speech, that others countries elsewhere around the world have the right to elect whomever the population chooses. And that is the case whether it's in Syria, whether it's in Germany, whether it's any other country around the world.

QUESTION: Well, are you saying that there's some kind of limitation on the right to free speech in Germany that this needs to be – I don't –

MS NAUERT: Guys, you're just being silly about this, okay? Does someone want to talk about – does someone want –

QUESTION: Well, you were the one who just raised – said if someone in Israel wants to talk about Venezuela, that seems – I don't get where that comes from, but anyway –

MS NAUERT: Okay. I think – look –

QUESTION: But look, I mean, is there a concern that – in this administration that conservative voices in Europe are not being heard?

MS NAUERT: Look, I'm not going to speak to that, okay?

QUESTION: All right. Okay.

MS NAUERT: I'm not going to speak to that. I haven't had those conversations. I haven't polled all my colleagues to see if that is the assessment or the overarching view of that.

QUESTION: Can I ask you one really briefly? This is about a free speech issue in Bahrain.

MS NAUERT: Okay.

QUESTION: Nabeel Rajab, do you have anything on that? Is –

MS NAUERT: Mm-hmm. I don't have anything new beyond the last time we spoke about it.

QUESTION: Because –

MS NAUERT: But let me check with my colleagues and see if we do have any updates.

QUESTION: Could you get me something? Because there was another court –

MS NAUERT: Yeah. I'll check on any updates I may have.

QUESTION: Thank you.

MS NAUERT: And –

QUESTION: Any update on the Russian –

QUESTION: Madam, can we go to India, please?

QUESTION: On the roadmap (inaudible) with Turkey?

MS NAUERT: Okay. Last question. What's that?

QUESTION: On your roadmap with Turkey –

MS NAUERT: Yes.

QUESTION: – what does the implementation of that roadmap look like? What else do we expect in the – I mean, YPG withdrew from the area. And also, are you doing anything to bring those two or some sort of understanding to your – both allies, SDF and Turkey?

MS NAUERT: Look, the Secretary endorsed, along with the foreign minister of Turkey, a general roadmap. I want to be clear that this is going to be conditions-based. That means that things can change over time as conditions change on the ground. This is a beginning of a series of conversations that will inevitably continue. Whether it's between the foreign minister and the Secretary or if it's at the staff level, these kinds of conversations will continue. We want to have peace and stability in Manbij, and that is something that we are both committed to. We have worked on this very, very hard with our NATO ally Turkey, and look forward to having greater peace and stability in that region.

Okay.

QUESTION: One question.

QUESTION: One more?

MS NAUERT: Got to go, guys. Thank you.

QUESTION: One more?

MS NAUERT: Thank you. I've got to go.

(The briefing was concluded at 3:59 p.m.)

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