

Press Releases: Remarks at a Meeting With Employees and Family Members of U.S. Embassy Islamabad

Remarks

Rex W. Tillerson

Secretary of State

U.S. Embassy Islamabad

Islamabad, Pakistan

October 24, 2017

AMBASSADOR HALE: Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you for joining us. I don't think that – if there's one person who does not need an introduction at an American embassy, it's the Secretary of State, so I feel a little superfluous. But just to take one moment, before you, Mr. Secretary, is an extraordinary team, one of – has to be one of the hardest working, most highly motivated and most disciplined groups under your command. And we're very grateful that you'd take time out of one of those three-country days to spend a few moments with all of us. Thank you.

(Applause.)

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Well, thank you. Thank you very much, Ambassador Hale, and thank you for the leadership that you provide over here to both our embassy here, but also the three consular offices. I think we have someone of theirs – some of them joining us, I think, by VTC back there. Yeah, okay. They're waving; they can see. Nice to see you.

Well, it is a – it's a real pleasure to have the opportunity to touch down here in Pakistan on what's a fairly torrid pace, if you've been following our travels over the last few days, but a very important stop as we're – we've come to the country to talk further with the leadership about President Trump's South Asia strategy. And Pakistan has an incredibly important role in that South Asia strategy. The country is very important to us. The security, the stability of the country is very important to us. And many of the solutions to the regional challenges are – have to be found here as well in dealing with the leadership in Pakistan, and so we're here to have further discussions about that.

This mission, obviously extremely important to us. We know the challenges

that you live with day in and day out. It's not an easy place. It's challenging from a work standpoint, we know, but it's also challenging from a personal standpoint. And I'm mindful of the situation that many of you are serving under here, long way away from family; you've got family members back home. And I know what it means to miss a lot of important events with families, whether it's birthdays or weddings or graduations. Regrettably, I missed a few over my life as well when I was in some locations that I could not take my family to live with me either. But really appreciate your service, your commitment, your willingness to provide what you do on behalf of the United States of America.

The most important thing you provide is that face of what the American people mean to the rest of the world, our commitment to the rest of the world, our commitment to a secure world, our commitment to a prosperous world, and most importantly, and what many of you do, is a commitment to a hopeful world. And so all the work you do, whether it be on educational, health, providing capacity around the country, just really speaks to the compassion of the American people, and the fact that we do care about this part of the world and we do care about Pakistan. And so how you go about that is extremely important to us.

Also want to recognize the importance of our locally employed staff. Many of you are the continuity of this place. As your colleagues from the U.S. come and go – and they do come and go on a fairly frequent basis – your continuity that you provide, you maintain a lot of the capability for us. You allow us to get the things done that are necessary to do, and you provide many of the continuity with important relationships as well. And so your value to our ability to achieve mission is something that I cannot overstate.

I think this is a – obviously, it's a very active mission with so many agencies represented here and in our consular offices around the country, a strong military relationship here and cooperation. And so the posture you're in here is extremely important, again, to the United States.

So we're looking forward to having productive discussions with the leadership of the country. We're going to be very open, very frank about the challenges that we see, how we need to work together to address those challenges, certain things we really need for the Pakistan leadership to undertake, but we also want them to understand we're here to work together as partners, and we should be working toward the same objective. I know everyone wants a peaceful, stable, secure Pakistan with great opportunity for economic growth. And we do see great opportunity for U.S.-Pakistan economic growth as well. And having a stable environment is really important to promoting the opportunities for U.S. businesses to come to Pakistan, invest, conduct business, and also to invite Pakistani businesses to invest in the United States.

So once again, I want to thank all of you for the important role that you play for us here in Pakistan. You'll recall, if you saw my address when I joined the State Department, the day I entered the building I had three things that I told you are important to me that I wanted to make important to all of you. And first is your safety and security, and the safety and

security that I want you to assume responsibility for yourself and for those standing around you. Each of us have a responsibility in that regard.

The second is accountability. We hold ourselves accountable for our results; we hold ourselves accountable for our mistakes; we hold ourselves accountable so that we can learn. And lastly, is respect for one another. We have to treat each other with respect every day, in every activity. If we hold ourselves accountable, we can hold others accountable that we're dealing with. If we treat each other with respect, it's a great habit of how to treat others with respect as we go about carrying out the important work here in Pakistan.

So I appreciate, again, the opportunity to just say a few words to you. I'd like to make the crowd and shake every hand in here. I don't know that I'm going to be allowed to do that, but again, thank you for everything you do. And again, thank you Ambassador Hale for your leadership.

(Applause.)

The Office of Website Management, Bureau of Public Affairs, manages this site as a portal for information from the U.S. State Department. External links to other Internet sites should not be construed as an endorsement of the views or privacy policies contained therein.

Press Releases: Remarks at the Office of Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi

Remarks
Rex W. Tillerson

Secretary of State

Prime Minister's Office
Baghdad, Iraq
October 23, 2017

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Prime Minister, for receiving me in Baghdad. It is truly a pleasure to be here to have this opportunity to visit with a very important partner in the fight to defeat ISIS, to defeat Daesh. And we congratulate Iraq under your leadership for the tremendous progress and victories – the liberation of Mosul last July, taking one of Daesh’s stated caliphate capitals away from it, the recent liberations of Hawija and Tal Afar. These are all very important victories, and we applaud the efforts on the part on the Iraqi forces to defeat Daesh. As you point out, there is still more that has to be done to ensure that Daesh is defeated once and for all and is eliminated from all of Iraq.

We are concerned and a bit saddened by the recent differences that have emerged between the Kurdistan Regional Government and the Iraqi central government. We are – we have friends both in Baghdad, and we have friends in Erbil, and we encourage both parties to enter into discussion and dialogue. I think if both parties commit themselves to a unified Iraq, to a – to the Iraqi constitution, I think all differences can be addressed and the rights of all can be respected and Iraq will have a very secure and a prosperous future.

We had an opportunity to share in an important event in Saudi Arabia, the creation of the Coordination Council. We think this is an important milestone in restoring relationships between Iraq and the Gulf, the GCC countries, and Saudi Arabia that’s going to lead to very important economic development in Iraq as well – all for the good of the people of Iraq – and strengthening the security and stability of the region.

We look forward too to furthering U.S. economic activity with Iraq, and we look forward to a future of a secure and stable Iraq with a great partnership between Iraq and the U.S. for many years to come. Thank you again.

The Office of Website Management, Bureau of Public Affairs, manages this site as a portal for information from the U.S. State Department. External links to other Internet sites should not be construed as an endorsement of the views or privacy policies contained therein.

[Press Releases: Accountability for Human Rights Abuses in Rakhine State, Burma](#)

Heather Nauert

Department Spokesperson

Washington, DC
October 23, 2017

Burma in recent years has emerged from a half-century of authoritarian rule and undertaken a significant transition to an open, democratic society. The U.S. Administration supports this transition and the elected civilian government as important means to achieve peace, stability, and prosperity in the interests of all peoples of Burma and the U.S.-Burma partnership.

At the same time, we express our gravest concern with recent events in Rakhine State and the violent, traumatic abuses Rohingya and other communities have endured. It is imperative that any individuals or entities responsible for atrocities, including non-state actors and vigilantes, be held accountable. Accordingly, in addition to existing restrictions on our already-limited engagement with Burma's armed forces and our long-standing embargo on all military sales, the United States is taking the following actions in pursuit of accountability and an end to violence:

- Since August 25, we have ceased consideration of JADE Act travel waivers for current and former senior leadership of the Burmese military;
- We are assessing authorities under the JADE Act to consider economic options available to target individuals associated with atrocities;
- Pursuant to the Leahy Law, we find all units and officers involved in operations in northern Rakhine State to be ineligible to receive or participate in any U.S. assistance programs;
- We have rescinded invitations for senior Burmese security forces to attend U.S.-sponsored events;
- We are working with international partners to urge that Burma enables unhindered access to relevant areas for the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission, international humanitarian organizations, and media;
- We are consulting with allies and partners on accountability options at the UN, the UN Human Rights Council, and other appropriate venues; and
- We are exploring accountability mechanisms available under U.S. law, including Global Magnitsky targeted sanctions.

We will continue to support Burma's transition to democracy, as well as efforts to resolve the current crisis in Rakhine State. The Government of Burma, including its armed forces, must take immediate action to ensure peace and security; implement commitments to ensure humanitarian access to communities in desperate need; facilitate the safe and voluntary return of those who have fled or been displaced in Rakhine State; and address the root causes of systematic discrimination against the Rohingya by implementing the

Rakhine Advisory Commission's recommendations, which includes providing a credible path to citizenship. We are ready to support these efforts.

The Office of Website Management, Bureau of Public Affairs, manages this site as a portal for information from the U.S. State Department. External links to other Internet sites should not be construed as an endorsement of the views or privacy policies contained therein.

[Press Releases: Press Availability at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan](#)

Press Availability
Rex W. Tillerson

Secretary of State

Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan
October 23, 2017

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Well, I want to start by thanking President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah and the Afghanistan leadership for meeting with me this morning. I thought it was very important to stop here in Afghanistan coming to the South Asia region as part of the recently announced South Asia policy and strategy that President Trump has put forth.

I also want to thank – I have Ambassador Llorens and General Nicholson with me – for their leadership, both our diplomatic as well as the incredible military effort of the men and women in uniform here as well, and all of the effort that they've put forth to work towards a peace, which is really our objective.

I think the U.S. has made it clear in terms of our support for Afghanistan, support for a sovereign, unified, and democratic Afghanistan, charting a path to peace, prosperity, and self-reliance. It is imperative at the end that we are denying safe haven to any terrorist organizations or any extremists to any part of this – the world.

(Brief interruption.)

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Okay.

QUESTION: I'm so sorry.

SECRETARY TILLERSON: That's all right. We also want to work with regional partners to ensure that there are no threats in the region as well. And this is very much a regional effort, as you saw was rolled out in the strategy itself. So we're demanding others also deny safe haven to terrorists anywhere in the region. We are working closely with Pakistan in that regard as well.

President Ghani has assured me of his firm commitment to reform, continuing reforms here in Afghanistan, as well as his new anti-corruption strategy and policies that is going to underpin much of the effort here. We also discussed preparations for parliamentary elections next year in 2018. It's very important that those elections go forward as well. And finally, we discussed regional developments and agreed on the vital importance of all regional stakeholders to work with us, work with the United States, but also work with our other partners, the NATO partners and others who take a great interest in this region, to fight against terrorists, fight against insurgents, to support peace and stability for Afghanistan.

We have a lot of hard work, some challenges ahead of us. But the United States and our partners here in Afghanistan are committed to seeing this through.

With that, happy to take a question or two.

MODERATOR: John.

QUESTION: Sir, what kind of message – let me back that up. You've said in the past that if the Pakistanis do not take firm action in denying safe haven for the Taliban and other extremists, they could suffer a cut in U.S. – further cuts in U.S. assistance – the United States, I believe, has given Pakistan a menu of other actions that it could take – unless it takes those actions within a certain timeframe. Are you able to give us details of what that menu is and what the timeframe is?

SECRETARY TILLERSON: I'll be traveling to Islamabad tomorrow, in fact, to meet with Pakistani leadership as well, and we have made some very specific requests of Pakistan in order for them to take action to undermine the support that the Taliban receives and the other terrorist organizations receive in Pakistan. And we've said in this whole strategy this is a conditions-based approach, and so our relationship with Pakistan will also be conditions-based. It will be based upon whether they take action that we feel is necessary to move the process forward of both creating the opportunity for reconciliation and peace in Afghanistan, but also ensuring a stable future Pakistan. In our conversations with Pakistani leadership, we're as concerned about the future stability of Pakistan as we are in many respects here in Afghanistan. Pakistan needs to, I think, take a clear-eyed view of the situation that they're confronted with in terms of the number of terrorist

organizations that find safe haven inside of Pakistan. And so we want to work closely with Pakistan to create a more stable and secure Pakistan as well.

MODERATOR: Gardiner.

QUESTION: Sir, this sort of has the feel of a forever war. Is there a part of this strategy – as you said, it's conditions-based, but it seems as though that condition means a U.S. military presence far off into the horizon. Isn't it?

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Well, the President has made it clear that we're here to stay until we can secure a process of reconciliation and peace. It's not an unlimited commitment; he's also made it clear it's not a blank check commitment. That's why it is a conditions-based commitment.

But I think if you consider the current situation in Afghanistan – and we were talking about this a few minutes ago – and you look a few years in the past and what the circumstances were, Afghanistan has come quite a distance already in terms of creating a much more vibrant population, a much more vibrant government, educational systems, a larger economy. And so there are opportunities to strengthen the foundations for a prosperous – a prosperous Afghanistan society.

Clearly, we have to continue the fight against the Taliban and against others in order for them to understand they will never win a military victory. And there are, we believe, moderate voices among the Taliban, voices that do not want to continue to fight forever. They don't want their children to fight forever. So we are looking to engage with those voices and have them engage in a reconciliation process leading to a peace process and their full involvement and participation in the government. There's a place for them in the government if they're ready to come renouncing terrorism, renouncing violence, and being committed to a stable, prosperous Afghanistan.

MODERATOR: Michele.

QUESTION: Have you spoken with the Pakistanis since your big speech on India? Are you trying to reassure them about what India's involvement is here? And I understand Ghani is going as well.

SECRETARY TILLERSON: I've not spoken to anyone in the Pakistani leadership since the speech I gave on India. That's certainly something we'll be talking about during the visit tomorrow. But I think our view of the relationship with India is one that's of strategic importance not just for this specific region, but in the context of that speech it was about a free and open Indo-Pacific region stretching all the way to – from Japan to India.

So it's a broader relationship. We do, though, believe that India has a very important positive role that India can play in the process to achieve a peaceful, stable Afghanistan as well. They already are providing important economic activity – creating jobs – which is important for the future Afghanistan. And we think they – we want to encourage that as well. We think they can be a very positive influence on creating the right environment for

the future in Afghanistan.

MODERATOR: All right, guys. Thanks so much.

The Office of Website Management, Bureau of Public Affairs, manages this site as a portal for information from the U.S. State Department. External links to other Internet sites should not be construed as an endorsement of the views or privacy policies contained therein.

Press Releases: Ongoing U.S. Humanitarian Assistance in Response to the Rakhine State Crisis, Burma

Media Note
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
October 22, 2017

The U.S. government has provided nearly \$40 million in life-saving emergency assistance in direct response to the Rakhine State crisis since August 25. This brings the total U.S. humanitarian assistance in FY 2017 to displaced Burmese in Burma and the region to nearly \$104 million.

U.S. assistance goes to our international organization partners on the ground, including the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the World Food Program (WFP), which help provide protection, emergency shelter, food and nutritional assistance, as well as health care and psychosocial support for the more than half a million displaced Burmese in Burma, Bangladesh, and the region.

We applaud the Government of Bangladesh's generosity in responding to this severe humanitarian crisis and appreciate its continued efforts to ensure assistance reaches people in need.

We call for an immediate end of the violence in northern Rakhine State, and for the Burmese government to allow refugees to return home voluntarily, safely, and with dignity. We welcome Burma's commitment to bringing long-term peace and stability to Rakhine State by implementing the recommendations of the Annan Commission report.

The United States also calls upon the Burmese government to allow for unhindered humanitarian access to people in Rakhine State, Burma, so we can more fully address pressing humanitarian needs. We also urge other donors to join us in providing additional humanitarian assistance for those affected by the crisis.

For further information, please contact PRM Press at PRMPress@state.gov.

The Office of Website Management, Bureau of Public Affairs, manages this site as a portal for information from the U.S. State Department. External links to other Internet sites should not be construed as an endorsement of the views or privacy policies contained therein.