

Press Releases: Designation Under Russia's "Undesirables" Law of Open Russia, the Open Russia Civic Movement, and the Institute of Modern Russia

Press Statement
Mark C. Toner

Deputy Department Spokesperson

Washington, DC
April 28, 2017

We are deeply troubled by the Russian Government's decision to designate Open Russia, the Open Russia Civic Movement, and the Institute of Modern Russia as so-called "undesirable" foreign organizations. We reject the notion that these and other international civil society organizations are a threat to Russia. If Russia hopes to build a strong, democratic government with a dynamic, competitive economy, it should value and support, not harass and criminalize such independent voices.

We again call on the Government of Russia to uphold its international obligations and commitments to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms and to cease restrictions on the work of civil society organizations in Russia.

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Press Releases: 20th Anniversary of the Chemical Weapons Convention

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The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), the world's only multilateral treaty that verifiably bans an entire category of weapons of mass destruction, marks the 20th anniversary of its entry into force this Saturday, April 29. The CWC prohibits the development, production, acquisition, stockpiling, retention, transfer, and use of chemical weapons.

To date, the CWC—with 192 States Parties—has verified the destruction of approximately 95 percent of all declared chemical weapons stockpiles and has made a significant contribution to making our world a safer place. The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), the CWC's governing body, has facilitated the destruction of chemical weapons in Libya, Syria, Iraq, Russia, Albania, China, and the United States – among others.

Nonetheless, the international community's work is far from done, and serious challenges remain. In 2013, following devastating chemical weapons attacks on Damascus suburbs, Syria acceded to the CWC and agreed to comply with the Convention's obligation to fully declare and eliminate its chemical weapons program. Despite the destruction of over 1,200 tons of chemical weapons and precursor chemicals, the OPCW has repeatedly expressed concerns about gaps, inconsistencies, and discrepancies in Syria's declaration. The OPCW concerns preceded the most recent appalling chemical weapons attacks perpetrated by the Assad regime in Khan Shaykhun earlier this month.

Additional challenges include the reported use of the nerve agent VX in the assassination of Kim Jong-Nam in Malaysia, a heinous act representing a clear threat to international security. Further, ISIS has repeatedly used sulfur mustard in chemical weapons attacks in Syria, as well as in Iraq. There must be consequences for these actions and those responsible must be held accountable.

The United States remains committed to the CWC and the complete elimination of chemical weapons worldwide. We continue to call on the international

community to stand with us and speak with one voice against the use of chemical weapons anywhere, by anyone. The use of chemical weapons by any actor lowers the threshold for others that may seek to follow suit, and raises the possibility that such weapons may be used against the United States, our allies or partners, or any other nation around the world. On the CWC's 20th anniversary, we reaffirm that the use of chemical weapons will not be tolerated.

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Press Releases: Violence in Macedonian Parliament

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Washington, DC
April 28, 2017

The United States strongly condemns the violent attacks on members of the Macedonian parliament which followed the election of Talat Xhaferi as Speaker of Parliament. We will work with the new Speaker to support democracy and to help Macedonia move forward on its European path.

Violence has no place in the democratic process. We express our deepest sympathies to those Members of Parliament injured in the attacks and their families. The United States calls on Macedonian authorities to ensure the security of all Members of Parliament, to investigate the attack thoroughly, and to hold accountable those who committed acts of violence.

We urge all parties to remain calm, resolve any differences peacefully, and

respect Macedonia's laws and democratic processes.

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Press Releases: Remarks at the United Nations Security Council Ministerial Session on D.P.R.K.

Remarks

Rex W. Tillerson

Secretary of State

United Nations
New York City
April 28, 2017

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Thank you, Secretary General, for that most helpful briefing. I shall now make a statement in my capacity as Secretary of State of the United States, and I thank you for the opportunity to address the Security Council.

According to UN Security Council Resolution 2321, a stated objective of this council is North Korea's abandonment of its nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs.

For the past 20 years, well-intentioned diplomatic efforts to halt these programs have failed. It is only by first dismantling them that there can be peace, stability, and economic prosperity for all of Northeast Asia.

With each successive detonation and missile test, North Korea pushes Northeast Asia and the world closer to instability and broader conflict.

The threat of a North Korean nuclear attack on Seoul, or Tokyo, is real.

And it is likely only a matter of time before North Korea develops the capability to strike the U.S. mainland.

Indeed, the D.P.R.K. has repeatedly claimed it plans to conduct such a strike. Given that rhetoric, the United States cannot idly stand by. Nor can other members of this council who are within striking distance of North Korean missiles.

Having for years displayed a pattern of behavior that defies multiple UN Security Council resolutions, including 2321 and 2270, and erodes global progress on nuclear nonproliferation, there is no reason to think that North Korea will change its behavior under the current multilateral sanctions framework.

For too long, the international community has been reactive in addressing North Korea. Those days must come to an end.

Failing to act now on the most pressing security issue in the world may bring catastrophic consequences.

We have said this before and it bears repeating: the policy of strategic patience is over. Additional patience will only mean acceptance of a nuclear North Korea.

The more we bide our time, the sooner we will run out of it.

In light of the growing threat, the time has come for all of us to put new pressure on North Korea to abandon its dangerous path.

I urge this council to act before North Korea does.

We must work together to adopt a new approach and impose increased diplomatic and economic pressures on the North Korean regime.

The new campaign the United States is embarking on is driven by our own national security considerations, and it is welcomed by many nations who are concerned for their own security and question why North Korea clings to nuclear capabilities for which it has no need.

Our goal is not regime change. Nor do we desire to threaten the North Korean people or destabilize the Asia Pacific region. Over the years, we have withdrawn our own nuclear weapons from South Korea and offered aid to North Korea as proof of our intent to de-escalate the situation and normalize relations. Since 1995, the United States has provided over \$1.3 billion dollars in aid to North Korea, and we look forward to resuming our contributions once the D.P.R.K. begins to dismantle its nuclear weapons and missile technology programs.

The D.P.R.K., for its own sake, must dismantle its nuclear and missile programs if it wants to achieve the security, economic development, and international recognition that it seeks. North Korea must understand that respect will never follow recklessness. North

Korea must take concrete steps to reduce the threat that its illegal weapons programs pose to the United States and our allies before we can even consider talks.

I propose all nations take these three actions beginning today:

First, we call on UN member-states to fully implement the commitments they have made regarding North Korea. This includes all measures required in Resolutions 2321 and 2270.

Those nations which have not fully enforced these resolutions fully discredit this body.

Second, we call on countries to suspend or downgrade diplomatic relations with North Korea. North Korea exploits its diplomatic privileges to fund its illicit nuclear and missile technology programs, and constraining its diplomatic activity will cut off a flow of needed resources. In light of North Korea's recent actions, normal relations with the D.P.R.K. are simply not acceptable.

Third, we must increase North Korea's financial isolation. We must levy new sanctions on D.P.R.K. entities and individuals supporting its weapons and missile programs, and tighten those that are already in place. The United States also would much prefer countries and people in question to own up to their lapses and correct their behavior themselves, but we will not hesitate to sanction third-country entities and individuals supporting the D.P.R.K.'s illegal activities.

We must bring maximum economic pressure by severing trade relationships that directly fund the D.P.R.K.'s nuclear and missile program. I call on the international community to suspend the flow of North Korean guest workers and to impose bans on North Korean imports, especially coal.

We must all do our share, but China accounting for 90 percent of North Korean trade, China alone has economic leverage over Pyongyang that is unique, and its role is therefore particularly important. The U.S. and China have held very productive exchanges on this issue, and we look forward to further actions that build on what China has already done.

Lastly, as we have said before, all options for responding to future provocation must remain on the table. Diplomatic and financial levers of power will be backed up by a willingness to counteract North Korean aggression with military action if necessary. We much prefer a negotiated solution to this problem. But we are committed to defending ourselves and our allies against North Korean aggression.

This new pressure campaign will be swiftly implemented and painful to North Korean interest.

I realize some nations for which a relationship with North Korea has been in some ways a net positive may be disinclined to implement the measures of pressure on North Korea.

But the catastrophic effects of a North Korean nuclear strike outweigh any

economic benefits. We must be willing to face the hard truths and make hard choices right now to prevent disastrous outcomes in the future.

Business as usual is not an option.

There is also a moral dimension to this problem. Countries must know by now that helping the North Korean regime means enabling cruelty and suffering.

North Korea feeds billions of dollars into a nuclear program it does not need while its own people starve.

The regime's pursuit of nuclear weapons does not serve its own national security or the well-being of a people trapped in tyranny.

I ask the community of nations to help us preserve security and protect human dignity.

In one of my first trips as America's Secretary of State, I looked across the DMZ at the haunted land of North Korea. Beyond the border is a nation of sorrow, frozen in time. While the world sees the gleaming buildings of Pyongyang, the blight of oppression and starvation has swept this land for over 60 years.

But even though the present condition of that country is bleak, the United States believes in a future for North Korea. These first steps toward a more hopeful future will happen most quickly if other stakeholders in this – in the region and the global security join us.

For years, North Korea has been dictating the terms of its dangerous course of action.

It is time for us to retake control of the situation.

We ask the members of this council and all other partners to implement a new strategy to denuclearize North Korea.

Thank you.

I resume my function now as president of the council. I now give the floor to His Excellency, Mr. Fumio Kishida, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan.

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Press Releases: United States Citizens Detained in Iran

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Mark C. Toner

Deputy Department Spokesperson

Washington, DC
April 27, 2017

On the sidelines of the April 25 meeting in Vienna of the Joint Commission overseeing implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, the U.S. delegation raised with the Iranian delegation its serious concerns regarding the cases of U.S. citizens detained and missing in Iran, and called on Iran to immediately release these U.S. citizens so they can be reunited with their families.

According to reports, U.S. citizen Siamak Namazi has been unjustly detained in Iran since October 2015, and his 81-year old father, U.S. citizen Baquer Namazi, has been unjustly detained in Iran since February 2016. The United States is deeply concerned about reports of their declining health and well-being in detention. The United States urges Iran to immediately release Siamak and Baquer on humanitarian grounds.

It has also been more than a decade since Robert Levinson disappeared from Iran's Kish Island. Iran committed to cooperating with the United States in bringing Bob home and we call on Iran to fulfill this commitment. The United States remains unwavering in its efforts to return Bob to his family.

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