

Assistant Secretary Patterson and Assistant Secretary Rivkin Press Conference

March 3, 2015

Algiers, Algeria

AS Patterson: Thank you very much. Let me say what a pleasure it is for Ambassador Rivkin and I to be here and join Ambassador Joan Polaschik. The U.S.-Algerian relationship is strong and continues to grow. We look forward to building every aspect of that relationship. Security cooperation continues to be a top priority for both our governments. The United States is proud to stand with Algeria to fight extremism and to take steps to address the root causes of terrorism. The United States values Algeria's hard-won gains against terrorism and supports Algeria's efforts to share those lessons with others. I'd like to praise the leadership of the Algerian government, not only in Mali, which was a very considerable success for the government, but also in Libya. Algeria has been in the forefront of trying to find a peaceful solution to that troubled country and we look forward to working with the Algerian government and the rest of the international community as that process moves forward. Thank you.

AS Rivkin: Mesdames et messieurs, As-Salaam-Alaikum et bon après-midi. Je suis honoré de parler avec la presse. Une presse libre et indépendante est toujours important pour la santé d'une démocratie. Donc, je suis toujours heureux d'avoir l'occasion de discuter de sujets importants avec vous. Avant de continuer mon discours en anglais, je voudrais vous dire à quel point je suis heureux d'être ici en Algérie. Je voudrais préciser qu'il s'agit de mon premier voyage en Afrique du Nord en tant que Secrétaire adjoint des affaires économiques du Département d'Etat. J'ai décidé de venir ici car je pense sincèrement que nous entamons un nouveau chapitre très prometteur dans notre relation commerciale. Et Nous sommes venus en Algérie parce que nous croyons en son présent et son avenir. Nous croyons que lorsque vous créez les conditions pour que les jeunes puissent réaliser leurs aspirations, tout le monde bénéficiera ; et l'Algérie aura l'avenir qu'elle mérite. Et maintenant, si vous me pardonnerez, je vais continuer en anglais.

As I just mentioned, I am delighted to be in Algeria and to have the opportunity to speak to the press, because a free and independent press is the life blood of any healthy democracy. We've come to Algeria, the Assistant Secretary and I, because we – the United States Government – are seeking to build greater and deeper economic and commercial ties between the United States' private sector and the Algerian public and private sector.

I had the honor of leading the U.S. Trade and Investment Mission here, which includes companies of all sizes across a broad range of sectors from renewable energy to high-tech agriculture to world-class services. And we did this in partnership with the National U.S.-Arab Chamber of Commerce and the U.S.-Algerian Business Council. In meetings with government officials and members of the Algerian business community, we've underscored that our

American companies are ready and willing to strengthen the commercial ties between our two nations. American firms bring with them the latest technologies, the world's best business practices, and the know-how that they can transfer to their Algerian partners so that Algerian companies can become leaders in new sectors across the country. American companies also bring with them a culture of promoting innovation and entrepreneurial spirit that proves over and over again to be our greatest export. We do not claim to have a monopoly on these traits. We know those qualities are very much alive in the hearts and minds of the Algerian people and that is why we support a business friendly climate that can foster creativity, and which rewards, rewards, rather than stigmatizes entrepreneurs who have the courage and vision to take risks. And in these kinds of environments, small and medium enterprises will be able to do what they do best: foster economic growth, create jobs, and contribute to the rapid diversification that can help Algeria take its rightful place in the future. In conclusion, we applaud Algeria's efforts to invite more foreign investment and expand the Algerian economy, especially focusing on job opportunities for young people, because the United States stands ready to support this process. But, to be truly helpful, we must highlight the barriers that impede greater trade and investment so that we can work together as equal partners and create prosperity and opportunity in both directions. Thank you very much.

PAO Kristi Roberts: Thank you, Ambassadors Rivkin and Patterson. And now we will open the floor for questions.

Reporter (translated): First of all allow me to speak French. First question in the resolution of conflicts Algeria is known to support peaceful solutions for all conflicts, especially in Mali and Libya. And despite the attempt by Egypt to launch military, to support a military solution in Libya, and despite the fact that the United Nations also supported a peaceful solution in Libya. Is the U.S. committed to a peaceful solution?

AS Patterson: Absolutely, we are committed to a peaceful solution in Libya. The only solution to Libya's numerous problems is a political solution in which all political sides come together to form a national unity government. Over the past two days we've had very extensive conversations, and in Washington, with the Algerian government on the way forward and we are very much in accord with their approach.

We support the efforts of the special envoy of the United Nations and the Secretary General, Bernardino Leon, who has visited Algeria a number of times and is closely engaged with representatives of your government and again they have been very supportive of his process.

Reporter (translated): So you mentioned that in order to have better relationship with Algeria we had to lift those obstacles that are still there and do you think that the economic, world economic situation, especially with the dropping oil prices, is it possible to have better relationships.

AS Rivkin: Let me start by re-emphasizing something that the Assistant Secretary said and that **Son Excellence l'Ambassadeur des Etats-Unis ici en Algérie elle dit toujours**, that our relations with Algeria are terrific. We have extraordinarily strong bilateral ties. I am here, as the Assistant Secretary of State for Economic Affairs, to strengthen the economic ties and make that relationship even stronger.

On cherche toujours en tant qu'investisseur la transparence, la prévisibilité et l'état de droit.

And if those qualities exist, then we can greatly increase the chance that American businesses will invest in this great country.

You asked about obstacles, I won't call it an obstacle, but we have encouraged our colleagues here in Algeria to think about the 51/49 rule, not because large companies like GE and others have problems working with it. But, the key to diversification is strengthening small and medium enterprises and this type of rule makes it difficult for small and medium enterprises, without the resources to navigate a market, to find ways of investing in this country.

You asked about the oil prices and its impact on the economy and I think that the drop in oil prices highlights why it's important for the diversification of the Algerian economy. And America stands ready to help our Algerian friends by finding ways of diversifying and partnering with American business.

Reporter (in French):

AS Rivkin: Well you mentioned-

Reporter (translated): So you're aware that there were protests in Southern Algeria about the exploitation of shale gas. Don't you think that it's a mistake for Algeria not to exploit these resources?

AS Rivkin: **Mais elle a dit aussi que ce n'est pas le problème aux Etats-Unis avec le gaz de schiste et je veux dire que ce n'est exactement vrai. Les différents états ont de différents avis à ce sujet-là mais quand même. Je continue en anglais.**

The innovation behind exploration in shale gas has sparked an unprecedented economic growth in America. It's also made our country more energy independent and it has greatly reduced the unemployment rates.

But, we are not here to tell the Government of Algeria what to do as it relates to shale gas. This is a decision of the Algerian government. We are here to offer our help, if they chose to go this route, because we have expertise and technology that might aid the Algerian people in finding ways of exploiting this real phenomenal technology.

Reporter: Good morning and welcome to Algeria. My question is it's unfair that we compare the American experience in shale gas with the Algerian one. How Algerian government must do to exploit this kind of energy in order to develop her economy like other American experience?

AS Rivkin: I don't mean to compare America with Algeria. I'm simply, I'm an American, and I work for the U.S. government, and I'm trying to articulate why it has been an overall success for the American economy. It's Algeria's choice what it wants to do, I'm not comparing the two. But in the interest of aiding economic ties, of building economic ties, between our two great nations, if they choose to go in this direction, it's something we would be ready and willing to help with. That's all. I'm not trying to compare the two, I'm just mentioning from my perspective, America has benefited from this technology and if Algeria chooses to go in this direction we are here to help.

Reporter (translated): So did you talk with Algerian officials about the issue of shale gas or will you talk about this issue? We know that there are many U.S. companies that are involved in this sector, I mean, Halliburton. So did you discuss or will you discuss about this?

AS Rivkin: The Assistant Secretary and I and the Ambassador met with a number of senior officials in the Algerian government and my message to them was the same as I've just to you. Which is to the extent that this is where Algeria as a country wants to head, we are happy to lend a hand the same way we are trying to find ways to grow our economic relationship across the entire spectrum of industries and I wanted to mention that I've met with Americans doing business here who talk about the extraordinary business opportunities that exist in Algeria. I'm having lunch in a few minutes with Algerian businesses doing business here and looking forward to hearing how we can help. And the Ambassador organized—**je sais je parle rapidement, excusez-moi**—the Ambassador organized a meeting with women entrepreneurs at her residence where I saw the incredible power and creativity of the entrepreneurial economy here. **Je**

continue pour un moment pour dire The spectrum of economic opportunity here is enormous. **Le gaz de schiste c'est une partie.**

Reporter (translated): You said that you were here to lend a hand in case Algeria wants to exploit shale gas. But did the Algerian authorities or officials say anything about your request in this field? Or did they say they need to exploit the shale gas?

AS Rivkin: The topic of shale gas comes up in discussion with Algerian government amidst a broad array of economic opportunities that we're discussing between our two countries. We're here to help with diversification if we can, we're help with entrepreneurship, we're here to help increase foreign direct investment from America into the country, we're here to help create jobs. In the spectrum of this broad conversation, shale gas comes up, and of course, because we have energy companies here, my response is, if the Algerian government choses to pursue the path, we're here to help.

PAO Kristi Roberts: We don't have any time for any more questions, as the Ambassador mentioned, we have a lunch, they have a lunch with Algerian business interested in partnering with American firms in just a few minutes. But I wanted to give Ambassadors Patterson and Rivkin a minute, if they want, to highlight any closing remarks.

AS Patterson: Let me just say again how much we appreciate Algeria's leadership role in the region and I also want to compliment, I met with the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Religion and Algeria has been very active in combatting violent extremism. And we talked about further steps in which we might work together to move forward on this agenda of combatting radicalization in this region. And also in recovering the young men who engage in these activities and the Algerian government has some very interesting ideas based on their own program, your program, of national reconciliation so we look forward to working together on that field as well.

AS Rivkin: Ladies and Gentlemen, John Kerry believes that economic policy is foreign policy and foreign policy is economic policy. He believes that strengthening the economic ties with our friends around the world will deepen profoundly the bilateral relationships. This is the first time that Assistant Secretary Patterson and I have been assigned to go together to one country. It makes a statement. It shows how important Algeria is to our foreign policy and how much we want to help with this economic policy.

Last week there was a meeting of the TIFA, which hasn't happened in a decade, hasn't happened in a decade. I'm hopeful that another thing that hasn't happened in a decade, which is the open skies agreement we've been discussing also begins to see the light of day. I'm leading, as I mentioned, a trade delegation of over 30 American executives who are all coming here looking to invest. Next week, there will be another delegation about safety and security. This ladies and gentlemen, is the beginning of the renewal of our economic ties between Algeria and the United States and under the leadership of our extraordinary Ambassador, I think we're going to make a difference.

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