

**TRANSCRIPT OF ASSISTANT SECRETARY MALINOWSKI
BURMA PRESS CONFERENCE: INTERNATIONAL AND LOCAL
REPORTERS 6/28/2014**

PRESS BRIEFING 1

MODERATOR: Shibani Mahtani from the Wall Street Journal. We're here with Assistant Secretary Malinowski, General Crutchfield, and Ambassador Mitchell, and Deputy Assistant Secretary Amy Searight and a couple of staff members. So, thanks for taking the time of course to everyone. I think we'll go ahead and keep this to 20-25 minutes and Assistant Secretary Malinowski will provide some—Can we close the door actually, sorry—provide some initial comments on the context of his trip and then we can open it up to any general questions. Sir?

A/S MALINOWSKI: Hi, and tell me [introductions ensue]. General Crutchfield, I don't know if you've met him. Amy Searight, who is Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Asia and Pacific. So, one week trip, kind of in three parts. We started out in Mon and Karen State. Talked to the various religious community leaders in Mon state to explore an obvious set of issues in Karen State, talked through the peace process, talked to KNU, civil society, et cetera. In Rangoon, met with US and local business communities and spent a day speaking to the so-called SDN community, which we can talk about. And then went up to Naypyidaw and met with Commander in Chief, Defense Minister, Speaker of the Parliament, Aung San Suu Kyi and numerous others. I suppose the most interesting highlight of that was the General was able to address the Defense Academy, first time any US officer we think in history has addressed them, so a large group of mid-level officers, who then asked a whole series of interesting questions and we just put the speech up, I don't know if you've—oh, you have it there, okay good.

And, then also, came back here, met with more civil society folks, ethnic minorities, so our military delegations saw both sides, both the military and Kachin and Karen and others from both sides, met the two Rakhine communities as well, today. So, a lot of different pieces to the trip. And I

think, you know, the larger context is that we see a tremendous amount of change happening but we also see a lot of risks, and those risks are accentuated by a couple factors. First, the hardest deepest reform questions are the ones that remain unresolved, naturally predictably. And because the 2015 elections are coming up and a lot of deep and hard questions are naturally predictably becoming politicized.

So, what are the big questions? For us in no particular order, the elections themselves in 2015, which will be an enormously important milestone. We told the government that no event in modern Burmese history will be more watched around the world, than the 2015 elections. We met with the Union Election Commission, talked to them about all of the different challenges, whether the rules for campaigning will be, will allow for a free and fair elections and more broadly, whether the climate in terms of press freedom, respect for the rights of civil society, activists, et cetera., will be consistent with where Burma needs to be to show the world it is continuing to take step by step progress towards democracy.

How will the military define its role in this whole process? The general's speech and all of our meetings emphasized above all else the importance of civilian control of the military and as you'll see, he talked about the American experience as a model and argued that that is the only way in the long run to build trust between the military and society. And again, we had a very good back and forth discussion with them about those issues. Many of the constitutional questions are wrapped up in this fundamental debate about what the role of the military will be. So how will those be resolved.

The peace process, can the center achieve a sustainable peace with the ethnic minorities after the longest running civil war on the planet. And can that peace, will that peace bring tangible improvements to the lives of the local people or will it be simply a deal between two armed groups to carve up the pie.

What role will the business community play in the transformation? Will the local business community and the international business community provide

a model of transparent and responsible business practices? And the SDN meetings were, of course, part of exploring that theme.

And then, finally, and in some ways for me, most fundamentally, there's the question of whether Burma's arguably greatest strength, its ethnic and religious diversity, will continue to be a strength in the years ahead, or whether we see more unscrupulous manipulation of religious and racial differences for transparently political ends. And we have seen some of that in recent months and it's of tremendous concern to us. The challenges in Rakhine state are related to that problem, that it's deeper than just the conflict in Rakhine. So this came up in many, many of our meetings, with civil society groups, with religious communities in Mon and Karen states. It was an issue we discussed with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, it's an issue that came up in most of our government meetings. We of course raised the proposed draft laws on religion, some of which, well one of which I think we've seen and the rest of which we haven't seen but we know the basic themes.

And I think everywhere our message was that the country can and we're confident will continue to move forward if people are not divided along those lines. The division should be--the debate in 2015 should be about how to achieve democracy and should be a debate between moving forward and going backward. It should not be a debate about religious and racial identity. So, those are the big themes. That's what we did. Underlying all of that I think is our interest in Burma becoming a stronger and more successful country with a closer partnership with the United States. That depends of course on continued reform. It depends on internal peace. But we've expressed to everyone that the potential in the relationship is unlimited so long as the progress that we've seen continues. We understand it's going to take time. There are going to be setbacks. We're willing to be very patient with it and we're going to be engaged and committed for the long haul until the goals for which people sacrificed so many years of their lives for... Those who went to prison, those who had to leave the country to exile until those goals are achieved. So, I'll take any questions on any of that, or what the meaning of life is or the World Cup.

REUTERS: Sounds like you almost explored every topic, more or less.

A/S MALINOWSKI: We kind of did! It was a one week trip, you know? We really wanted to dig deep...

AP: Could you tell me a little bit more about the meeting with some business men?

A/S MALINOWSKI: Some business men?

AP: The cronies, those who are on SDN list?

A/S MALINOWSKI: Well, we invited everyone who is-- all of the individuals on the SDN list, the business people, the so called cronies, and most of them came. And the purpose of the meetings was to lay out for them what they need to do to get off the blacklist. My sense is that many of them are very eager to do so, both for very practical reasons and because they want to build a new legacy for themselves and for their children. So we went through the steps. We stressed that this is a legal process not a political process. It's open to everybody. It's based on objective criteria and essentially what they have to do is to demonstrate to us in a verifiable way, backed by evidence, that they are engaging in responsible business practices. That they have cut ties with the military and military owned businesses. That they are not complicit in human rights abuses such as land grabs for example and as they submit evidence that demonstrates that they have changed their practices consistent with those principles, our Treasury Department will review their case and we are eager to see people pass through that hoop. This is, I think, a very creative and it's a very creative way of winding down the sanctions regime, leveraging the desire of these individuals to be fully integrated in the global economy. To ensure that some of the wealthiest and most influential actors in the Burmese economy operate in accordance with world class standards of corporate and social responsibility. That would be good for Burma.

AP: How long does it usually take to review these cases?

A/S MALINOWSKI: That's up to them. The ball is in their court.

AP: If they submit a plea, how long does it take for the US Treasury--

A/S MALINOWSKI: It depends on the quality of what they submit. If they submit a very, very good case, backed by solid evidence, and we don't have to go back to them, then the process can move relatively quickly, but I can't predict a precise amount of time because it is a careful process and as I stressed, it's a legal process, it's not a political decision.

AP: And who are those people that you met?

A/S MALINOWSKI: I will respect their privacy but you can certainly—you know the universe and a significant portion of them came to meet us and you can certainly ask them...

AP: Like half a dozen?

A/S MALINOWSKI: I don't know what that means. (AP Reporter overlapping: I mean how many—because there are quite a number of people on the SDN list?) I won't give you a number.

MODERATOR: I think that's a fair point, so...we can move on to another...

REUTERS: If the process is not political and it's purely legal and you know it takes the amount of time that it takes for them to present the right evidence, if you will, then why is it that people like Shwe Mann and Thein Sein were taken off the list so quickly? I mean—and you know--Shwe Mann...it's been public knowledge that he's gone to Pyongyang and done arms deals and yet when the reform process happened these guys were taken off, the politicians, so does that not suggest that in fact the process is political?

A/S MALINOWSKI: It is possible to make a foreign policy decision with respect to somebody on the SDN list and in those cases we were dealing with leaders in the government that were freeing political prisoners, organizing increasingly free and fair elections and we felt that that was the right decision and in fact a necessary decision to enable the kind of partnership that we are slowly, cautiously trying to build. In this case, we

have decided upon a specific set of criteria that will apply to individuals who were listed for providing material support to the military regime in Burma, a process that is designed to leverage improved behavior and business practices on their part. There's a whole separate question about enterprises, state enterprises for example, and other business entities on the SDN list and we have a separate but similar set of criteria.

REUTERS: Is that criteria new or has that been kind of developed with Burma in mind?

A/S MALINOWSKI: Developed with Burma in mind.

REUTERS: Really?

A/S MALINOWSKI: I mean they are based, of course, on the original criteria for listing these individuals but to my knowledge we have not done this in this particular way in other sanctions regimes. Is that fair, David?

DAVID: I think that's fair. I think it's consistent across all sanctions regimes that sanctions are intended to address current activity and behavior, they are not to punitive. So, the criteria in this case were developed with the specific circumstances of Myanmar in mind. So, you know I think those criteria are unique to Burma but the sort of theory behind it is the same across all sanctions regimes.

REUTERS: Would that criteria be used in the future in different countries or is this like purely Burma specific?

A/S MALINOWSKI: The specific criteria are Burma specific. Whether we apply this model, individualized sanctions relief, based on individualized—based on a set of criteria tailored to a particular country, is something that we'll have to see. This is something that could be a model but every country and every context is different. I do think that one thing I can say about the meetings that we had is that I think...I'm optimistic that this process is going to produce some interesting results here because I think that there are a number of individuals who very much want, for the reasons that I described, to be off of this list and I think they understand that what we are asking of them is 100% consistent with what the Burmese people are

asking of them. There is a very evident thirst in this country for responsible investment, responsible business practices. The current movement to reform, we shouldn't forget, began not with a pro-democracy protest but with a protest against irresponsible commercial development, a dam on a river. And so these two factors reinforce each other: the bottom up pressure on these businesses, these individuals to reform the way they do business, combined with the criteria we have laid out, I think could produce a very interesting result. I think it could produce a business environment in Burma that leapfrogs ahead of Burma's neighbors in terms of commitment to a responsible set of business practices.

REUTERS: Can I ask about the Constitution, because that's obviously the big issue. From your point of view, how likely do you think it is that it'll get amended before the next election and how important is it to the United States? And then, if it's not amended are there repercussions for that?

A/S MALINOWSKI: I'm not going to say how likely it is. It doesn't make sense for me to predict what's going to happen even tomorrow in Burmese politics or even American politics. I think what's important to the United States are the fundamental principles involved, that the timetable is up to the Burmese and not something we should dictate, but it is important, for example, that the country move step by step towards greater civilian control of the military. That was, as I mentioned, the central theme of our mil to mil engagements, the General's speech and many of the Constitutional questions are about civilian control of the military. Again, what pace they move in and the precise form the Constitutional amendments take is not for us to say but the end goal, we hope, will be a country in which democratic rights are fully protected by the law and the military is a professional body that functions under the authority of elected civilians.

REUTERS: How receptive were they to that message? I mean, in your conversations, did you get the sense that the military leadership is on board with this transition or is there some resistance to it?

A/S MALINOWSKI: There...I wouldn't want to describe the military as a collective that thinks, in which everybody thinks alike. My impression is

that they are wrestling with that very question. We got questions about it from the younger officers following the speech. They asked us to elaborate. They asked us to talk about how quickly we think this change will take place. We heard some agreement with respect to the ultimate goal. We heard familiar arguments about the unique role that the military has played over the decades in this country. So, they're going to have to wrestle with this and it won't just be up to them because civilians will have a lot, will have their say as well. And there will have to be compromises and it's not all going to happen in one fell swoop. But we were clear about what the ultimate goal was and we were clear that although the pace of change is up to them, the sooner the change happens, the sooner we can enhance the military to military relationship in the ways that I think they are eager to see us do.

MODERATOR: Sorry, just for Shibani, since you're on the phone and can't visually see us and since we really only have time for one or two more questions, let me ask you if you have a question that you'd like to ask.

WALL STREET JOURNAL: Yep, thank you. Just going back to the SDN list for a second, I was going to ask if any of the individuals on that list had already started the process, the legal process through which they need to get off and also were there entities like UMEHL will be treated any differently or have any different sets of requirements that they would have to go through?

A/S MALINOWSKI: I'm sorry, the second...I didn't catch the-

MODERATOR: Can you repeat the second question, Shibani?

WALL STREET JOURNAL: Yes, the second question was whether the entities through UMEHL would have any sort of different processes that they would have to go through or will it be like the same for individuals and kind of state linked entities?

A/S MALINOWSKI: On the first question, I don't want to discuss any individual cases. I think I can say that some have taken some initial steps but I wouldn't want to go beyond that, just again, to respect their privacy

and the privacy of these deliberations. On the entities, the overall criteria and goals are actually quite similar. You know we're talking about responsible business practices, respect for human rights, transparency, and by the way I think I may not have stressed that quite enough in talking about the SDNs, that, you know, for all the criteria, transparency is absolutely key. They've got to show it. I think that the most complicated case would involve military owned enterprises because one of our criteria is cutting ties with the military and how we would ultimately deal with a question of military owned enterprises as distinct from say the Myanmar Timber Enterprise, which is a state enterprise but reporting to a civilian ministry. So that's a complicated question that I don't think we've fully resolved yet.

MODERATOR: So last question of course and then sorry we have to go to another press briefing.

AP: Religious and conversion law that you discussed with the government officials and ethnic leaders and religious leaders, do you think this legislation can affect freedom of belief?

A/S MALINOWSKI: Well, as we understand it, we don't see how the legislation can be consistent with international standards and we expressed that clearly to the government officials we met. We heard a lot of concerns about it from religious minority communities with whom we met. We heard a lot of concerns from women we met throughout the country. And we hope that the government and the parliament do not take any steps that make what is already a problem even worse. This is a time to step back from divisiveness and for leaders in Myanmar, in Burma, to call for unity and not to appease forces that are trying to divide people on the basis of religion or race. And I think, among the officials we met, there was a lot of understanding in terms of the importance of that message. I think a lot of, I think many of the people we met recognize that this is...that these questions of religious and racial identity are potentially very volatile and dangerous and that it would be in the best interest of the country and the reform process to lower the temperature.

MODERATOR: Great, well thank you so much.

REUTERS: Thanks guys.

MODERATOR: Thanks Shibani.

Press Briefing 2

MODERATOR: Alright, well great, thanks everyone for coming. We're obviously very pleased to have a delegation from Washington, led by Assistant Secretary Tom Malinowski who is here with other visiting officials. What we'll go ahead and do is have the Assistant Secretary make opening remarks and then at that point we'll open up the floor to questions. I'll go ahead and choose you as you have a question- please raise your hand and then identify your name and your media outlet affiliation, and then ask your question. And we have about 20 to 25 minutes for this particular round table discussion. With that sir, I'll turn it over to you.

A/S MALINOWSKI: Thank you so much. So I'm Tom Malinowski, from the State Department. To my right, General Tony Crutchfield who is the deputy commander of our Pacific Command, who is part of part of the trip. You of course know Ambassador Mitchell. Amy Searight who is Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense back in Washington in the Pentagon for Asia and the Pacific- South and South East Asia. Well, you know, that's a big part of Asia. So we, I have been in Burma for the last week, and I'll tell you a little about the trip, and the themes, and then take your questions. We started in Mon and Karen States, we went to Moulemein and Hpa-An, spoke to a wide range of people- religious community leaders, KNU leadership, civil society, local government. Came back to Yangon, met with members of the US business community here, the local chamber of Commerce, and also spent a day meeting with the so called SDN community, the individuals who have been placed on our sanctions list and explaining to them the steps they need to take should they wish to get off of the sanctions list. Then we went to Naypyidaw for two days. We met with the Commander in Chief, the Defense Minister, the Speaker of Parliament, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, , other parliamentarians, the Union Election Commission, and other senior officials of the government. General Crutchfield delivered a speech to the National Defense College, it was the first time an American officer has

addressed the college I think in history, and took questions from the military officers. The speech is now on our website, I think you have it so you can take a look. And then we came back here today and met with more civil society representatives. The General met with ethnic minority representatives including Kachin, Shan, Karen, Chin and others. We met with both the Rakhine, both Rakhine communities, Muslim and Buddhist as well. So, we touched on a wide range of issues. Broader context, we see important change happening, continuing to happen in this country- we also see challenges and risks, and those challenges and risks are accentuated by two factors: first, the hardest and deepest questions of reform are the ones still to be faced, and second we have an election coming in 2015, and so some of those hard and deep questions inevitably, predictably become politicized.

What are the key questions on our minds? First of all, the elections themselves: Will they be free and fair? Will there be a climate before and during the elections that allows the people of the country to engage in a free and fair process to choose their next leaders? So that includes questions of freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, the rights enjoyed by civil society. Second, how will the military in this country define its role in the future? The General's speech was in large part about the importance of civilian control of the military and many of the critical constitutional questions now being debated revolve around that question and we discussed them with leaders in Naypyidaw and with others.

Can the central government and the ethnic minorities make peace? Will this peace process lead to a sustainable peace? One that benefits communities and people in the conflict areas. That was an issue we explored with minority representatives, with the military, with the civilian leadership.

What role will the business community play in all of this? Will the business community model a set of business practices that are transparent and responsible? That was the subject, of course, of our conversation with the SDNs and also the other investors here. And then finally, a question that is very much on our minds, is whether one of Burma's greatest strengths, its religious and ethnic diversity, will remain a strength in the years to come.

We are concerned by the, I would say, the manipulation we have seen of racial and religious differences by some people for what I think are transparently political ends. We see this as a risk moving into the 2015 elections and to the process of reform itself and so with all of the leaders we met, we urged that they be leaders for unity and against division. That they seek to use their influence to lower the temperature so that the decision people face in 2015 is not about race and religion and patriotism and who is a good Burmese. It is about whether the country should move forward or not, whether it should move to democracy or not, and how to do that. Those are the questions that we hope the people of the country will debate. Underlying all of this is America's interest in partnership with a strong and successful Burma. That strength and success, of course, depends on the reform process moving forward. It depends on internal peace, choices and decisions that only the people of the country can make but as they make those choices, our partnership will continue to grow deeper, whether our business partnership, our military to military partnership, the partnership with our governments. And we certainly hope that that will be possible in the future.

MODERATOR: Great, thank you, sir. We'll open it up to any questions that you may have.

MYANMAR TIMES: When you were the Director of Human Rights Watch in 2013, Human Rights Watch published a report that said "all you can do is pray about the situation in Rakhine." Do you still believe in that and what is the current position of the US government?

A/S MALINOWSKI: The US government has been and is profoundly concerned about the situation in Rakhine State. We discussed it with all of the key leaders and officials. We discussed it with both communities around this table here today. We think that the first and most urgent need is to deal with the emergency humanitarian situation. People need medicine. People need food. People need safety and security. The government has released a draft action plan and that action plan is a step in the right direction, but what's important is action and we hope to see in the coming days with the new leadership in Rakhine state, a resolution to some of the problems that

have prevented organizations like MSF and others from delivering assistance to people who need it to stay alive. In the longer run, we hope that there will be a process of dialogue between the two communities and the government, one that begins to resolve the deeper and more complicated questions of citizenship and reintegration between these two communities. There is no solution other than that they find a way to live together and we hope to see that happen.

VOICE OF AMERICA: First of all, congratulations. You are the most suitable person for this position.

A/S MALINOWSKI: Oh, I'm sure there's someone more suitable but thank you.

VOICE OF AMERICA: I believe it. Well, Human Rights Watch, recently we have interviewed Brad Adams and they are concerned about the military to military relationship at this stage because it's premature and what is your response to that? I mean the military to military relation is it premature or it's time to engage at this point?

A/S MALINOWSKI: It is time to engage in a cautious way. And in fact, my old friends at Human Rights Watch told us that they strongly supported this visit that the two of us have made before we came here. The purpose of this engagement, the sole purpose of this engagement, as you will see from the General's speech was and is to speak to the military about the importance of human rights, the rule of law, and civilian control. All of our engagements and all of our discussions revolve around those issues. There is the potential for a deeper partnership, even a full partnership in the future, but we can only move in that direction as the military moves towards greater civilian control, respect for rule of law, all of the different issues that we have raised. And we went into a very specific set of issues in our meeting with the Commander in Chief, the Defense Minister, with respect to forced labor and child soldiers, relationship with the civilian government, the issue of land seizures, which we have heard is very, very important to people in many, many parts of this country, and that relates both to the business community and to the military. We spoke to the Commander in Chief about

whether the military will adopt a much more clear policy in the future about the seizure of land from farmers and from ordinary people in this country. So that is the purpose of the military to military engagement. We feel that those conversations are more effective and potentially more productive when they can take place between soldiers.

VOICE OF AMERICA: And we also learned that the Senior General Min Aung Hlaing will be visiting U.S. soon.

A/S MALINOWSKI: There's no plan for such a visit.

MODERATOR: Next question please.

UNKNOWN JOURNALIST: Yes, you've mentioned--

MODERATOR: Can you introduce yourself?

RADIO FREE ASIA: Oh sorry, I'm from Radio Free Asia. You mentioned that you met with some people who are put on the US Sanction list, are you—I mean the US government is willing to remove them from the list soon or are you still thinking?

A/S MALINOWSKI: How soon is up to them. What we told them is that there is a process that they can go through if they wish to be considered for removal, but they're going to have to take some fundamental---they're going to have to make some fundamental changes in the way that they do business. And we went through the specific criteria and the specific steps that we would expect them to take. What are those steps? Greater transparency in their business operations, cutting ties to the military and to military owned businesses, avoiding complicity in human rights abuses, including for example, land grabs. They have to do those things and they have to show us that they are doing those things in a verifiable way, backed by evidence. But if they do, and I believe they can, I believe they can afford to take those steps, then there is a process whereby they can and will be removed from the SDN list. The ball is in their court though.

KYOTO NEWS: You mentioned the Minister of Defense and Commander in Chief Min Aung Hlaing. Could you please elaborate a little bit on your meeting and your impression with the National Defense College?

A/S MALINOWSKI: Um, do you want to start with your impression?

L/G CRUTCHFIELD: I'll start with the impression. Well first of all I thought it was a great opportunity to start this relationship, my personal relationship with the Myanmar military through this engagement at the college. What I tried to do and you can see in the speech, is to portray an alternate future for the Myanmar military based on the US military experience with US citizens. I painted a picture of what is possible, a more professional military, military that's trusted by you the people, through professional education, the respect for the rule of law, the respect for diversity, and probably the most important thing is complete control over the military from our elected civilian officials. We believe that using those same techniques, the Myanmar military can have the trust of the Myanmar people. I used an example today that I know it works because I can walk through an airport in the United States with my uniform on and a complete stranger, a citizen of the United States, will offer to buy me dinner for nothing. Shake my hand and say thank you. That's the trust that we believe that can be built through the things that I outlined in that speech. Finally, my impressions. I believe the officers that I addressed absolutely heard my message. I believe it gave them cause for thought. They were very eager to discuss the points. In fact, during the Questions and Answer session, we ran out of time. They were very interested and engaged. I believe the message resonated with most, if not all, the officers that were present.

KYOTO NEWS: Thank you, would you like to add something about the question of the Senior General?

A/S MALINOWSKI: The Senior General? Um, I...we spent about 90 minutes with him and my impression is that conversations with the Senior General, and correct me if you disagree, Ambassador, have become more open, more substantive than they were at the beginning, which is a good sign. I don't want to characterize what he said to us, because it's up to him

to tell you that, but I can say what we raised with him and what we raised with him are first the issues that are outlined in the speech. We went into greater specifics about how to create mechanisms of accountability within a military. Issues like land, and forced labor, and child soldiers, and the need to issue clear, transparent directives on those problems. And we engaged him on the larger question, of what role the military in this country will play in relation to civilian authorities as the process of reform continues. And we made clear that we see a lot of potential for the military to military partnership between the two countries as the Burmese military continues to evolve in those directions.

DEMOCRATIC VOICE OF BURMA: I'd like to know specifically what kind of engagement you're envisioning at this point. What kind of programs are planned and when might they start?

L/G CRUTCHFIELD: Let me tell you what they're not. They are not training between US military and combat forces in Myanmar. It is not an engagement of exchange of weapon systems. What we think it is based on the Assistant Secretary's remarks of noticeable change from the government of Myanmar, we believe that the military to military relationship we can have are things such as training in disaster assistance and learning how to react to disasters to ease the suffering of the Myanmar people if a natural disaster happened. It can be professional sessions and education on respect for human dignity and ethics, the respect for the rule of law. Those are the steps that we think we can take initially. What steps we take after that of course will be completely up to the government and how fast the reform moves and once that's done, through consultations with the, of course, the US government and the Office of the Secretary of Defense, we will decide what further military to military steps we take.

DEMOCRATIC VOICE OF BURMA: And also, during your discussions with some of the ethnic leaders, are you—do you have any of the similar engagement with ethnic armed groups? Training them on human rights issues?

A/S MALINOWSKI: We have talked to them about human rights issues many times in the past. I met with General Gun Maw of the Kachin Independence Army in Washington about a month ago.. We met with the KNU leadership in Hpa-An, as I mentioned. And in those conversations of course we're talking about the peace process, we're talking about the humanitarian needs of civilians in the conflict areas. We're talking about their human rights concerns with respect to the Burmese military but we also talk to them about the importance of their forces adhering to human rights and the rule of law, and there are issues there in terms of child soldiers and land mines. They are also engaging with the international humanitarian organizations on those issues. We had a briefing today from a wide range of the international groups here including the Red Cross, UN organizations, and others, some of which do have programs with some of the ethnic armed groups on precisely those issues which we strongly support.

MODERATOR: Do you have a question?

RADIO FREE ASIA: I just have a quick question on the peace process. There was an article in the journals saying the United States is not really interested in helping Myanmar's peace process in terms of like supporting money or technical assistance. Are you willing to work with the--at least with--Myanmar Peace Center for the peace process because some ethnic leaders are hoping the US is more involved in the Myanmar peace process?

A/S MALINOWSKI: Well we support it in a number of ways. First and foremost through our conversations with the government where we press very hard for an end to fighting. We expressed serious concern about the fighting in Kachin State on this trip and I'm sure in previous engagements as well, urging the government to create conditions for trust with the armed groups that would lead to a ceasefire and then ultimately a political settlement. We've made clear that we understand that a ceasefire is only the first step in this process. That sustainable peace depends on a political dialogue that addresses some of the underlying grievances on both sides. And we've had those conversations with the ethnic armed groups as well and we've urged them to have the courage to take the risks necessary to come to a settlement with the central government. In terms of our

assistance, we absolutely are willing to provide assistance to support a ceasefire, to support civil society groups in the ethnic minority areas which we are already doing, and these are the people who will hold their leaders—leaders on both sides accountable, to make sure that any peace settlement is sustainable. Derek, do you want to add anything on assistance?

AMBASSADOR MITCHELL: Yes, if and when there is a political dialogue, we'll be supporting that as well. And the idea is we want to support-- have equal support for both sides committed to the process going forward. So, it is absolutely untrue that we are not interested in assisting this peace process. It is a defining challenge of the country and it's something that we are very committed to be engaged in, in a number of different ways that will be constructive and helpful to both sides.

MODERATOR: Great, I think that's all the time we have. We want to thank the delegation of course and we want to thank all of you for attending. Thanks.

Drafted: DRL-PPD: C Cary

Cleared: DRL-PPD: C Cary (ok)

EAP-P: J Rebholz (ok)

DRL-EAP: S May (ok)

EAP-MLS: S Hutchinson (ok)

EAP-SRB: J Cefkin (ok)

PAS: S Sardar (ok)