

**INTERNATIONAL SECURITY / MIDDLE EAST UPDATE**  
**January 24 - 30, 2014**

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**1. [State Dept. on U.S. Views on Pakistan Nuclear Security](#) (01-29-2014)**

U.S. Department of State  
Bureau of International Security and Nonproliferation

Fact Sheet

**U.S. Views on Pakistan Nuclear Security**

The United States is confident that Pakistan is well aware of its responsibilities with respect to nuclear security and has secured its nuclear arsenal accordingly.

We have stated this clearly, including in a Department of State [press statement](#) issued September 4, 2013 and in the October 23, 2013 [U.S.-Pakistan Joint Statement](#) issued as part of the visit of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to Washington.

Most recently, the [Joint Statement](#) issued on January 27, 2014 following the U.S.-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue Ministerial stated that “Secretary Kerry expressed confidence in Pakistan’s commitment and dedication to nuclear security and appreciation for Pakistan’s efforts to improve its strategic trade controls. He also recognized that Pakistan is fully engaged with the international community on nuclear safety and security issues.”

## **2. Obama Cites Expansive U.S. Global Engagement Through Diplomacy** (01-29-2014)

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.

Washington — President Obama, in his annual speech to a joint session of the U.S. Congress, cited the crucial role of strong and principled American diplomacy in a world of challenges and threats. At the beginning of his sixth year in office, Obama described America's global engagement as stronger than ever and as essential in strengthening peace and security. He called on Congress to support these global efforts, pass immigration reform, bolster the fight against terrorism, support Afghanistan's security, and restore trust in the Middle East peace process.

“You see, in a world of complex threats, our security, our leadership depends on all elements of our power, including strong and principled diplomacy,” Obama said during his hourlong address to the U.S. Senate, the U.S. House of Representatives and a global television audience. “American diplomacy has rallied more than 50 countries to prevent nuclear materials from falling into the wrong hands, and allowed us to reduce our own reliance on Cold War stockpiles,” Obama said.

The president's references to a more expansive U.S. global engagement echoed remarks made by Secretary of State John Kerry at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, where he told an audience of political, business and academic leaders that the United States has not stepped back from the world, but remains as much engaged as ever.

“Far from disengaging, America is proud to be more engaged than ever and, I believe, is playing as critical a role, perhaps as critical as ever, in pursuit of peace, prosperity and stability in various parts of the world,” Kerry told the Davos audience January 24.

Obama told Congress that America's leadership is defined not just by defense against threats, but also by the enormous opportunities to do good, promote global understanding and greater cooperation, expand new markets and ultimately free people from fear and want.

“We do these things because they promote our long-term security, and we do them because we believe in the inherent dignity and equality of every human being, regardless of race or religion, creed or sexual orientation,” Obama said. “On every issue, the world turns to us, not simply because of the size of our economy or our military might, but because of the ideals we stand for and the burdens we bear to advance them.”

The president urged a divided Congress to heed the call from business, labor, faith and law enforcement groups to approve an immigration overhaul, in part because of the positive impact it will have on the U.S. economy, but also because of immigration's strengthening power to enhance the United States.

“Independent economists say immigration reform will grow our economy and shrink our deficits by almost \$1 trillion in the next two decades,” Obama said. “And for good reason: When people come here to fulfill their dreams — to study, invent, contribute to our culture — they make our country a more attractive place for businesses to locate and create jobs for everybody.”

Obama told Congress that when he entered office in 2009 nearly 180,000 U.S. soldiers were serving in Iraq and Afghanistan, but today all combat troops are out of Iraq and more than 60,000 American soldiers have been withdrawn from Afghanistan.

With Afghan forces taking the lead for the nation's security, U.S. and allied forces have moved into a support and training role, the president added. "Together with our allies, we will complete our mission there by the end of this year, and America's longest war will finally be over," the president said.

The president also emphasized that the United States will begin moving away from a permanent war footing, limiting further the prudent use of drones in security operations and reforming the U.S. surveillance programs to ensure that the privacy of ordinary people is not being violated.

The United States will continue to work with the international community to usher in the future that the Syrian people deserve — "a future free of dictatorship, terror and fear," Obama said.

"As we speak, American diplomacy is supporting the Israelis and Palestinians as they engage in the difficult but necessary talks to end the conflict there, to achieve dignity and an independent state for Palestinians, and lasting peace and security for the state of Israel," Obama said.

Read more: [President Obama's 2014 State of the Union Address](#)

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### **3. Ambassador Power at U.N. Open Debate on War** (01-29-2014)

U.S. Mission to the United Nations  
Samantha Power, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations  
New York, NY

*Remarks by Ambassador Samantha Power, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations, at a Security Council Open Debate on War, Its Lessons, and the Search for a Permanent Peace*

Mr. President, I thank the Kingdom of Jordan for proposing "War, its Lessons, and the Search for a Permanent Peace" as a topic for Security Council debate. In so doing, you have raised profound questions about the role of accountability, the role of the United Nations, and each of our individual and collective responsibilities in preventing and ending deadly conflict.

We know that the opposite of "war" is not "peace." The opposite of war is "not war." And we have to remain alert to the chasm between a mere suspension of hostilities and the creation of lasting reconciliation based on the acceptance of a shared historical narrative. The former is the most urgent and achievable goal when conflicts are raging and lives are being lost, but the latter is necessary if we are to improve the likelihood that fighting does not resume.

To move from "not war" to "peace," communities need to be able to know who did what, how, and why—to move from blaming "Christians" or "Muslims," "Hutu" or "Tutsi," "Shia" or "Sunni," "Dinka" or "Nuer"—communities must begin holding not whole races or religions responsible for their pain, but individuals.

Mr. President, two decades ago, you and I first met when you served as a political officer in the UN peacekeeping mission in Bosnia and I was a journalist reporting on the conflict. We both observed the virulent role the past can play in poisoning relationships between people who have much in common and—at least before the fighting begins—no personal cause for anger. The ironic expressions that made the rounds back then spoke to the role of history in fueling violence: "nothing learned, nothing forgotten" was one saying.

Today, we see countless examples of old, unaddressed grievances boiling over. In Burma, a country that has taken historic strides toward democracy, Muslims continue to feel the effects of a repugnant and deep prejudice that is prevalent across society. This has left the Rohingya without citizenship, vulnerable, and marginalized. Other Muslim populations are finding themselves increasingly isolated from communities with which they've lived for decades. These emotions have proven deadly. Over the last weeks, we've all seen the alarming reports that Muslims were targeted, and possibly dozens killed in Maungdaw Township in Rakhine State. Last year, we saw similar atrocities in Meiktila. Burma has made positive progress in opening up its political system over the last two or three years, but this kind of violence poses grave risks and must be dealt with before it claims more lives. To do so, there must be a credible and independent investigation into what happened in Maungdaw and there must be justice for the victims. Otherwise, a cycle of violence, grievance, retributive violence, new grievance, more retribution, et cetera, will take root, with each round getting harder to stop than the one before.

Examples of disagreements about the rights and wrongs of the past exist on every continent and may have their origins as far back as antiquity or as near to hand as last night. All too often, we are bedeviled by divergent views of particular acts: one side sees aggression, where the other sees self-defense; one side's justice is defined by its rival as vengeance; one side's patriotic gesture is interpreted by its neighbors as disrespect. More broadly, differences of perspective come into play whenever we contemplate the history of the great religions, the rise and fall of colonialism, the two world wars, or any variation of the question, asked in a multitude of contexts: who did what to whom? And, all too often, even when diplomats know the answers, it seems downright undiplomatic to articulate them. We tend to describe outbreaks of violence in the passive voice—"violence erupted" or "intercommunal violence emerged." We use these phrases because we are afraid to blame. Accountability is easy in the abstract; in practice, it requires a willingness to assign—and in turn, accept—responsibility.

It helps no one when victims are forced to blame their suffering on an entire religious, ethnic, or political faction. Crimes against humanity are committed by individuals, including—no, especially—by those who give these orders then stand back while underlings shed innocent blood. That is why historical records matter. They provide the evidence that can be used to establish personal accountability. And unlike allegations of collective guilt, individual accountability can heal wounds without opening new ones. By developing and preserving historical records, we can help ensure that when disagreements arise, now or in the future, the stakeholders can at least be informed by a common set of facts.

My government agrees that the recovery and protection of such records and the creation of national archives where none exist are useful steps and should be encouraged, and where appropriate, assisted by the UN.

More generally, when seeking to bring opposing sides together, UN representatives should be encouraged to ask hard questions about why conflict began and how it has been prosecuted. UN missions—like national policies—should aim to get at root causes, not just symptoms.

The urgency of this could not be more evident. Just look at the Security Council's current docket. The Central African Republic has been disintegrating along largely religious lines, despite the fact that the country has not traditionally been prone to sectarian violence. In South Sudan, even with a cessation of hostilities agreement now in place, attacks continue and each ethnic group involved is assigning blame to the other, with personal rivalries only compounding the finger pointing. In Syria, the government's brutality has extended without limit to torture, executions, indiscriminate bombings, the shredding of medical neutrality, the use of starvation as a weapon of war, and gas

attacks against civilians. Terrorist groups have inflicted additional pain on a people that, when they assembled to show support for democracy, they wanted no more than basic dignity for themselves and for their children. That is why the key challenge going forward is to create a transitional body with enough capability and credibility to restore a sense of mutual trust. But we need only put ourselves in the shoes of those who have suffered such brutality—who have lost livelihoods, homes, friends, sons and daughters, mothers and fathers, husbands and wives—to know how hard it will be to trust again. And without accountability, the trust deficit will only grow larger.

The dueling narratives that exist today will continue to fester and polarize, providing oxygen for authoritarians and militants. In each of these cases—the Central African Republic, South Sudan, and Syria—the international community has wisely launched commissions of inquiry to document events, gather eyewitness testimony, and investigate competing claims. And it's no accident that over the last several years, the United States has supported and the UN system has produced more commissions of inquiry, panels of expert, and related fact-finding bodies than at almost any other time in UN history. We have done so not because there is more war—though, sadly there is far too much war—but because we now all share a better understanding of the role fact-finding and, ultimately, accountability, plays in preventing rampant violence from becoming endless, cyclical, and uncontrollable violence.

Those who posit a tension between justice and peace need look no further than history; the evidence is overwhelming that peace in the absence of justice rarely endures. This is not to suggest that there is a single model for achieving that goal--there are many--, but all begin with the search for truth. This was the case with the war crimes trials following World War II, and it has been the case more recently in—among other places—South Africa, the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, El Salvador, and Sierra Leone.

Stability and peace begin with our willingness to do what is necessary to deter those who would employ violence to abuse the rights of others. As the fates of Charles Taylor and Ratko Mladic now illustrate, the narratives that are most likely to help douse the embers of conflict are those that put the facts on the public record and the worst offenders behind bars.

One hundred years after shots were fired in Sarajevo, it is entirely appropriate that the Security Council examine the question of how we might “reverse engineer” war in order to understand better its causes and in so doing, what is necessary to achieve a lasting and enduring peace. In the past, we on the Council have shown ourselves capable of learning. We've learned to be more comprehensive in our approach to crisis situations. We have become more alert to the threat of genocide and mass atrocities and more aware of religious and cultural factors. We are becoming more proactive in including women in efforts to preserve security and make peace. We have started giving more robust peacekeeping mandates to blue helmets, and the peacekeepers themselves are becoming more creative in their use of technology and new tactics. All of this learning is helpful. None of it is a panacea. The same may be said of ensuring that an accurate and objective record is kept of what happens in our time so that the dangers of bias are minimized and lies are exposed before they become myths.

A wise man once urged us to pray for God's protection against “those who believe that they are the sole possessors of truth.” King Hussein knew that peace is built on reality and that reality will never mesh perfectly with any one set of perceptions about the present, future, or past. It is this Council's task to integrate that understanding into the daily business of preventing conflict and nurturing reconciliation. No job could be more difficult, and none more vital.

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#### **4. Deputy Secretary William Burns Completes Visit to Iraq for Strategic Consultations (01-28-2014)**

Deputy Secretary Burns met today in Baghdad with Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, Speaker of the Council of Representatives Osama Nujaifi, Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari, and National Security Advisor Faleh Fayyad. In all of these meetings, the Deputy Secretary confirmed the enduring U.S. commitment to Iraq as defined in the Strategic Framework Agreement.

Regarding the security situation, the Deputy Secretary stressed the importance of a holistic security and political strategy to isolate and defeat terrorist groups like the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). He praised the strategy in Ramadi where local and tribal officials are playing a leading role in pushing terrorists out of the city, and encouraged the Government of Iraq (GOI) to follow through on its commitment to incorporate tribal fighters into the formal security structures of the state.

The Deputy Secretary also reviewed preparations for national elections to be held on April 30, noting the importance of holding elections on time and ensuring that those displaced from fighting in Fallujah and other cities in Anbar province are able to vote. He confirmed the U.S. commitment to Iraq's political process as defined in the Iraqi constitution and the right of all Iraqi citizens to hold their leaders accountable through regularly scheduled elections.

The Deputy Secretary finally reviewed the regional situation and noted strengthened relations over the past year between Iraq and its important neighbors Jordan and Kuwait. He further encouraged all relevant parties to conclude a framework agreement for exporting oil from the Iraqi Kurdistan Region to Turkey, noting the progress that has been made in recent talks between Baghdad and Erbil. He emphasized the serious risks to long-term stability should such exports begin before this deal is finalized.

The Deputy Secretary also commended the decision today by the Council of Ministers to contribute to the UN trust fund to cover costs of re-settling residents of Camp Liberty to a third country. He emphasized in all of his meetings the importance of close cooperation between the GOI, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), and the residents of Camp Liberty to ensure their safety and security pending their re-settlement outside of Iraq.

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#### **5. U.S. Emphasizes International Cooperation in Arms Control (01-28-2013)**

Washington — In a concerted effort to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons, the United States will continue to pursue international cooperation and transparency. In a discussion on U.S. security policy at the Swedish Institute of International Affairs in Stockholm on January 17, Frank Rose, deputy assistant secretary of state for arms control, verification and compliance, said the United States is taking a multipronged approach.

Among the priorities is maintaining a dialogue with Russia to find better ways to verify the weapons capabilities of each country, as well as setting an example for other countries with nuclear weapons capabilities.

As one of the five major nuclear weapons countries — along with China, France, Great Britain and Russia — the United States is committed to “continued discussions on issues related to all three pillars of [nuclear security]: nonproliferation, disarmament and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy,” Rose said.

The recently completed Megatons to Megawatts program signified a major step in this direction. Under a 1993 agreement, the United States purchased 500 metric tons of uranium from dismantled Russian weapons to generate electricity in U.S. commercial nuclear power plants. The last shipment arrived at the Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant in Kentucky in December 2013.

In addition, the New START treaty, effective February 5, 2011, restricts each country to numbers of nuclear warheads between 1,500 and 1,675, roughly 85 percent below Cold War levels.

The United States also is working closely with NATO to achieve significant reductions in U.S. and Russian nuclear weapons in Europe, where Russia holds greater stockpiles. NATO also is seeking greater transparency in verifying each country's holdings.

Additional steps in the U.S. approach include negotiating a treaty that ends the production of fissile materials for use in making nuclear weapons. The United States is consulting with China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, India, Pakistan and other countries to find a way to start negotiations for a Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty.

Resolving differences with Russia on verification of missile defenses remains a major U.S. objective. "Over the past 20 years, both Democratic and Republican administrations have concluded it is in our national interest to cooperate with Russia on missile defense," Rose said.

The U.S. missile-defense system is aimed at defending the United States and its European, Middle Eastern and Asian allies against regional threats. "These are threats that are growing, and must be met," he said. U.S. missile defenses are not designed for, or capable of, undermining the Russian or Chinese strategic deterrents, he added.

The United States cannot agree to limit its defense systems, but "we believe that cooperation and transparency can provide Russia the visibility and predictability it seeks," Rose said.

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## **6. Joint Statement from U.S.-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue (02-27-2014)**

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and Pakistan Advisor to the Prime Minister on National Security and Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz, accompanied by a high-level delegation, met in Washington on January 27, 2014, for the Ministerial meeting of the U.S.-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue. The first Ministerial since the revitalized Strategic Dialogue was announced during Secretary Kerry's August 2013 visit to Pakistan, this session built on Prime Minister Sharif's October 2013 official visit. Reaffirming the strong relationship and enduring partnership between the two countries, the Strategic Dialogue Ministerial marked the commitment of both countries to strengthen the bilateral relationship and advance their shared interests in a stable, secure, and prosperous Pakistan and region. Both sides expressed their conviction that an enduring U.S.-Pakistan partnership is vital to regional and international security. They recognized their shared interest in Pakistan's economic growth, increased trade, regional stability, and mutually-determined measures to counter extremism and terrorism.

Secretary Kerry and Advisor Aziz reaffirmed the importance of the U.S.-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue and reviewed the progress of the Strategic Dialogue's five working groups: 1) Energy; 2) Security, Strategic Stability, and Non-Proliferation; 3) the Defense Consultative Group; 4) Law Enforcement and Counterterrorism; and 5) Economics and Finance. Meetings of the first three working groups convened in late 2013.

### *Building a Foundation for Inclusive Economic Growth*

Secretary Kerry and Advisor Aziz reaffirmed their commitment to expanding bilateral trade and business links and welcomed the upcoming United States-Pakistan Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) Council meeting in March 2014 in Washington, D.C. The Secretary underscored the U.S. commitment to supporting private sector-led growth in Pakistan and welcomed the proposal by Advisor Aziz to regularly convene a Joint Business and Investment Forum, involving the private sector. Both sides also look forward to convening a follow-on conference to the successful U.S.-Pakistan Business Opportunities Conferences held in Dubai in June 2013, and to a U.S.-convened conference in April 2014 in Islamabad that will link Pakistani and Central Asian businesses to encourage increased regional trade. They also look forward to the forthcoming announcement of a third fund of the Pakistan Private Investment Initiative (PPII) to leverage private equity for small and medium enterprises. Additionally, they reaffirmed the agenda for the upcoming Economics and Finance Working Group, to be held in April 2014 in Washington, D.C., where the United States and Pakistan will discuss trade and investment promotion, economic assistance, and regional economic integration. They further proposed that the working groups continue to refine the benchmarks used to realize these goals.

### *Alleviating Pakistan's Energy Crisis*

Strategic Dialogue participants, including Minister of Water and Power Khawaja Asif, reviewed concrete next steps from the Energy Working Group, which was held in Washington in November 2013, as well as a subsequent trade delegation to Houston, Texas. The two sides expressed satisfaction with discussions held in November 2013 on a range of options to enable Pakistan to overcome its energy deficiencies. The two sides noted progress in developing a U.S. technical assistance program to support the development of Pakistan's domestic natural gas reserves. Secretary Kerry highlighted that U.S. assistance in the energy sector has added over 1,000 megawatts of power to Pakistan's national grid, helping provide power to over 16 million Pakistanis. In addition, the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC), the development finance institution of the U.S. government, is currently working on financing up to 300 MW of wind power generation projects that will deploy U.S.-based investment in Pakistan.

The United States and Pakistan also underscored the importance of intensifying efforts to facilitate regional energy connectivity and continuing to upgrade Pakistan's transmission infrastructure. Pakistan welcomed the recent U.S. commitment of \$15 million in support of the Central Asia-South Asia electricity transmission project (CASA-1000) that will help create a regional energy grid to link Central and South Asia for the first time. Both sides expressed support for cooperation in expanding power generation capacity; promoting the efficient use of energy resources; fostering development of Pakistan's gas resources and their efficient utilization; increasing utilization of hydroelectric and renewable resources; and continuing reforms to the energy sector to ensure its financial sustainability and to attract private sector investment.

### *Strengthening educational linkages and people to people contacts*

Secretary Kerry and Advisor Aziz discussed the important role of investments in education in helping prepare Pakistan's younger generation to enter the job market and become leaders in their country and communities. They reaffirmed the shared intent expressed by President Obama and Prime Minister Sharif in October 2013 to further promote educational and research opportunities for Pakistani students, scholars, and researchers in U.S. institutions.

### *Deepening Cooperation on Shared Security Challenges*

Secretary Kerry, Advisor Aziz, and their respective delegations had constructive conversations on security, strategic stability, and Pakistan's intensified efforts to combat terrorism. Secretary Kerry thanked Advisor Aziz for Pakistan's efforts to help defeat Al-Qaeda and expressed appreciation for the sacrifices of Pakistan's military personnel and civilians in the fight against terrorism and extremism. The Defense Consultative Group (DCG) annual engagement is the key bilateral forum for discussing the U.S.-Pakistan security relationship and defense cooperation. The DCG last met in November 2013, and both sides renewed their commitment to pursuing a forward-looking, transparent, and politically sustainable defense relationship in areas of mutual interest. The United States expressed appreciation for Pakistan's continued contribution to regional maritime security, and both sides reaffirmed the decision by President Obama and Prime Minister Sharif to strengthen their cooperation in this area.

A follow-on Defense Resourcing Conference (DRC) in February 2014 will focus on security assistance issues. The United States and Pakistan will participate in the 2014 Nuclear Security Summit in The Hague, and both countries look forward to continuing the bilateral dialogue on security, strategic stability, and non-proliferation (SSSNP). Secretary Kerry expressed confidence in Pakistan's commitment and dedication to nuclear security and appreciation for Pakistan's efforts to improve its strategic trade controls. He also recognized that Pakistan is fully engaged with the international community on nuclear safety and security issues.

Both sides welcomed plans to convene the Law Enforcement and Counterterrorism Working Group in March in Washington, D.C. During that meeting, the two countries look forward to discussing counterterrorism cooperation and assistance, as well as additional joint steps to counter improvised explosive devices (IED), disrupt terrorist financing, and improve border management. Both Secretary Kerry and Advisor Aziz condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, and Secretary Kerry expressed appreciation for the steps taken by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and the Government of Pakistan to combat terrorism. The United States and Pakistan renewed their common resolve to promote peace, stability, and transparency throughout the region and to eliminate the threats posed by extremism and terrorism.

#### *Advancing Regional Peace and Stability*

Recognizing the paramount importance of regional stability, Secretary Kerry and Advisor Aziz stressed that a peaceful, stable, independent, and united Afghanistan is in the interest of the region, and affirmed the important role of countries in the region in supporting Afghanistan's progress toward stability and prosperity. Both sides emphasized their support for a policy of non-interference in Afghanistan, including by all countries of the region.

Both sides also reaffirmed that Afghan-led peace and reconciliation is the surest way to end violence and ensure lasting stability of Afghanistan and the region. They noted Pakistan's important role in supporting Afghan-led reconciliation, and Secretary Kerry expressed appreciation for Pakistan's concrete efforts in this regard. Both sides reiterated their call on the Taliban to join the political process and enter into dialogue with the Afghan government. Secretary Kerry and Advisor Aziz reiterated that peace and reconciliation must respect the historic achievements that Afghanistan has made over the past decade. Both sides shared their mutual conviction that a stable and peaceful Pakistan-Afghanistan border was important for the success of counterterrorism, counterinsurgency, and counter-IED efforts, and that cross-border militancy was a serious threat to both countries. They thus underscored the critical significance of improved border control in achieving these objectives.

Secretary Kerry and Advisor Aziz also recognized the potential for enhanced stability and prosperity from improved bilateral relations between Pakistan and India, benefiting the lives of citizens on both sides of the border. Toward that end, the United States welcomed Prime Minister Sharif's vision for a peaceful neighborhood and efforts for the economic uplift of the people of the region, including steps taken by Pakistan and India to improve their relations.

### *An Enduring Partnership*

Noting with satisfaction the overall progress of the Strategic Dialogue and of its various working groups, Secretary Kerry and Advisor Aziz affirmed the utility of continuing to refine the goals and benchmarks by which we measure success, to further promote bilateral cooperation. In this context, both sides looked forward to the next Ministerial meeting of the Strategic Dialogue to review progress in implementing our shared goals.

Secretary Kerry and Advisor Aziz reaffirmed their commitment to further advancing the strong partnership between the two countries through the Strategic Dialogue and stressed the importance of a U.S.-Pakistan partnership built on a foundation of mutual interest and respect.

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## **7. Kerry Reaffirms U.S. Commitment to Peace in Middle East (01-24-2013)**

Washington — Secretary of State John Kerry reaffirmed the U.S. commitment to peace in the Middle East in remarks delivered January 24 to the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

Dismissing any suggestion that the United States is “disengaging” itself, Kerry said “America is proud to be more engaged than ever” and is playing a critical role in the pursuit of peace, prosperity and stability in various parts of the world.

Kerry emphasized that U.S. diplomacy in the Middle East is based on partnering. “We have no pretense about solving these problems alone,” the secretary said.

Kerry focused on the critical diplomatic challenges presented by Iran, Syria, Israel and the Palestinian Territories. He said initiatives taken so far “have the potential to reshape the Middle East and could even help create the foundations of a new order.”

For example, the agreement recently reached with Iran has the potential to roll back that country's nuclear weapons program, Kerry said. He noted that Iran has taken a series of steps to reduce its stockpile of 20 percent enriched uranium, disable the infrastructure for its production and allow “unprecedented transparency” and monitoring to guarantee that Iran is complying with the agreement.

Kerry said the next challenge is “six months of intensive negotiations with the goal of resolving all the international community's concerns about Iran's nuclear program.” But if Iran can meet this test, Kerry said, the Middle East “will be a safer place, free from the fear of a nuclear arms race.”

In Syria, where the Assad regime has been responsible for atrocities and a horrifying amount of bloodshed, Kerry said he saw some flicker of hope for peace in recent talks between the Syrian government and the opposition.

More than 40 countries and institutions have assented to the Geneva communiqué, which was hammered out at the U.N.-hosted International Conference on Syria, also known as Geneva II, the week of January 20. The communiqué, Kerry said, clearly outlines that the conflict must conclude with the creation of a transitional government with full executive authority by mutual consent.

But Kerry said in no uncertain terms that Bashar al-Assad cannot be part of Syria's future. Assad's crimes, the secretary said, guarantee that "Assad will never have or be able to earn back the legitimacy to bring that country back together." "This one man," Kerry said of Assad, "must step aside in favor of peace and of his nation. You can never achieve stability until he is gone."

The United States and its partners, Kerry said, will use diplomatic means to continue to fight for "a pluralistic, inclusive Syria where all minorities are protected, where all rights are protected, and where Syria can come together to be once again the secular and unified state that it was, represented by a government of the people's choice where all minorities are protected."

Of all the challenges now facing the Middle East, the most intractable is the struggle to make peace between Israelis and Palestinians, according to Kerry. The United States has remained committed over many decades to a peaceful resolution between the two parties because failure in this effort "will make certain additional conflict," Kerry said.

Despite U.S efforts to facilitate an agreement between Israel and the Palestinians, Kerry said, "This issue cannot be resolved at the United Nations. It can only be resolved between the parties." "As committed as we [the United States] are, it is ultimately up to the Israelis and the Palestinians to reach an agreement on how to end this conflict," Kerry said. "Make no mistake, this will require difficult political decisions and painful compromises on both sides. These are emotional issues, many embedded in age-old narratives."

"We often spend so much time talking about what both parties stand to lose without peace that we actually sometimes forget to talk enough about what they stand to gain from peace," Kerry said.

"Palestinians stand to gain, above all else, an independent, viable, contiguous state, their own place among the community of nations," the secretary said. Israel could gain important economic partners, Kerry said, because nations of the Arab League and 35 Muslim countries stand ready under the Arab Peace Initiative to recognize Israel and normalize relations the moment a peace agreement is reached.

"Intensive, creative, strong diplomacy requires cooperation, and that is exactly why the United States is so engaged in the Middle East and around the world, and why we will stay so," Kerry said. "As our friends and partners take courageous steps forward, they can be assured that President Obama and his administration will remain engaged for the long haul, but we will also confront these challenges with the urgency that they deserve."

The World Economic Forum, which drew some 2,500 participants from almost 100 countries, is an independent international organization committed to improving the state of the world by engaging business, political, academic and other leaders of society to shape global, regional and industry agendas.