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1. [U.S. Envoy Allen's Meeting with Coalition Working Group \(03-18-2015\)](#)

*Remarks by John Allen, Special Presidential Envoy for the Global Coalition To Counter ISIL
Berlin, Germany*

Inaugural Meeting of the Coalition Stabilization Working Group

I want to thank both Foreign Minister Steinmeyer and Ambassador von Goetze for their leadership and hospitality in welcoming us to Berlin today. And I want to thank the governments of Germany and the United Arab Emirates for the leadership of this crucial working group.

Germany and the UAE are joined in this commitment by a host of Coalition partners who have dedicated significant resources to Iraq's success. Indeed, that so many nations have convened in Berlin today should give us confidence as we support Iraq in its challenging effort to stabilize liberated communities.

It is difficult for any of us to conceive of the deprivations that men, women, and children have suffered living under Daesh's tyranny... The trauma of children whom Daesh has attempted to recruit as fighters; the trauma of men and women who lived for many months in constant fear for their children's lives and of their own execution; the trauma of Iraqis whom Daesh has attempted to turn on one another... Indeed, their trauma is Iraq's agony.

Two days ago Dr. Hamid, Dr. Turki and I convened a meeting in Baghdad, where I emphasized Iraq's stabilization efforts will be the most important signal of the intentions of this government towards Iraqis who have been driven from their homes. Stabilization will be an opportunity for the Abadi government to make tangible its goal of rebuilding an Iraq for all Iraqis.

Dr. Hamid and Dr. Turki discussed the progress and status of Iraqi-led stabilization planning. I saw firsthand that Iraq's government understands the seriousness of these efforts, and the difficulty of the work to come.

In my conversations, it was clear that the Iraqis have started to think through the mechanisms they will need for successful stabilization operations. On the first day of meetings we heard from the Iraqis about the need to plan for IDP returns, support IED clearance, and provide resources and expertise to assist with Stabilization efforts. On the second day a team of experts and Coalition members met with their Iraqi counterparts and discussed Iraqi plans in greater detail.

There is more work to be done in this regard to support Iraqi planning, and begin to identify specific areas where the Coalition can support. We started that process, in Baghdad, and now here in Berlin we must support the Iraqis laying out a plan to support their people. I look forward to our discussion today about the Stabilization Task Force in Baghdad, and how the Coalition can use this mechanism to coordinate efforts with Dr. Hamid and Dr. Turki.

We are in full agreement with our Iraqi partners: for their efforts to succeed and be sustainable, they must be Iraqi-led.

We likewise agree that the sequencing of all these operations is crucial to their success. A successful stabilization effort begins fair treatment during military... or clearing... operations. The Iraqi Security Forces and their partner tribal elements and Popular Mobilization Forces must not commit acts of revenge, recrimination, or abuse against civilians or prisoners. But even as Iraqi military partners are working on these clearing operations, we are encouraging them to work closely with their civilian counterparts on planning and sequencing relief and humanitarian operations.

For as Daesh is defeated in population centers, there will be an immediate need for policing and public security efforts, as well as medical care, water, and electricity. Populations that have fled the fighting will need shelter, assistance, and security until they can return home.

We know from experience that these kinds of essential services are delivered more efficiently and more effectively when they are sequenced and planned early on, with close military and civilian cooperation.

Reconstruction, though vital, must remain a downstream goal as we prioritize immediate rescue and relief efforts. There will of course be urgent reconstruction needs that should be prioritized, like police stations, hospitals, roads, and bridges that have been destroyed.

The UN has offered to host scenario planning with the humanitarian and essential services actors in Iraq to help prioritize and sequence, and identify needs and gaps. We should all welcome this offer... For we have an opportunity as members of this Working Group to determine how and where we can support our Iraqi partners most effectively.

There is no way of getting around it: stabilization operations can be expensive and this will require significant resources. We applaud the inclusion in Iraq's 2015 budget of \$2 billion for recovery

funding and support of displaced Iraqis. It will be essential to move resources quickly to the liberated areas most in need.

But it's worth noting that while \$2 billion is in the budget, Iraq's severe economic difficulties will mean much less is actually available.

As Iraq continues to clarify stabilization and recovery needs, we will work with the Coalition to further develop the concept of a trust fund and find appropriate support. We as a Coalition will work together to assist and support Iraq as we are able, though we do not have the resources to support all Iraq's needs. Nor can a trust fund, no matter how well-organized, achieve full effectiveness without in-depth and early prioritization, planning, and sequencing for stabilization operations.

That is why in some cases, our support will take the form of providing appropriate technical support and expertise. In others, it will involve actual material assistance.

I know that the Working Group co-leads are eager for partner nations to arrive at a common understanding of what stabilization means for Iraq's communities. Indeed, it is imperative for us to get the big ideas right early, and arrive at a shared view of what we intend to achieve.

It is my hope that today we can build on this shared understanding to achieve a set of initial standards, benchmarks, and goals, which will serve as a guide for our activities as a Working Group.

There is an immediate need for us to understand how civilian stabilization operations can be synchronized with the military operations they follow.

As I see it, there are four components of the effort that must be synchronized:

First, there is the clearing component, when the Iraqi Army and/or the Popular Mobilization Committee remove Daesh from a town or city.

Second is the security and policing component that deals with crime and provides general security so life can begin to return to normal. This will likely come from a combination of PMC units, local tribes, and police.

Third is the restoration of local governance, which will be difficult because many officials are in exile, were killed, or cooperated with Daesh.

Fourth is the provision of essential services. This includes immediate humanitarian assistance to address life-threatening issues, as well as short-term restoration of services such as health, water, electricity, and rebuilding critical infrastructure.

These four components will be applied differently to the varying circumstances found in each liberated area. It is critical that we account for these differences in the support we provide for Iraq's stabilization efforts. Now that recovery of Iraqis from under Daesh's control is beginning in earnest, these efforts must begin with urgency. We are already seeing some early stabilization efforts in Diyala, and hopefully soon in Tikrit.

Today, we need to come together as a Coalition, to listen to the plans of our Iraqi partners, encourage their efforts, and formulate a strategy for how we can support them in the weeks and months to come. Thank you.

2. Kerry's Interview on Iran, Syria with CBS (03-16-2015)

Interview of John Kerry, Secretary of State, Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, March 15, 2015
Interview With Margaret Brennan of CBS

MR. SCHIEFFER: Good morning. We begin with Margaret Brennan's interview with Secretary Kerry as he prepared to leave Egypt and fly to Switzerland for the talks. She asked him flatly: Had the Cotton letter put the talks in jeopardy?

SECRETARY KERRY: Well, I don't know yet. When I negotiate for the first time on Sunday night with Foreign Minister Zarif, I'll have a better sense of where we are. But what I do know is that this letter was absolutely calculated directly to interfere with these negotiations. It specifically inserts itself directly to the leader of another country, saying don't negotiate with these guys because we're going to change this, which, by the way, is not only contrary to the Constitution with respect to the executive's right to negotiate, but it is incorrect, because they cannot change an executive agreement. So it's false information and directly calculated to interfere and basically say don't negotiate with them, you got to negotiate with 535 members of Congress.

QUESTION: But they --

SECRETARY KERRY: That's unprecedented – unprecedented.

QUESTION: And they have to negotiate with you. You're the one who has to sit at that table.

SECRETARY KERRY: Well, I've said that it's unprecedented. I've never seen anything like this. Now in fairness, look, I don't know how many people really focused completely on it. But I do know that the effect and the intent of the author was to basically say don't do this deal. And by the way, that's – to say that before there was – even is a deal. I mean, it's like giving people a grade on a test before the test is even written, let alone given. It's wrong. It's unprecedented. And I hope it hasn't made it very difficult here.

And by the way, we're not – this is not just the United States of America negotiating. This is China, Russia, Germany, France, Great Britain.

QUESTION: So how do you clear the air? Are you going to apologize for this letter?

SECRETARY KERRY: Not on your life. I'm not going to apologize for the – for an unconstitutional and un-thought-out action by somebody who's been in the United States Senate for 60 some days. That's just inappropriate. I will explain very clearly that Congress does not have the right to change an executive agreement. Another president may have a different view about it, but if we do our job correctly, all of these nations – they all have an interest in making sure this is, in fact, a proven peaceful program. And it would be derelict if we allow some gaping hole in this program that doesn't do so. But let's see what it is first. And I think this applies to everybody, incidentally, who's been trying to judge this before, in fact, the deal – if it can be sealed – is sealed.

QUESTION: You've made the point this is an international agreement; this isn't just the U.S. and Iran. But Senator Corker, Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, said the decision to bypass Congress and instead go to the UN and allow them to vote on some of this deal is a direct affront to the American people. How do you respond to that?

SECRETARY KERRY: Well, with all due respect – look, I do really disagree with that judgment, and I talked to him about it the other day and made it clear we are negotiating under the auspices, to some degree, of the United Nations. So just as Congress has to vote to lift sanctions – so Congress does have a vote – so does the United Nations have to lift some sanctions at some point in time.

QUESTION: Well, that's on sanctions. But to authorize this deal, do you see Congress having a role?

SECRETARY KERRY: No, sanctions – Congress has a role. We have had over 205 briefings, phone calls, discussions with Congress; 119 of them have taken place since January of this year. We have been in full discussion with Congress on this. We've been in full discussion with allies in the region. We have had our team go to Israel or meet with Israelis in Washington or elsewhere to brief them regularly in this process. This isn't a complete mystery. And the fact is that – but we also have been operating under a rule that everybody understands: Nothing is agreed to until everything is agreed to. And so we have to finish our negotiation, and we deserve the right to do so, frankly, knowing we have to submit it to the world to judge. We ought to be able to find out unimpeded and un-interfered-with in an unconstitutional way, in violation of 200-plus years of tradition.

QUESTION: The President wants a deal by the end of March. If you can't meet that timetable, what happens?

SECRETARY KERRY: Margaret, we are trying to get a deal by the end of March. The President's view --

QUESTION: Would there be an extension?

SECRETARY KERRY: Well, the President's view – and I share this view completely – is that we've been at this for over two years now and Iran has said its program is peaceful. In the time that we've had, the fundamental framework of decisions necessary to prove your program is peaceful should be possible. So we believe very much that there's not anything that's going to change in April or May or June that suggests that at that time a decision you can't make now will be made then. If it's peaceful, let's get it done. And my hope is that in the next days that will be possible.

QUESTION: But if these talks fail, do you think there is a risk that Iran will make the choice to build a bomb?

SECRETARY KERRY: Of course there's that risk. Obviously --

QUESTION: Is that really what's at stake?

SECRETARY KERRY: Well, look, if they moved along the road to decide suddenly to break out and rush to try to have enough fissile material to build a bomb, we have a number of options available to us. President Obama has said they are all on the table. And he has also pledged, very publicly and very clearly on a number of occasions, Iran will not be allowed to get a nuclear weapon.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Secretary Kerry also addressed the situation in Syria. We'll have that in our next half hour.

(Break.)

MR. SCHIEFFER: One of the things that Secretary Kerry also talked about in addition to this when he talked to our Margaret Brennan last night was Syria and the whole situation there. And I want to just play a portion of what he said on that.

SECRETARY KERRY: We are working very hard with other interested parties to see if we can reignite a diplomatic outcome. Why? Because everybody agrees there is no military solution. There is only a political solution. But to get the Assad regime to negotiate, we're going to have to make it clear to him that there is a determination by everybody to seek that political outcome and change his calculation about negotiating. That's underway right now. And I am convinced that with the efforts of our allies and others, there will be increased pressure on Assad.

QUESTION: And you'd be willing to negotiate with him?

SECRETARY KERRY: Well, we have to negotiate in the end.

MR. SCHIEFFER: So there you hear the Secretary of State saying we may have to negotiate with Assad.

Related Sites:

[Kerry on Egyptian Development, Iranian Negotiations](#)

3. State Dept. on 1st Anniversary of Russia's Occupation of Crimea (03-16-2015)

Press Statement by Jen Psaki, Department Spokesperson

One Year Later — Russia's Occupation of Crimea

On this one year anniversary of the sham "referendum" in Crimea, held in clear violation of Ukrainian law and the Ukrainian constitution, the United States reiterates its condemnation of a vote that was not voluntary, transparent, or democratic. We do not, nor will we, recognize Russia's attempted annexation and call on President Putin to end his country's occupation of Crimea.

A year ago, as covert Russian military forces took control of key government buildings and infrastructure, the population of Crimea was forced to go to the polls facing a false choice of either joining Russia or calling for Crimea's independence. Two days later, the Russian Federation attempted to annex sovereign Ukrainian territory, disrupting 70 years of international order and drawing the condemnation of free, democratic societies across the globe.

Over the last year, the human rights situation in Crimea has deteriorated dramatically, with mounting repression of minority communities and faiths, in particular Crimean Tatars, and systematic denial of fundamental freedoms. Local residents have been detained, interrogated, and disappeared and NGOs and independent media have been driven out of the peninsula. These brutalities are unacceptable and we call on Russia to stop further abuses.

This week, as Russia attempts to validate its cynical and calculated “liberation” of Crimea, we reaffirm that sanctions related to Crimea will remain in place as long as the occupation continues. The United States continues to support Ukraine’s sovereignty, territorial integrity, and right to self-determination.

4. U.S. Envoy Allen on Stabilizing Iraqi Territories (03-16-2015)

Remarks by John Allen, Special Presidential Envoy for the Global Coalition To Counter ISIL, Prime Minister's Guest House, Baghdad, Iraq

Stabilizing Iraqi Territories

It is good to be back in Baghdad and to see so many familiar faces. I want to thank the Prime Minister and COMSEC for hosting us today. I also want to thank the Iraqi deputy ministers, Dr. Hamid, Dr. Turki, German Charge Milan Simandl and leaders who have come together to discuss a series of efforts that are vital to the peaceful and prosperous future of Iraq.

We also have a team today from the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, the UN, and the EU to learn from you today. We will bring your message back to the other Coalition partners who will meet in Berlin on Wednesday.

When I was here last, Prime Minister Abadi and I spoke about the importance of planning for Stabilization Operations. I have come to Baghdad today with a team of experts because we agreed that Stabilization planning must begin in earnest. Today and tomorrow our team will learn and understand how the Coalition can best support the Iraqi plan for stabilizing territories your country will take back from Daesh.

As Daesh is defeated in population centers and the military forces must move on to other objectives, there will be an immediate need for policing and public security efforts to set the conditions for essential service delivery. Populations that have fled the fighting will need shelter, assistance, and security, until they can return home. In many cases facilities will have been destroyed or made insecure by IEDs. Providers will need to rapidly assess and respond with basic medical care, water, electricity and other municipal services. All first responders, whether civil or military, should be sensitized to the special needs of those who’ve suffered under Daesh, especially women and girls.

A successful stabilization effort begins with fair treatment during military operations. We applaud Iraqi leaders, including His Eminence Ayatollah Sistani, who publicly called for the protection of civilians and warned against acts of revenge, recrimination, or abuse against civilians or prisoners. It also means protecting the schools, hospitals, water treatment facilities and securing antiquities and, libraries. These measures begin the process of reunifying Iraq and building trust between liberated communities and the Government of Iraq.

It is also critical for military and civilian ministries to work together from the beginning. Military forces need to understand how civilian stabilization operations will follow military operations. As part of our team today, we have experts on the provision of health services, restoring water and electricity, on policing and civilian-military planning, and on addressing the specific needs of women, children and vulnerable populations. Over the next two days they will work with you to identify how to synchronize civilian and military plans, and identify how the Coalition can work with you.

As I see it, there are four components to the counter-offensive that must be synchronized.

First, is the clearing element when the Iraqi Army and the Popular Mobilization Forces remove Daesh from a town or city.

Second is the security and policing element that deals with crime and provides general security so life can return to normal. This will likely come from a combination of PMF units, local tribes, and police.

Third is restoring local governance which will be difficult because many officials are in exile, were killed, or cooperated with Daesh.

Fourth, is providing for essential services including short-term restoration of services such as health, water, electricity, and rebuilding critical infrastructure.

These four components will be applied differently to the circumstances found in each liberated area. It is important that you plan uniquely for each city and town, and prepare the necessary resources.

Several Coalition partners have expressed a specific interest in offering technical and planning support to assist Iraq by filling any gaps in implementing Iraqi-led stabilization efforts. We will look to the leadership of Dr. Hamid and Dr. Turki to identify where assistance is needed and to communicate the Iraqi stabilization plan to the Coalition partners.

After this visit to Baghdad I will go to Berlin, where Germany and the United Arab Emirates will launch the Coalition Stabilization Working Group. This Working Group will work with the Government of Iraq to organize Coalition support to stabilization operations and identify resources.

It is difficult to overstate the importance of these critical activities. The stabilization effort will be the most important signal of the intentions of this government towards any and all Iraqi's who have been victims of Daesh and those who have been driven from their homes. Iraq's future as a unified nation depends upon how the liberating force treats those living under Daesh rule.

Stabilization operations can be expensive and require dedicated resources. We applaud the inclusion in the budget of \$2 billion for recovery funding and support of displaced Iraqis. It will be essential to move resources quickly to the liberated areas most in need. As you continue to clarify stabilization and recovery needs, we will work with the United Nations to further develop the concept of a trust fund and find appropriate support. The Coalition does not have the resources to resource all of Iraq's needs. We will work together to assist and support Iraq as we are able.

The recovery of Iraqis from under Daesh's control is now beginning in earnest. We are already seeing the results of your early work in Diyala, and hopefully soon in Tikrit. Today, we want to hear from you about what you have seen to date, what lessons we can learn from the last few months, and what you anticipate the requirements are to stabilize liberated areas.

I look forward to learning more about Iraq's efforts to bring stability to liberated areas from today's conversation and to identify future actions necessary to ensure success in the days and months to come.

And now I would like to hand it over to my German partner, Charge Milan Simandl, whose nation is energetically engaged in this important effort.

5. CIA Chief: Terrorism Morphing Into Different Threats (03-16-2015)

By Jim Garamone
DoD News, Defense Media Activity

WASHINGTON, March 16, 2015 – Terrorism is morphing into different types of threats, including cyberattacks that can impact nations across the globe, the director of central intelligence said in New York last week.

John Brennan told the Council on Foreign Relations that terror attacks in Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Central Asia show the terror threat is changing. The CIA working with foreign partners is key to defeating the terror threat, he added.

“These attacks underscore a disturbing trend that we have been monitoring for some time -- the emergence of a terrorist threat that is increasingly decentralized, difficult to track and even more difficult to thwart,” Brennan said.

Though the United States and its partners have had considerable success in attacking core al-Qaida, affiliates have risen, said Brennan, pointing to al-Qaida groups in Libya, Egypt, Somalia, Nigeria “and especially Yemen where al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula has demonstrated a capability to plot attacks well beyond Yemen’s borders, including in our homeland.”

ISIL a ‘Serious Danger’ Beyond Region

But the heartland of terror, the director said, now operates in Syria and Iraq where the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant is waging a campaign of unspeakable brutality against the local population and anyone who does not share its ideology.

Left unchecked, ISIL poses a serious danger not only to Syria and Iraq, but to the wider region and beyond, including the threat of attacks on the U.S. homeland and the homelands of its partners, Brennan said.

The intelligence chief echoed DoD leaders in saying the fight against ISIL will be a long one. “If there is one thing we have learned over the years, it is that success against terrorism requires patience and determination,” he said. “Clearly our country will be dealing with terrorism in one form or another for many years to come.”

Threats in the Cyber Realm

Modern communications technologies complicate the fight against ISIL and its ilk, Brennan said. “New technologies can help groups like ISIL coordinate operations, attract new recruits, disseminate propaganda and inspire sympathizers across the globe to act in their name,” he said. “The overall threat of terrorism is greatly amplified by today’s interconnected world where an incident in one corner of the globe can instantly spark a reaction thousands of miles away, and where a lone extremist can go online and learn how to carry out an attack without ever leaving home.”

The cyber domain brings tremendous benefits, but also brings tremendous dangers, he said.

“Threats in the cyber realm are an urgent national security priority, as America has no equivalent to the two wide oceans that have helped safeguard our country’s physical, maritime and aviation domains for centuries,” Brennan added.

Nations, terrorist organizations, criminals and hackers are trying to penetrate U.S. digital networks, he said.

“Government institutions are under constant assault, and private companies are spending enormous sums of money to defend against hacking attempts, denial of service attacks and other efforts to disrupt their networks,” Brennan said.

The North Korean attack on Sony last year highlighted the cyber threat, he said.

“CIA is working with our partners across the federal government to strengthen cyber defenses, to share expertise and to collaborate with the private sector to mitigate these threats,” Brennan said. “Together we have advanced our understanding of the threats in the cyber realm.”

6. State’s Blinken on 4th Anniversary of Syrian Uprising (03-13-2015)

*Remarks by Antony J. Blinken, Deputy Secretary of State, Washington, DC
Reception to Commemorate the Fourth Anniversary of the Syrian Uprising*

Thank you very much. And, I’m really grateful that all of you could be here, and grateful too for the extraordinary work that Daniel’s been doing every single day. No one has been working harder, no one has been trying harder, no one has been pushing us harder than Daniel to try to get to a better place on this incredibly challenging and incredibly heart wrenching situation that we face in Syria. So thank you.

I’m glad to see everyone here today, but I especially want to say welcome to the dedicated representatives of the Syrian opposition and the Syrian-American diaspora community. Your leadership, your persistence, your strength in the face of relentless hardship and struggle have given hope to countless Syrians through four long and deeply, deeply tragic years.

And, this is an occasion, as somber as it is, to honor your efforts and to honor your commitment.

This anniversary marks the moment when peaceful calls for freedom and dignity were met with bullets and barrel bombs.

When Assad went to war against his own people and lay siege to a proud nation’s rich history and heritage.

Four years ago, Syria was a middle class country of engineers and scholars; of scientists and entrepreneurs; of doctors and teachers.

Today, whole neighborhoods have been bombed out of existence; eleven million people have been forced to flee their communities. In all, nearly half of Syria’s pre-war population has been displaced.

Parents have been robbed of their children; and children have been robbed of their future. In a nation with a strong tradition of education, one of the most heart wrenching things, of the many

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heart wrenching things, is to know that so many of Syria's school-aged boys and girls have not been able to step foot in a classroom for more than three years.

Four-fifths of Syrians are now living below the national poverty line. Life expectancy has been reduced by 20 years—from 79 years in 2010 to 55 last year.

And, as you know better than anyone, this humanitarian catastrophe is exacerbated further still by the Assad regime's intentional and deadly obstruction of life-saving aid.

The regime leverages food and water as a weapon of war. It removes medical and surgical supplies from humanitarian convoys, even as those shipments are authorized for delivery.

The United States holds the Assad regime accountable for these abhorrent actions that violate our most basic humanitarian principles and terrorize the Syrian people every single day.

In this vast sea of suffering, we are grateful for the bravery and commitment that each of you and the organizations that you represent have brought to bear.

Tireless efforts embody that the spirit of compassion and volunteerism that is at the very core our common values. And for that reason, I want to especially recognize Dr. Zaher Sahloul and the Syrian American Medical Society for your truly heroic work to provide medical care inside of Syria. Doctor, are you here? Please.

We're privileged to support, in ways that we can your work, and we know the extraordinary risks that you and your colleagues face to save lives every single day.

Just yesterday, I was looking at a report that over 600 medical staff have been killed in Syria—97 percent of them by the regime. This is a devastating statistic for a country that once prided itself on its medical education. And indeed, one of Syria's great exports before the war, were doctors, including doctors to this country, to the United States.

I would also like to recognize, if I may, Ms. Mirna Barq and the Syrian American Council—and also Dr. Yehya Basha and the Coalition for a Democratic Syria—for your tremendous activism and service as an educational resource for the American people and for our government.

We stand with you in your efforts to alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people, just as we stand with the activists, local leaders, and members of the opposition who fight for peace, who fight for justice, and for a comprehensive political solution to the conflict.

Today, I can announce a modest step forward that the Administration is working with Congress to provide nearly \$70 million in new foreign assistance to continue our full range of support to the moderate Syrian opposition.

With this additional funding, the United States will have committed nearly \$400 million to support the opposition since the start of the revolution. And in two weeks, we will again step up to pledge generously at the conference in Kuwait to fund humanitarian assistance for displaced Syrians and refugees in neighboring states.

So, today, even as we commemorate this fourth anniversary, we all know one thing – it's four anniversaries too many.

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This is a time to pause and to honor and remember those who have sacrificed everything to usher in a better future for their country and their fellow citizens.

We remain committed, as challenging and as difficult as it is, to help Syrians obtain their future through a genuine political solution to the conflict.

We're committed to degrading and defeating ISIL, which has found fertile ground in this chaos—hijacking the cause of the Syrian people to advance its own agenda and its own agenda of terror.

And we pledge to continue to work together—as partners—to end this war, restore a nation, allow it to welcome home its citizens, respects their rights, and brighten their futures.

Let me just conclude by saying this. These statistics are powerful. They tell us a lot. We try to make sense of them. We try to digest them. But, behind every single statistic is a human being. And I know for the people in the room, these human beings are your friends, your family, your loved ones. And, nothing we can say or do can fully express the pain I know all of you feel every day when faced with this conflict and this tragedy. And I know, too, the tremendous frustration that I would imagine virtually all of you feel at the fact that we are four years in, and it endures. It is a small consolation that many of us share that same frustration, that we continue, as Daniel said, to work at this every day, and we will continue to work at it every day until we get it right.

Thank you. Thank you for everything you're doing.

7. State's Crocker on Importance of United Nations (03-13-2015)

*Remarks by Bathsheba Crocker, Assistant Secretary, Bureau of International Organization Affairs
Washington, D.C. at the Council on Foreign Relations*

Thank you first and foremost to the Council on Foreign Relations for hosting today's conversation and to Stuart for guiding it, and for that kind introduction. Thanks also to all of you for coming this afternoon for a discussion of the status, purpose, and value of multilateral diplomacy.

I'm here today in the context of the 70th anniversary of the United Nations, whose Charter was signed in San Francisco on June 26, 1945. That Charter, and the lofty aspirations contained in it, remains very much at the center of today's international system, a system that has evolved and expanded well beyond the vision of its earliest promoters. But a system that has endured – remarkably – and a Charter that retains relevance even some seven decades on.

My comments today are not intended to be retrospective, but rather a brief survey of the UN and the larger international system as it is today, and the qualities and capacities that I believe will be crucial for its continued relevance.

As I begin, I take the liberty of assuming your stipulation to some guiding realities:

First, that pressing transnational challenges are only growing in scope, scale, and variety. In this category, I might offer climate change, food security, pandemic health challenges such as Ebola, the threat of violent extremism, and more.

Second, that these varied challenges require often urgent and sometimes simultaneous multilateral action. This truth is perhaps most evident often in the case of humanitarian crises.

Third, that today's remarkable connectivity accelerates the pace at which events become available to global audiences, and thus in turn accelerates the pace at which the international community is expected and called upon to respond.

And finally, that an international system unable to respond to these truths would quickly become irrelevant on the global stage.

Seventy years ago, the need for an international body to provide a convening authority and a constraint for disputing nations was obvious. And though it is true that since that day in San Francisco there have been few constants on the international stage, it is also true that a body that was conceived primarily as a means to prevent war among the great powers of the world has met that fundamental objective.

The original 50 signatories of the UN Charter have grown to 193. The modern international system comprises dozens of organizations and agencies, with responsibility for engaging on innumerable shared priorities, and – let's be honest – more than a handful most of us have never heard of. Civil society networks have emerged as a powerful complement to multilateral tools, and globalization has fostered economic and cultural linkages that would have been unimaginable at the end of World War II.

And yet, across that timeline and in all those categories, American leadership within the international system has been steadfast and instrumental. Now, in making that statement, I acknowledge that from its earliest moments, the UN has been the source of discomfort in some segments of the U.S. political universe. That said, it is notable that for all of its seven decades, the UN and the evolving international system have enjoyed the strong support of U.S. administrations and the Congress.

But why? Why is the vitality and agility of the United Nations and other international organizations of such importance to the United States?

In its most simple expression, it comes to this – we ask the international system to do a great many things on our behalf, and on the whole it is genuinely and actively responsive in that regard.

Yes, there are failings in the system, frustrations inherent in its history and exploited by its membership. There are recurring instances of mismanagement and inefficiency. There is a deeply-rooted anti-Israel bias that rears its ugly head across the system. And there is a persistence of division, call it North vs. South, NAM vs. the West, or G77 vs. the likeminded, that seems almost unthinkable given how much has changed on the global stage since 1945.

But the challenges we face today require as never before the multiplier effect of an effective international system. And the reality is that with the UN, that means we must take the good with the bad – accept the shortcomings, because the benefits to the United States still far outweigh the stories that grab headlines.

So today I will briefly discuss the UN's unique capability and capacity, where today's international system succeeds, where it falls short, and why we must remain relentless in our efforts to push it toward improved effectiveness, efficiency, and innovation and expand our efforts to encourage UN member states to break through tired voting habits and stale thinking. Any discussion of where the international system works must be predicated on an acceptance that the system is messy. With 193

UN member states, division is not uncommon – but we also have to remember how much gets done by consensus, even in the unwieldy UN General Assembly.

And, frankly, if member states were all of one mind, the need for an international system would be far from obvious. No, clearly our differences illustrate the need, create opportunities for unanticipated partnerships, and can make multilateral accomplishments all the more resonant. They are, in fact, the source of the legitimacy that the UN bestows when it speaks to an issue of global concern.

So, where does one look for such accomplishments? I'll offer a few examples in three broad categories. First, we find accomplishment where the international system effectively channels shared aspirations.

Take, for example, human rights and the UN Human Rights Council. This is a body that has been fairly criticized as providing solace and protection to some of the world's worst human rights abusers while focusing with unrelenting, unhealthy attention on a single nation – Israel.

When the United States decided to seek election to the Council in 2009, it was with a determination to redirect the Council's energies, refocus its purpose, and begin strengthening its reputation as the global focal-point for universal human rights.

In the succeeding years, we've achieved a great deal. In 2011, we led an effort to pass a groundbreaking resolution on the rights of LGBT persons – the first such resolution in the UN system. We supported the Latin Americans in taking the lead on the follow-on resolution this past September. We have worked with our partners to lift the veil of secrecy on the horrendous human rights abuses in North Korea at the hands of the regime and to get this issue on the agenda of the Security Council – a huge accomplishment.

We have also led a sustained effort to promote the investigation of and accountability for human rights violations in Sri Lanka, and in fact consistently promote the utility of focusing on country-specific situations to highlight some of the most distressing human rights situations around the world.

That effort has resulted in Commissions of Inquiry and Special Rapporteurs on the human rights situations in Iran, Syria, Belarus, Burma, and North Korea and independent experts on the situations in Sudan, Somalia, and Mali. We have also led efforts to pass important thematic actions to bolster freedoms of expression and association, the rights of women and girls, the protection of civil society, and much more.

And, I would note, that we have achieved this level of success in spite of the recurring presence on the Council of some of the world's worst offender states.

It is also true that we have not succeeded in ending the ingrained bias against Israel, but we continue to advocate forcefully against that bias in the Human Rights Council and across the international system. In fact, as Secretary Kerry pointed out earlier this month, we have intervened on Israel's behalf over the last two years a couple of hundred times in more than 75 different multilateral fora, both to defend it and to support its positive agenda.

This recent progress notwithstanding, the Human Rights Council will obviously never be flawless. But consider the outsized influence of this relatively small body of just 47 member states and the small Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. We measure that influence not just in

the allergic responses often displayed by offender nations, but more meaningfully in the feedback we receive from civil society in those nations, who remind us frequently that Council action has a powerful impact on the ground.

Today, shared aspirations are evident across the UN system, from the heightened focus on gender issues, to strengthened humanitarian coordination across UN agencies, to the elevation of climate change and other (inaudible) issues, and in the energy and ambition fueling negotiations toward a Post-2015 Development Agenda.

Obviously, shared aspirations do not immediately or even necessarily equate to agreed action, but they serve to shape many of the conversations defining today's multilateral diplomacy.

We also find accomplishment in the international system where it acts to promote peace and security. The headline institution here is of course the UN Security Council, which has not always warranted or enjoyed universal admiration. At times, disagreement between permanent members has inhibited action on urgent crises and Syria is an obvious example here.

But it should come as no surprise that in situations closest to our core interests, the United States and other permanent members won't always - or even often - agree. And indeed the Council was created to give us a mechanism to air our differences and try to foster solutions without resorting to open conflict.

And where the P5's interests align, the Security Council plays an indispensable role. We have continued to work effectively with Russia and the rest of the Council on combatting the flow of foreign terrorist fighters, on substantive actions to counter terrorism, counter piracy, on robust nonproliferation regimes targeting Iran and North Korea, on authorizing peacekeeping missions, and much more.

To be sure, the Council's failures on matters such as Syria are as inexcusable as they are unsurprising. And over time, failure to act time and again to address front-burner issues could undermine the body's legitimacy. But as often as that has been predicted it has been disproved, as even when we and others have acted without Council authorization, we have generally returned to the Council to bestow legitimacy and to coordinate on additional actions.

UN peacekeeping is also a widely-known UN peace and security tool, and lends itself well as an example of multilateral burden-sharing. UN peacekeepers, in fact, are currently the largest deployed military force around the world, with 16 missions and over 130,000 personnel today. We've had UN peacekeeping missions nearly as long as we've had the UN itself, and like the parent body, they have not always measured up. In particular, we see the challenge when missions are mandated to take actions they don't deliver on, such as the protection of civilians.

We learned from the experiences of Rwanda, of the Balkans, and elsewhere that missions needed strengthened mandates to make clear the authority to use force and protect civilians. Today, more than 95 percent of peacekeepers serve in missions with a responsibility to protect civilians. Today, the problems we see relate more to how to plan for such operations, how to get host nations to do their job, how to make sure troop contributing countries are able and willing to enforce robust mandates – and a lack of the political underpinning needed to ensure missions' success.

We are committed to modernizing peacekeeping missions and pressing to fill critical gaps and as the nation contributing over 28 percent of the UN peacekeeping budget and with a seat on the Security Council, we obviously have strong views. We are engaging with and support the new

Independent Panel chaired by former President Jose Ramos-Horta to review UN peace operations, and in fact held serious discussions with panel members at the State Department on Tuesday.

Also earlier this week, both Ambassador Power and Deputy Secretary Blinken spoke forcefully on the continued U.S. commitment to peacekeeping and the gaps we are focused on filling, and President Obama will host a Peacekeeping Summit in New York in September.

Finally, we find accomplishment where the international system provides unique specialized and technical expertise. Consider, for example, the ongoing negotiations related to Iran's nuclear program. While I want in no way to prejudge the outcome of those negotiations, I do think they offer an important reminder of the need to invest in credible international organizations. In this instance, I'm referring to the International Atomic Energy Agency, which occupies an indispensable place on the global stage as an authoritative technical entity.

As the Iran negotiations continue through the P5+1 process, the IAEA has the proven capacity to undertake the monitoring and verification roles that would likely be required of it under any agreement and that have been required to verify compliance under the Joint Plan of Action. Imagine how much more difficult these already highly technical and complex negotiations would be without the existence of this international agency.

In a similar vein, I think it fair to speculate that the international community would have struggled mightily to deal with the Assad regime's chemical weapons stockpiles in the absence of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. I take little risk in suggesting that not all of knew about the OPCW before their services and capabilities were required in Syria, and the fact that those capabilities were employed effectively further endorses the sustained investment required to maintain the many and varied elements of our modern international system.

Now, these accomplishments are real, they are valuable, and in many cases they contribute directly to our national security. There are also, to be sure, areas in where the international system falls short, and while I have alluded to several already, they bear repeating.

First, there is one suite of issues that I believe represents one of the UN system's biggest sustained failures. That is, of course, the treatment of Israel-Palestine issues.

There remains a persistent, corrosive bias against Israel in many UN fora, including the UN General Assembly, the Human Rights Council, UNESCO, and beyond. It is made manifest in resolutions and commissions of inquiry, and reinforced by incendiary language and bloc voting. This bias diminishes every international body in which it is allowed to persist, and does nothing to advance the vision of a two-state solution in the Middle East.

Recently, more assertive Palestinian action has compounded the challenge. They have sought to elevate their status in the General Assembly and elsewhere across the UN system. They sought and won member state status at UNESCO, which triggered a legislative requirement that the U.S. cease funding that organization. They signed the Rome Statute and are seeking to employ the ICC to adjudicate questions that should be left to negotiations to resolve.

This appropriation of the international system is more than a dangerous precedent. It poses a threat to the legitimacy and viability of institutions, and provides ready ammunition to those who would seek to diminish U.S. leadership across the international system.

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In a similar vein, the UN system is frequently and justifiably criticized for providing open venues for rogue states and bad global actors. I'll brace myself for the laugh track when I tell you that Venezuela is on the Security Council and China, Russia, and Cuba are members of the Human Rights Council. Bloc voting can result in counterintuitive outcomes, and bad actors are sometimes determined to employ multilateral venues to advance goals antithetical to the hosting organization.

I think we can all agree that these realities are unfortunate at best and all too often corrosive and damaging. And there are times when the system in which we've invested so much just doesn't perform as well or as quickly as we'd want – for example WHO being so slow off the mark in responding to the Ebola crisis.

Finally, in the category of shortcomings we need to make special note of continued management, transparency, and accountability failings. Such failings have a profound impact on the international system – damaged credibility, diminished impact, and justifiable exposure to critics. In this category I would include a long history of poorly managed or mismanaged budgets, a sclerotic personnel system, an opaque response to crises such as sexual exploitation and abuse by UN peacekeepers.

The United States is at the forefront of efforts across the UN system to promote the positive evolution in the management cultures of all organizations and agencies. Sometimes we feel a little lonely in that position, but our sustained focus on these issues is beginning to make a difference. There is more budget transparency and accountability in many organizations today. There are more robust investigation tools. There is momentum toward addressing the lack of uniform whistleblower protections.

These steps and others are important, but we must be unrelenting in our demand for continuous, thoughtful evolution of the UN's psychology and physiology.

In order to see that evolution realized, member states must care, and many do, including of course the United States. We care because we've built this system to manage shared responses to global challenges. As many before me have said, if the United Nations didn't exist, we would almost certainly have to invent it – and I'm not sure in today's world, that we could.

The United Nations at 70 shows some of its age, to be sure. But the questions facing the global community today demand an invigorated international system, not an interment. And that system is trying to get a lot done this year – in its 70th year – from major negotiations on post-2015 and climate, to peacekeeping reform, to addressing the threats of (inaudible) by violent extremism, to negotiations around the UN budget, to major discussions on internet governance and cyber security and Security Council reform. And let's not forget the geopolitical shifts that underlie all these questions – from a revanchist Russia to an increasingly assertive India, China, and Brazil.

Indeed, in some ways this seems like a test year for the UN system: can it still deliver on the kinds of big-ticket multilateral agenda items it is trying to get done? Can it prove that it has evolved and is continuing to evolve to take on new challenges? Will we and other member states continue to see value in using this system – will it continue to deliver for us?

These important questions will all be tested as the year proceeds, and I hope I've given some flavor today of why it's so important that the answers continue to be "yes."

For now, I want to thank you very much for your attention this afternoon, and I look forward to our conversation.

8. U.S. Response to Council of Europe Chair on Ukraine, Terrorism (03-12-2015)

Response to the Address by the Chair of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, H.E. Didier Reynders, Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of Belgium

*As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna*

Mr. Deputy Prime Minister, we warmly welcome you to the Permanent Council and thank you for your presentation in your capacity as Chair of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

Your remarks made clear that issues of central concern to this Permanent Council – such as the situation in Ukraine and the transnational threat of terrorism - are also critical to the Council of Europe.

On Ukraine, we welcome the visits you made to Kyiv and Moscow in December in your capacity as Council of Europe Chair. You have made it clear that full and faithful implementation of the Minsk agreements is urgently needed, including full implementation by Russia.

We appreciate the strong statement you made in February calling for the release of Nadiya Savchenko, Oleg Sentsov, and all other Ukrainian hostages and illegally detained persons in Russia.

Foreign Minister Reynders, those appeals for implementation of the Minsk agreements are echoed around this table every week, as OSCE participating States urge Russia and the separatists it backs to uphold all of the commitments made in Minsk and resolve this crisis peacefully.

Mr. Minister, the OSCE and the Council of Europe both look at countering terrorism, violent extremism, and radicalization through a broad lens, and both organizations bring many tools, including promoting tolerance, inclusion, and respect for human rights, to the table in addressing them.

As you and the people of Belgium know from direct experience, terrorist threats are global and do not respect national borders. We must work cooperatively to address these threats.

Just as the OSCE adopted ministerial declarations last year committing participating States to counter foreign terrorist fighters and combat kidnapping for ransom, the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers adopted a declaration on counter-terrorism. We understand that the Council of Europe is working toward a Plan of Action on Counterterrorism for its May Ministerial, and is planning an international conference focusing on tolerance as a tool to counter terrorism. The OSCE calendar for the year ahead also has a rich array of conferences and activities to address aspects of countering violent extremism. I hope that coordination between our organizations ensures that our work in this area does not duplicate or overlap but is complementary, and that we can learn from each other.

Combatting deeply disturbing trends in anti-Semitism in Europe is also high on the OSCE agenda, as reflected in a declaration made at our December ministerial.

Mr. Minister, you have taken actions to combat anti-Semitism, not only through the Council of Europe, but also at home in Belgium.

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I understand that the shooting at the Jewish Museum in Brussels last May was all too real for you — as you were in the vicinity, and rushed to the scene when you heard the gunshots.

We welcome your continued leadership on combating anti-Semitism. We believe the creation by the Council of Europe of a Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism, similar to the United States' own position, would be an appropriate and effective means of addressing the dangerous rise in anti-Semitism that has been plaguing European countries in recent months.

The protection of human rights is also a shared goal of our two organizations. The United States believes that the OSCE and the Council of Europe have significant, complementary roles to play in strengthening respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy, and the rule of law. If I may express a personal note of gratitude, your own voice, Mr. Minister, has often been a strong one in defense of universal values.

We also appreciated the frank and thoughtful briefing given last year to the Permanent Council by the Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights, Nils Muiznieks. We support the Council of Europe's emphasis on Roma and Sinti inclusion and Commissioner Muiznieks' firm statement that the shameful situation of intolerance toward and exclusion of Roma and Sinti "cannot be further tolerated and could be reversed with a little political will."

Commissioner Muiznieks has also been active in monitoring and reporting on human rights in Russia occupied Crimea, and we support his work, as well as the work of the OSCE and its institutions, in this regard.

Mr. Minister, while the founding principles of our two organizations remain strong, states must exercise political will to implement the commitments they have made as members of these organizations. For example, political will is needed for Russia to implement the agreements it made in Minsk and to convince the separatists it backs to do the same. The international community's collective political will must be strong to counter the transnational terrorist threats our countries face. Protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms also requires the political will of states to uphold their obligations, to be open to criticism, and to listen to civil society.

We look forward to continuing to work together with you, Mr. Minister, and the Council of Europe to see that states devote their political will to upholding the principles for which our two organizations stand.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

9. Amb. Baer on OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (03-12-2015)

Interpretative Statement on the Extension of the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine Pursuant to IV.1(A)6 of the OSCE Rules of Procedure

*As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna*

In connection with the decision to extend the mandate of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, the United States would like to make the following interpretative statement under paragraph IV.1(A)6 of the OSCE Rules of Procedure.

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The United States welcomes the extension of the mandate of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine. In so doing, we reaffirm the interpretative statement we made on March 21, 2014, upon adoption of the mandate, and on July 24, 2014, upon the first extension of the mandate, under paragraph IV.1 (A)6 of the Rules of Procedure, and we note that those interpretative statements remain in force. We remind the Permanent Council of the key elements of those statements:

The United States reaffirms its firm commitment to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.

We note that that the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine has a mandate to work throughout Ukraine, including in Crimea.

We note that all participating States must cooperate with the Special Monitoring Mission and should take no actions to obstruct its access to Crimea or any other region of Ukraine.

We offer our gratitude to all monitors, staff, and leadership of the Special Monitoring Mission for their excellent work under difficult and at times unacceptable conditions.

In addition to recalling those key elements of our previous interpretative statements, we would also like to use this opportunity to call on Ukraine, Russia, and the Russia-backed separatists to ensure that the SMM has unfettered movement throughout the territory of Ukraine and to guarantee the safety and security of SMM monitors as they carry out their duties.

I request that this interpretative statement be attached to the decision and to the Journal of the Day. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Related Sites:

[Amb. Baer on Russia's Ongoing Violations, Defiance in Ukraine](#)
