

**INTERNATIONAL SECURITY UPDATE**  
**April 8 - 15, 2015**

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**1. [U.S.-Iraq Joint Statement on Strategic Partnership \(04-14-2015\)](#)**

**Joint Statement by the United States of America and the Republic of Iraq**

President Obama welcomed Haider Al-Abadi, Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq, and the accompanying delegation to Washington from April 13-16, 2015. The President and the Prime Minister met today at the White House to reaffirm the long-term U.S.-Iraq strategic partnership based on mutual respect and common interests and their shared commitment to the U.S.-Iraq Strategic Framework Agreement. The President expressed his strong support for the progress that the Prime Minister and the Iraqi government have accomplished since the two leaders last met seven months ago.

**Working Together to Destroy ISIL**

President Obama and Prime Minister Al-Abadi reviewed progress in the campaign to degrade and ultimately destroy ISIL. The two leaders honored the sacrifices of Iraqis from all communities in the fight against ISIL and expressed appreciation for the significant contributions of more than 60 partners in the global coalition to counter ISIL. Over 1,900 U.S. and coalition strikes in Iraq have played a critical role in halting ISIL's advance and supporting the Iraqi Security Forces in liberating

significant Iraqi territory once held by ISIL. The Prime Minister praised the performance of the Iraqi Security Forces, including the volunteer fighters in the Popular Mobilization Forces, the Peshmerga forces, and local tribal fighters. Prime Minister Al-Abadi thanked the President and the American people for the critical support provided to Iraq, including the important work of U.S. service men and women currently stationed in Iraq and the region, and both leaders reaffirmed the core security partnership between their two countries.

The President and Prime Minister discussed next steps in the campaign to counter ISIL. The Prime Minister stressed the importance of stabilizing areas liberated from ISIL control, and ensuring the full transfer of authority to local officials and local police; the maintenance of civil order; the protection of civilians; the peaceful return of displaced residents; and the restoration of government services and the economy. The Prime Minister emphasized that the Government of Iraq has zero tolerance for human rights abuses and requested assistance from the United States and the coalition to enable immediate and long-term stabilization in areas liberated from ISIL. The Prime Minister underscored the integral role that local populations are playing in liberating their own areas and, accordingly, stressed the importance of enrolling additional tribal fighters in the fight against ISIL as part of the Popular Mobilization Forces. President Obama pledged to continue to support Iraqi Security Forces and tribal engagement initiatives with U.S. training and equipment. He specifically welcomed the recent decision by the Iraqi government to supply thousands of rifles and other equipment to tribal fighters in eastern Anbar province, building on the successful model at Al Asad airbase in western Anbar, where U.S. advisors are enabling tribal operations against ISIL in coordination with Iraqi Security Forces.

The two leaders underscored the threat that terrorism poses to Iraq, the region, and the global community. Both leaders emphasized the importance of implementing of UNSC resolutions 2178 and 2199. They also discussed the critical importance of addressing the sources of extremism and violence, including additional combined efforts in these areas over the coming weeks, and the President noted that the Prime Minister would continue discussions on the military campaign against ISIL in his meetings with the Secretary of Defense on April 15, in addition to the coalition plenary meeting on the same day.

### **Strengthening a Unified and Democratic Iraq**

Prime Minister Al-Abadi updated the President on political developments in Iraq, including his cabinet's efforts to implement the ambitious national program set forth upon the formation of the government. He noted parliament's passage of a national budget, Iraq's first in years with cross-sectarian support, with key provisions on oil exports and revenue sharing with the Kurdistan Regional Government. Prime Minister Al-Abadi affirmed his priority remains the passage of legislation that was outlined in the national program. The President welcomed the progress that has been made to date, and called on all political blocs to make the compromises necessary for full implementation of the national program.

More broadly, the Prime Minister outlined his vision of a more decentralized model of governance, as called for under the Constitution of Iraq, a model that he asserted was an essential element of the broader strategy for progress in Iraq. He detailed the government's program to devolve security and service delivery to the provincial and local levels. In this light, he noted efforts to empower local government in the stabilization of liberated areas. He also highlighted the importance of the National Guard in providing more authority over security to the residents of Iraq's provinces and to ensuring that Iraq's security forces are broadly representative and close to the communities they are sworn to protect and defend. The President expressed support for the strategy outlined by the Prime

Minister and committed to provide all appropriate assistance and support, as called for in the Strategic Framework Agreement, to strengthen Iraq's constitutional democracy.

### **Enhancing Opportunities for the Iraqi People**

The President and the Prime Minister both noted that our two nations must continue to enhance broad bilateral cooperation under the Strategic Framework Agreement. The Prime Minister outlined the range of Iraq's challenges resulting from the global decline in the price of oil, the humanitarian crisis, and Iraq's fight against ISIL. Prime Minister Al-Abadi outlined his government's strategy to shore up the Iraqi economy, including revitalization of Iraq's energy infrastructure and reforms to mitigate corruption and reduce wasteful spending. The two leaders agreed that international support for Iraq's fight against ISIL could be leveraged toward enhancing Iraq's integration with the global economy.

President Obama noted that economic cooperation is central to the long-term U.S.-Iraq partnership. The President congratulated the Prime Minister on Iraq's recent record high oil exports, the highest in more than thirty years, and they affirmed that they will work together to expand Iraqi oil production and exports in the future. The President said he had directed Vice President Biden to convene, on April 16, a Higher Coordinating Committee meeting of the Strategic Framework Agreement to focus specifically on economic issues, including bilateral trade, energy cooperation, private sector reform, and Iraq's fiscal stability.

President Obama and Prime Minister Al-Abadi both reaffirmed the need to address the humanitarian situation in Iraq, where more than 2.6 million Iraqis have been internally displaced since January 2014. President Obama noted his recent decision to provide nearly \$205 million dollars in additional humanitarian assistance to Iraqis in the region and to support Iraq's response to the Syrian crisis, bringing the U.S. contribution to help displaced Iraqis to more than \$407 million since the start of fiscal year 2014.

### **Reinforcing Regional Cooperation**

President Obama expressed his strong support for increased cooperation between Iraq and regional partners on the basis of mutual respect for sovereignty and non-interference in domestic affairs. The Prime Minister updated the President on his consultations with regional capitals and his efforts to enhance regional diplomatic representation in Baghdad. The President confirmed the importance of establishing a strong diplomatic presence in Baghdad by all regional Arab states.

The two leaders agreed that there are no military solutions to the region's conflicts. To this end, Prime Minister Al-Abadi welcomed the framework for a Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action between the P5+1 and Iran regarding Iran's nuclear program as a means towards greater peace and stability in the region. Both leaders affirmed that a strong U.S.-Iraq relationship was critical for regional security and in the long-term interests of both countries.

### **Conclusion**

This visit provides an opportunity to review the important progress that Iraq and the United States have made together and to discuss ways to further enhance cooperation across the full spectrum of the strategic partnership. The rapid and extensive response by the United States to the current challenges facing Iraq has highlighted the robust and steadfast relationship between our two countries, and the President and the Prime Minister agreed on the importance of continuing to strengthen this enduring relationship.

Related Articles:

[Obama, Iraqi PM al-Abadi After Their Meeting](#)  
[White House Fact Sheet on U.S.-Iraq Cooperation](#)

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## **2. Canada Joins Ukraine National Guard Training Program (04-14-2015)**

By Army Sgt. 1st Class Tyrone C. Marshall Jr.  
DoD News, Defense Media Activity

WASHINGTON, April 14, 2015 – The Defense Department announced today that Canada will be joining the DoD-State Department initiative to help train members of the Ukrainian National Guard which was announced last month.

Speaking to reporters, Pentagon spokesman Army Col. Steve Warren praised Canada for its contributions and for joining the National Guard training mission in Ukraine.

“We welcome our close friend and strong ally Canada’s contributions to the Ukrainian National Guard training program,” he said, adding that Canada has provided non-lethal military assistance to Ukraine throughout the ongoing crisis.

“Earlier this year,” Warren said, “Canada joined the United States-Ukraine joint commission. We look forward to continuing our long-standing defense relationship while undertaking this important endeavor.”

DoD officials announced March 20 about 290 U.S. service members from the Vicenza, Italy-based 173rd “Sky Soldiers” Airborne Brigade, would go to the International Peacekeeping and Security Center in Yavoriv, near the Polish border, and train six Ukraine National Guard companies with a focus on internal security and territorial defense in western Ukraine.

### **Russian Actions**

The colonel also noted DoD is “certainly aware” of three Russian naval vessels that are sailing through the English Channel.

“We know our allies, the British, are tracking them very closely as are we,” Warren said. “We’ve often said that nations have the ability to travel through international waters as long as they respect all international standards of conduct and territorial integrity, and laws.”

He said, “We call on the Russians to ensure they do that in this case.” He added that nothing suggests the Russians have violated these “norms.”

The colonel also noted there are no indications Russia is conducting any sort of exercise.

“I know that’s the Russians’ claim,” Warren said, “but we’ve seen no evidence of any type of exercise. And I believe the Brits have actually said as much as well.”

### **Minsk Agreement Violations**

Warren said there’s “no question” Russian-backed separatists have “repeatedly” violated the terms of the Minsk cease-fire agreement.

“This is something that we keep a very close eye on,” he said. “There’s also no question that the Russians continue to operate inside of Ukrainian territory.”

In fact, Warren said, the Russians have actually set up some training centers inside of eastern Ukraine where they’re helping train separatists in tasks such as gunnery and artillery firing drills.

“We also know that they continue to maintain advanced surface-to-air missile systems near the front line which is in direct violation of the Minsk agreements,” he said.

And, Warren said, the Russians have command and control elements inside of Ukraine that are helping to coordinate military operations there.

“So these are all examples of the Russians continuing to provide support to the separatists,” he said.

Related Sites:

[Special Report: Operation Atlantic Resolve – America’s Continued Commitment to European Security](#)

Related Articles:

[DoD Moves Forward on Ukraine National Guard Training](#)

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### **[3. State’s Rose: Verification Tools Indispensable to Arms Control \(04-14-2015\)](#)**

This blog post by Frank A. Rose originally appeared on the State Department website on April 13.

*Rose serves as the assistant secretary of state for arms control, verification and compliance. For more information on the IPNDV, go to [state.gov/t/avc](http://state.gov/t/avc) or follow Assistant Secretary Rose on Twitter @StateAVC.*

#### **How Do You Create the Tools to Verify a World Without Nuclear Weapons? by Frank Rose**

It was six years ago this month that President Obama gave his landmark speech in Prague stating the U.S. commitment to seek the “peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons.” The President acknowledged that reaching this goal would not be easy and may not be achieved in his lifetime, but it is a goal that can be — and must be — reached. One of the most important factors in reaching this goal is the creation of new and enhanced verification tools.

That is why the United States created a new public-private venture called the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification or IPNDV. Last December, Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security Rose Gottemoeller traveled back to Prague to launch the Partnership. And last month, the idea became a reality, when experts from twenty-eight nuclear weapon and non-nuclear weapon states came to Washington, D.C., to begin the work of solving the verification challenges associated with further nuclear reductions.

We are proud to be working with the Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI) on this unprecedented partnership and we are grateful to have a direct line to NTI’s experts who have acquired decades of experience working on these issues in all corners of the globe.

While our new Partnership is unique in its scope, lessons learned from past disarmament verification initiatives will inform the development of “work groups” — or subject areas deserving of closer study. The United States-United Kingdom Technical Cooperation Program and the United Kingdom-Norway Initiative are two such past initiatives. Both studies grappled with how to provide confidence and transparency with respect to a country’s declared nuclear weapons while, at the same time, controlling access to sensitive and classified information.

We have come a long way on nuclear disarmament. The proof is in the numbers. At the height of Cold War tensions with the former Soviet Union, the United States stockpile consisted of almost 32,000 nuclear warheads. Decades of bilateral arms control treaties and agreements with Russia have slashed that number by nearly 85 percent, and the U.S. offer for further reductions remains on the table provided there is a willing partner and conducive international security environment.

For all the progress on disarmament, future steps are expected to pose significantly more complex and intrusive verification challenges than in times past. Future success in addressing such challenges will be dependent, in part, on the development and application of new technologies or concepts. On-site inspections conducted under New START are just one example of how a strong verification regime is indispensable to any successful arms control treaty or agreement. Expanding the verification toolkit will lay the groundwork for further steps in negotiating verifiable reductions in nuclear weapons.

Addressing these challenges, and finding solutions, is one bridge needed to span the gap between our aspirations for nuclear disarmament and their eventual fulfillment. Fortunately, the robust participation of countries at the kickoff meeting of the verification Partnership indicates that the United States and the other nuclear weapon states do not and will not face this challenge alone.

The benefits derived from nuclear disarmament are not limited to just one country and we know that nuclear weapon states do not have a monopoly on creative ideas. A larger, more diverse group of states, many whom possess technical expertise in nuclear verification or the related sciences, will contribute to the discussion and provide a broader intellectual basis for exploring creative solutions. This is a way for all NPT parties, without distinction to their nuclear or non-nuclear weapon status, to advance disarmament objectives of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

We look forward to continuing the conversation with the public and other State Parties to the NPT at the upcoming NPT Review Conference. But we are in this for the long haul. We intend to continue working with other states on these verification challenges for years to come.

For President Obama, freeing the world from the shadow cast by nuclear weapons is not just an aspirational goal, but a deeply personal one. The President is “a father, who wants his two young daughters to grow up in a world where everything they know and love can't be instantly wiped out.”

Everyone who shares this sentiment — shares the goal of a world without nuclear weapons — should devote time and energy to the verification challenges that face us. An upfront investment in the tools and technologies to verify nuclear reductions at lower numbers is the means to the end we all seek. The International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification can help us get there.

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#### **4. State Dept. on Myths, Facts of Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (04-14-2015)** **FACT SHEET**

*U.S. Department of State, Bureau of International Security and Nonproliferation, Washington, D.C.*

### **Myths and Facts Regarding the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and Regime**

#### **(1) Myth: The NPT has failed to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons.**

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) has enjoyed tremendous successes over the 45 years since its entry into force. The NPT is the most widely adhered to nuclear treaty in history. It has established an international legal framework against the proliferation of nuclear weapons to which 190 countries have subscribed. Among them are states that abandoned nuclear weapons or nuclear weapons programs with the NPT serving as an impetus. The vast majority of NPT parties meet their obligations and benefit every day from the security the Treaty provides. For the few that do not, the NPT provides a common international basis for resolving noncompliance where the actions of a country contravene the treaty's principles.

#### **(2) Myth: Not enough is being done to pursue nuclear disarmament.**

When the NPT entered into force in 1970, the United States had a nuclear stockpile of over 26,000 nuclear weapons. By 2013 that number had been reduced by about 82 percent to 4,804 operationally deployed strategic nuclear warheads. From October 1993 through September 2013, the United States dismantled almost 10,000 nuclear warheads. Several thousand additional nuclear weapons are currently retired and awaiting dismantlement. Nuclear weapons reductions continue as we fulfill our obligations under the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START). When the New START Treaty limits are reached in 2018, the United States and Russia will have reduced our respective operationally deployed strategic forces to 1,550 deployed strategic warheads, their lowest level since the 1950s. The United States has reaffirmed our commitment to additional arms control measures, and has proposed negotiations with Russia to achieve another one-third reduction in our strategic nuclear arsenals. We also remain committed to bringing into force the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and we seek the immediate start to negotiations on a Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty.

Beyond nuclear arms control negotiations, we seek to broaden our cooperation with non-nuclear weapons states on disarmament verification issues through a new initiative, the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification. This program aims to develop technical solutions to challenges involved in verifying future nuclear agreements.

#### **(3) Myth: Modernization of nuclear weapons and related infrastructure is a step backwards on disarmament and inconsistent with NPT disarmament obligations.**

The United States is committed not to pursue new nuclear warheads, and life extension programs will not provide for new military capabilities. U.S. stockpile stewardship and life extension programs are designed to service the existing nuclear arsenal in order to ensure it remains safe, secure, and effective so long as nuclear weapons exist. The United States is pursuing life extension for a number of warhead types that will enable us to eliminate many of the weapons we maintain in our stockpile as a hedge against technical contingencies.

Modernization of nuclear infrastructure has nothing to do with developing new nuclear weapons. These investments are needed to replace aging infrastructure that will allow us to safely, securely, and more rapidly reduce the total stockpile. Simply put, infrastructure modernization, stockpile

stewardship, and life extension programs for U.S. warheads will contribute to and do not detract from progress on our NPT nuclear disarmament obligations.

**(4) Myth: There is insufficient cooperation among the nuclear weapons states on promoting nuclear disarmament, nonproliferation and peaceful uses.**

The NPT Nuclear Weapon States (P5) are working to strengthen implementation of all three pillars of the NPT. Since 2009, the P5 have met annually to jointly pursue an agenda of strengthening the global nuclear nonproliferation regime and have institutionalized regular dialogue on nuclear weapons-related issues. One notable result of these meetings has been development of a common reporting framework on implementation of the 2010 NPT Review Conference Action Plan. We are also pursuing technical work on nuclear terms and definitions that can help lay the foundation for future cooperation or agreements. P5 engagement is a long-term investment to strengthen and advance the NPT, build trust and create a stronger foundation to achieve the Treaty's disarmament, nonproliferation and peaceful uses goals.

**(5) Myth: Nuclear Weapons States are insensitive to the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons.**

This is simply not true. Underpinning all of our nonproliferation and disarmament efforts, stretching back decades, has been our clear understanding and recognition of the humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons. The United States remains firmly committed to the view that it is in the interest of all states that the 70-year record of non-use of nuclear weapons be extended indefinitely. The United States participated in the Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons in Vienna, Austria, last December to reinforce the message that it is precisely because of the destructive power of nuclear weapons that we give the highest priority to ensuring these weapons remain safe and secure for as long as they exist. While we share some of the frustration with the slow pace of nuclear disarmament, we also recognize that the realization of a world without nuclear weapons will require significant changes in the international system. For this reason, the practical path of step-by-step, verifiable nuclear reductions remains the only realistic route to our shared goal of a nuclear weapons- free world.

**(6) Myth: "Hair-trigger" alert status and failures to take proper care of nuclear weapons are accidents waiting to happen, and demonstrate the urgent need to eliminate all nuclear weapons.**

U.S. nuclear forces are not on "hair-trigger" alert and the U.S. employs multiple, rigorous and redundant technical and procedural safeguards to protect against accidental or unauthorized launch. Only the President can authorize the employment of U.S. nuclear weapons and we are taking further steps to maximize decision time for the President in a crisis. These steps enhance stability before and during a crisis and avoid the instability and compressed decision times that are inherent to changes in alert status.

The United States is also actively working to reduce the numbers and role of nuclear weapons in our national security strategy. These steps include taking all of our non-strategic nuclear bombers and nuclear-capable heavy bombers off day-to-day alert, engaging in the practice of open-ocean targeting for ICBMs and SLBMs, and reducing the number of warheads each ICBM carries to a single warhead. Converting ICBMs to a single warhead makes these weapons less attractive targets and therefore more stabilizing. Continuing at-sea patrols for submarines carrying nuclear weapons have a similar effect.

**(7) Myth: Export controls and discriminatory policies are impeding nuclear cooperation and preventing developing countries from exercising their inalienable right to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.**

The United States fully supports the right of all Parties to the NPT to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, in conformity with their nonproliferation obligations. An effective, transparent export control regime helps build confidence among states that assistance provided for peaceful nuclear development will not be diverted to illegal weapons purposes. The United States and other major supplier nations do not apply export controls in order to impede legitimate nuclear commerce. Rather, U.S. export controls are designed to maximize legitimate trade while raising barriers to high risk transfers that could result in the diversion or retransfer of U.S. technology, equipment and material to weapons purposes.

The United States actively lends support to NPT Parties that are in compliance with their NPT obligations to help them develop the infrastructure needed for peaceful nuclear applications and safe, secure, and safeguarded nuclear power programs. The United States is by far the largest contributor to IAEA peaceful use programs, including about \$142 million in voluntary contributions to the Technical Cooperation program since 2010 and another \$50 million toward the IAEA Peaceful Uses Initiative (PUI) that we helped launch. PUI programs have addressed the sustainable development needs of more than 120 Member States in areas such as human health, water resource management, food security, environmental protection, and nuclear power infrastructure development.

**(8) Myth: The United States has a double standard with respect to opposing nuclear proliferation.**

The United States remains committed to universality of the NPT and has consistently urged the few countries that have never signed the Treaty to accede as non-nuclear weapon states and in the interim to take actions that are supportive of NPT principles and provisions. We have also been consistent in advancing international efforts to hold NPT Parties to account for noncompliance with the Treaty – as President Obama said in his 2009 Prague Speech, rules must be binding, violations must be punished and words must mean something. We are very encouraged with process underway to address Iran’s noncompliance and we remain steadfast in our insistence that North Korea return to the NPT and IAEA safeguards and comply fully with its UN Security Council and nonproliferation obligations.

**(9) Myth: The United States is not doing its part to promote a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction.**

The United States remains firmly committed to the goal of a Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems. We continue to work with Russia, the UK, the UN and the Conference Facilitator, Ambassador Laajava, to convene the proposed conference to discuss a regional zone. We have supported five rounds of consultations between Israel and Arab states and encourage these talks to continue. Regional states bear the responsibility to reach consensus on arrangements for the conference. Efforts to turn the NPT process into a referendum on this issue should be rejected.

**(10) Myth: Nuclear cooperation with India is inconsistent with the NPT.**

Nothing in the U.S.-India Civil Nuclear Agreement or in the 2008 policy decision of the Nuclear Suppliers Group to enable civil nuclear cooperation with India violates the NPT. Such cooperation is permitted provided the supply of material or equipment is under safeguards. Under the parameters of the initiative, India committed to separate its civilian and military nuclear facilities and has placed all civilian-designated nuclear facilities under IAEA safeguards. All U.S. civil

nuclear cooperation with India is subject to such safeguards, and cooperation on sensitive nuclear technologies is ruled out. India has also worked to bring its export controls into line with internationally-recognized standards and committed to continue its voluntary moratorium on nuclear testing and support negotiation of a fissile material cutoff treaty. These commitments constitute significant gains for global nonproliferation efforts.

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## **5. ISIL Loses Control of Once-dominated Iraq Territory (04-13-2015)**

By Terri Moon Cronk  
DoD News, Defense Media Activity

WASHINGTON, April 13, 2015 – Some 25 percent to 30 percent of Iraqi territory has been taken back from Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant terrorist group control by coalition forces, Army Col. Steve Warren told reporters today.

Warren, a Pentagon spokesman, showed reporters a color-coded map of key populated sites in northern and central Iraq where ISIL was once the dominant force before Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve pushed the terrorists back.

Overall, he said, the map shows how “the combination of coalition air power and Iraqi ground forces are having an effect on the enemy’s ability to hold territory and to have freedom of maneuver,” he said.

“This equates to approximately 5,000 square miles to 6,000 square miles of Iraq territory since the peak of ISIL territorial influence in Iraq in August 2014,” Warren noted. “ISIL has lost large areas where it was once dominant.”

Essentially, he added, the ISIL front line has been pushed either west or south, depending on location, he said, in integral areas such as Erbil, Babil, Baghdad and the Kirkuk governances.

### **Coalition Maintains Pressure on ISIL**

“Among other strategic infrastructure and sizeable towns where ISIL has lost territory are Mosul Dam, Zummar and the vicinity of Sinjar Mountain,” Warren said.

The corridor north of Tikrit has been “substantially retaken by friendly forces,” Warren said. With offensive pressure on ISIL, he said he expects Tikrit also will be cleared from ISIL “relatively soon.”

Beiji and a nearby oil refinery is still contested, and will continue to be the focus of airstrikes, he said.

While it is too early to say the tide of the battle is turning in Iraq, Iraqi security forces, along with coalition air power, “have unquestionably inflicted some damage on ISIL and have pushed ISIL back in a somewhat meaningful way,” Warren said.

Related Sites:

[Special Report: Operation Inherent Resolve - Targeted Operations Against ISIL Terrorists](#)

Related Articles:

[Airstrikes Continue Against ISIL in Syria, Iraq](#)

[Counter-ISIL Coalition Small Group Meeting](#)

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**6. [Agreement with Iran \(04-12-2015\)](#)  
Interview with George Stephanopoulos of ABC This Week**

*Interview*

*John Kerry, Secretary of State, Washington, DC*

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, thanks for joining us this morning.

SECRETARY KERRY: Happy to be with you.

QUESTION: So President Obama says it's time to turn the page with Cuba. His critics, like Senator Marco Rubio, say that's, quote, "ridiculous" because Cuba hasn't changed its ways. So has Cuba changed, and what exactly will they have to do for a full relationship with the U.S.

SECRETARY KERRY: Well, the purpose of changing the policy, George, is, in fact, to encourage change and transformation. We've had this policy in place for – ever since the late 1950s since the revolution and Castro came into power. And frankly, it hasn't had the impact that people wanted. The belief is very powerful that by beginning to engage, by beginning to have greater travel, greater ability to move, greater ability to visit, ideas and opportunities will grow, that the Cuban people themselves will have a greater opportunity for expression and for exchange of views. And that is what will promote a transformation over a period of time.

But we have to begin somewhere, and the President has courageously decided to change a policy that hasn't worked and to move us down a different path. It will begin slowly. The first thing is diplomatic relations. Then we will move towards a process of normalization. And we had a very good meeting. I met with the foreign minister in Panama for several hours. We discussed the modalities of the diplomatic engagement. And then, of course, the President met with Raul Castro, the president, and we now go forward from there. But it's going to be a process of transformation.

QUESTION: We're also seeking a new relationship with Iran. You called that framework deal on the nuclear program historic; but the more we hear from the Iranian side, the less it sounds like a real deal at all. I want to – we saw Ayatollah Khamenei, the supreme leader, speak out this week on the deal. This office put out a tweet that says, "Hours after the talks Americans offered a fact sheet that most of it was contrary to what was agreed. They always deceive and break promises."

And there do seem to be big differences. The ayatollah says that the sanctions will be lifted as soon as the deal is implemented. The United States says no, it will only come after Iran takes those steps and it's verified by the IAEA. So is there a deal on that question or not?

SECRETARY KERRY: George, the facts on which the parameters are based are facts. And yesterday the Russians issued a statement saying that the fact sheet or the facts as expressed by the United States are reliable and accurate information. Now, you can go back to the interim agreement, and we have the same kind of dueling narratives. They're going to put their spin on their point of view, and obviously, they'll allege that we're putting a spin on our point of view. But I will stand by every fact that I have said, stated publicly.

And you have to look to the interim agreement where they likewise put out a different set of interpretations. But when it came time to implement the agreement, the agreement that was implemented was the agreement that we had articulated and it was the agreement that has been kept. And to Iran's credit, Iran has lived up to and lived by every requirement in that agreement.

So I'm going to let the facts speak for themselves. I don't want to get into a back and forth publicly. I don't think it serves any purpose. I'll be consulting Congress – tomorrow the House and on Tuesday the Senate. I will lay out in full our understanding of this agreement. And if it isn't the understanding, George, we're not going to sign an agreement. I mean, we will come to these next two and a half months open to trying to improve still, perhaps finish on a few – not perhaps – definitely finish in a few areas that were clearly left unresolved. And that's going to have to happen for a full agreement to be put into place.

QUESTION: When you go up to Capitol Hill, you'll probably encounter your old friend and colleague, Senator John McCain, who seems to be saying – suggesting that the ayatollah has his interpretation right. He calls you, quote, “delusional.” And he went on to say this: “I can't blame the ayatollah because I don't think they ever agreed to it, and I think John Kerry tried to come back and sell a bill of goods hoping maybe that the Iranians wouldn't say much about it.”

Selling us a bill of goods?

SECRETARY KERRY: (Laughter.) I think President Obama spoke very, very powerfully to Senator McCain yesterday, and I'll let the President's words stand. I also stand by every fact that I have laid out. It's an unusual affirmation of our facts to come from Russia, but Russia has said that what we've set out is reliable and accurate. And I will let the final agreement speak for itself.

QUESTION: As you know, your predecessor Secretary of State Hillary Clinton announcing for president today. And already, her tenure as secretary of state is in the crosshairs: Marco Rubio calling her the architect of a failed foreign policy; Ted Cruz the Obama-Clinton foreign policy disaster; Jeb Bush says it's a mess. You said you had big heels to fill when you took the job. What's your response to these critiques?

SECRETARY KERRY: Well, George, as you know, the secretary of state happily is able to not be involved in the presidential hurly-burly. I'm not going to get involved in it now. It's important for me to be able to speak to both sides of the aisle and talk about our foreign policy without being involved in partisan politics. And so I'm not going to get involved in it now, but I will say that Secretary of State Clinton did a terrific job of rebuilding alliances that had been shredded over the course of the prior years. She spent a lot of time, as you know, working on a number of different issues, including the beginning of the effort with Iran as well as the Gaza ceasefire and other things. She will defend, I know, her own record for herself. It's not my job to do it. But I wish her well in this race and I look forward to being able to stay well away from it.

QUESTION: Is she your candidate?

SECRETARY KERRY: Beg your pardon?

QUESTION: Is she your candidate?

SECRETARY KERRY: I'm not in the race, as I just said, George. I'm out of the partisan politics here.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, thanks for joining us this morning.

SECRETARY KERRY: Thanks.

Related Sites:

[Interview With Bob Schieffer of CBS Face the Nation](#)

[Interview With Chuck Todd of NBC Meet the Press](#)

## **7. Carter, South Korea's Han Solidify Alliance (04-10-2015)**

By Terri Moon Cronk  
DoD News, Defense Media Activity

WASHINGTON, April 10, 2015 – The U.S.-South Korea alliance has a global reach based on mutual trust and common values, Defense Secretary Ash Carter said in a joint press conference after meeting with South Korean Minister of Defense Han Min-koo today.

As Carter begins to wrap up his first official visit to the region as defense secretary, he met with his military counterpart in Seoul.

“We've worked together with South Korea to counter the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, combat Ebola and help rebuild Afghanistan,” Carter said.

“The gains for our national, regional and global security have been impressive, and I thank the Republic of Korea for all it's doing to ensure peace and security around the world,” the secretary added.

### **Defense Secretary Reaffirms Resolve, Support**

Carter reaffirmed the United States' resolve and support for the alliance and the defense of the Republic of Korea, and he emphasized America's unwavering commitment to its rebalancing strategy in the Asia-Pacific region.

“In light of this, I assessed that the U.S. strategy to rebalance toward the Asia-Pacific will contribute to promoting the peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and in Northeast Asia,” Han said.

The defense leaders reaffirmed their countries' commitments to the strong alliance and to deepening their collaboration in the years ahead, Carter noted, adding there is particular emphasis on new domains such as space and cyberspace.

### **North Korea Threats Pivotal to Talks**

North Korea's threats were also key to the leaders' talk. Carter said they made a candid assessment of the growing North Korean nuclear weapon of mass destruction and ballistic missile threats, “which continue to put at risk the peace and security of the Korean Peninsula, the region, and the U.S. homeland,” he said.

And as North Korea again demonstrated with its recent missile launches, the country is intent on continued provocation, Carter said.

Han added, “Secretary Carter and I reaffirmed that we will continue to work together on reinforcing the alliance's comprehensive capabilities in response to North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile threats.”

Carter and Han also agree on the importance of trilateral information sharing to deter North Korea nuclear missile provocations, Han said.

## South Korea, U.S., Japan Cooperation

“Carter concurred that Korea, the United States, and Japan should cooperate closely to contribute to peace and stability in Northeast Asia and the world,” the South Korean leader said.

“On the peninsula, deterrence and readiness are at a premium,” Carter said. “So, we're investing in advanced capabilities to make sure that our top, new investments are tailored to this dynamic security environment and can play a role in ... assuring security here.”

To that end, he said, the United States is beginning to rotationally deploy Army brigade combat teams to Korea, providing a more ready set of forces for the peninsula.

“And we're working hard to ensure interoperability with our Korean allies, including thorough training and exercises, like Key Resolve and Foal Eagle,” Carter noted.

The defense leaders also talked about their decision to adopt a conditions-based approach to the transition of wartime operational control, Carter pointed out.

The secretary called it a significant alliance decision, and said both he and Han remain committed to the objectives their nations established at the last security consultative meeting in October 2014.

Looking at America's lasting presence in the Asia-Pacific region, Carter said, “As secretary of defense, I'm personally committed to overseeing the next phase of our rebalance to the region, which will deepen and diversify our engagement throughout the Asia Pacific.”

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## **8. In Japan, Carter Reports Progress on Major Issues (04-09-2015)**

By Cheryl Pellerin

DoD News, Defense Media Activity

WASHINGTON, April 9, 2015 – In Yokota yesterday, Defense Secretary Ash Carter reported progress in talks with Japanese officials on the U.S.-Japan Defense Guidelines for Defense Cooperation and on a proposed regional regulatory and investment treaty called the Trans-Pacific Partnership.

Speaking with reporters who are traveling with Carter on his first official trip as defense secretary to Northeast Asia, the secretary discussed the purpose of his visit to Japan and progress made on longstanding issues.

“The purpose of my visit was to prepare the way for ... the so-called ‘2+2’ meeting, which is the meeting of foreign ministers and Secretary of State John Kerry and also the defense ministers, which occurs later this month,” Carter said.

The 2+2 meeting itself is a preparatory meeting in advance of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's visit here to meet with President Barack Obama.

### **U.S.-Japan Defense Guidelines**

"I had the opportunity to make progress and to discuss two very important things, Carter said, referring to the U.S.-Japan Defense Guidelines for Defense Cooperation and the proposed Trans-Pacific Partnership or TPP.

In October, the United States and Japan jointly released an interim report of ongoing revisions of the U.S.-Japan defense cooperation guidelines, according to the U.S. State Department's website.

The revised guidelines, expected to be finalized by the end of the year, will establish an expanded and more flexible framework for alliance cooperation to ensure the peace and security of Japan under any circumstances, from peacetime to contingencies, the website said, and to promote a stable, peaceful and prosperous Asia-Pacific.

### **Historic Moment**

"This is an historic moment for the U.S.-Japan relationship," Carter said. "Japan is ... changing its security posture in important and truly historic ways and we, accordingly, are changing our relationship to evolve with them."

The secretary said the update of the guidelines is significant because it opens new possibilities for the United States and Japan to work together in Northeast Asia.

"We can work in new domains like space and cyberspace, and we can cooperate in new ways, both regionally and globally," he added.

Carter said the agreement has many dimensions and represents a modernization of the alliance.

### **Lasting Security Relationship**

"To me it shows how lasting a security relationship with the United States is," the secretary added. "We've had it with Japan for many decades and of course it's been instrumental in keeping peace and stability in this part of the world."

Such stability has led to the uplifting of many people economically and politically in the region, Carter said. "And that hasn't happened automatically," he added. "It's happened because of the United States' military role out here."

Carter said the TPP is an important part of the U.S.-Japan relationship and relationships among many countries in the region.

The treaty, he said, "reinforces that the strategic approach to this part of the world is not just a military matter. It's economic and political as well and it's extremely important."

### **Missile Defense Preparations**

In response to a question about North Korea's firing of two short-range surface-to-air missiles off its west coast earlier today, Carter called it a reminder of how tense things are on the Korean Peninsula.

“That’s the reason I’m going to talk to our own commanders and troops, and very importantly to the government of South Korea, which like Japan is a longstanding, very staunch ally out here,” he said.

The show of North Korean aggression, Carter added, “reinforces the missile-defense preparations we’ve long had on the Korean Peninsula and have here.”

More broadly than missiles, Carter said the missile launch is a reminder of how dangerous things are on the Korean Peninsula, and how a highly ready force in support of a strong ally is needed to keep the peace.

“That’s what we’ll be talking about and visiting with the South Korean government about over the next couple of days,” Carter said, “the health of our alliance and the importance of our alliance to peace and security on the peninsula.”

Biographies:

[Ash Carter](#)

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## **[9. Biden on Situation in Iraq \(04-09-2015\)](#)**

*Remarks by Vice President Joe Biden on Iraq  
The National Defense University, Washington, D.C.*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: General Padilla, thank you very much for the introduction. And it is genuinely an honor to be here before such an incredibly distinguished audience. And, Ambassador Nesbitt, thank you. She is a senior vice president. I’m just a Vice President. (Laughter.) These days I don’t like the word senior associated with my name. (Laughter.) Provost Yaeger, and finally I’d like to say to Ambassador Faily, the -- Iraq’s Ambassador to the United States -- it’s an honor to have you here, as well today. Military officers, men and women, and Brian McKeon -- how you doing, Brian? Brian doesn’t want to tell anybody. He’s in the Defense Department now, but he worked with me since he got out of the University of Notre Dame, and that was 412 years ago. (Laughter.) But at any rate, it’s good to see you, Brian.

Next week, Prime Minister Abadi will make his first visit to Washington, D.C. And this provides us with an opportunity to take stock of where things stand right now. And that’s going to be the focus, with your permission, of my remarks today.

Critics have made a number of claims regarding our policy in Iraq and the state of affairs in Iraq today. They say that Iraq’s fight against ISIL -- under the command of the Iraqi government, backed

April 15, 2015

by America and an international coalition — has stalled, has been stalemated. We read that ISIL remains in a commanding position inside of Iraq; that Iran and its proxies are leading the fight against ISIL, and that they are dominating Iraq; and that Iraq itself is likely to be a thing of the past, doomed to split apart because of sectarian violence.

There's just one problem with these critiques: The claims do not reflect the circumstances on the ground. The claims do not respect and represent the circumstances on the ground.

They don't reflect Iraq's progress against ISIL — incomplete but significant and growing; Iraq's resilience and unity in confronting the crisis many predicted would split them apart; or Iraq's resolve to uphold their sovereignty and their independence — even as they look to their neighbors in all directions for assistance.

The jury is still out. That's the truth. It's not over yet. But the momentum is in the right direction. I'd like to speak about that for a few moment's today.

It is true that when ISIL swept into Ninewa last summer and took its capital, Mosul, we saw the collapse of the Iraqi army --we saw it melt away -- the horrific slaughter of innocent civilians; and the enslavement of women; ethnic cleansing of minority groups, including Christians who had lived in Mosul for over a thousand years.

ISIL gained significant amounts of money from the banks that they robbed, significant and sophisticated military equipment left behind by Iraqi forces, and manpower from brutal conscription and foreign fighters, and maybe most dangerously a sense of momentum, even a sense of inevitability which seemed to attract more foreign fighters.

That's why, when Mosul fell, President Obama responded decisively. Within hours, he took steps with all of you, the military, to make sure that all our people in our embassy were secure. Within days, we put Special Forces into the field temporarily to better understand the battle space. We surged intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance. And we set up a Joint Operations Center in both Baghdad and in Erbil — all to prepare to help the Iraqis fight back.

We knew though that the first order of business was to make sure that Iraq had a functioning, inclusive government. For all the years I spent in dealing with Iraqi public officials and the Iraqi government, we knew for certain without a united Iraqi government, there was no possibility -- none -- of defeating ISIL.

When Mosul fell, Iraq had just held their national election. Fourteen million -- roughly 14 million Iraqis had shown up at the polls. But now they had to form a government in the middle of this chaos. And having been deeply, deeply involved, as Brian McKeon will tell you because he was with me, trying to help form the first government and being engaged, we knew this could be extremely difficult sic.

During the term of the last government, distrust had deepened so profoundly between Sunni, Shia, and Kurds — creating serious obstacles to a unified effort against ISIL and a questioned willingness of whether they were willing to literally stay together.

But the irony -- the irony of all ironies -- is that Iraq was actually -- helped form its government because of ISIL. ISIL the very outfit that intended to tear Iraq apart and establish a caliphate, it actually united Iraqis.

The Sunnis realized they preferred a united, federal Iraq under a new government to being at the mercy of ISIL or dependent upon the other Sunni states. The Kurds realized that withdrawing from Iraq was not a viable option, and they did not want a terrorist state on their doorstep. I don't know how many conversations I had with President Barzani relating to this. And the Shia, they realized they didn't want to take on ISIL alone or become a vassal of a neighboring state. Consequently, they each concluded they were better off if they were in this together. And to quote a famous American politician in an early war of ours, we either hang together or hang separately.

The Iraqis themselves recognized how badly the trust had been broken among them. Nothing less than a comprehensive change could deliver a united Iraqi government that could effectively take on ISIL, and many Iraqi leaders believed that the only way to do this, as I believed, was a wholesale change in leadership; that every interest in Iraq had to find different leaders this time to occupy the seats of power.

I remember speaking to -- with Usama Nujayfi, a proud son of Mosul, who had been the speaker of Iraqi's parliament, and him deciding that in order to make way for a new wave of leaders, it was very important -- which he thought was important as well -- that he would have to step down as speaker.

And so there was a need, from the speaker to the Prime Minister to the president, to find new leaders. And the result was -- another widely respected Sunni, Salim Jabouri, became the new parliamentary speaker, and Iraq chose Fuad Masum, a well-respected Kurdish senior statesman, to be the new president. And he stuck to his convictions under enormous pressure -- because you know how the process works -- he, the president, is the one that then turns to one of the factions to form a government.

There was an enormous amount of pressure, but he stuck to his guns. And he named Haider al-Abadi, the Prime Minister, a Shia leader who had built up majority support within the Shia National Alliance, which won a majority of the votes. There was a consensus among these leaders that Iraq would need a much greater measure of functioning federalism, which is called for in the constitution. They all agreed to that. That common understanding backed by genuine acts of statesmanship has led to significant progress. And the chance of a long-term unity government here.

In just eight months, Prime Minister Abadi and other Iraqi leaders have formed an inclusive government, in record time, arrived at a national budget with equitable revenue sharing, forged an oil deal between Baghdad and Erbil. I don't know how many times Brian and I sat there over the 23 visits into Iraq being told there's an oil deal just over the horizon. Never occurred. But in the face of this crisis, they pulled that together.

They built a consensus and began to mobilize thousands of Sunni fighters to fight against ISIL. And just this past week, Prime Minister Abadi visited Erbil, met with President Barzani to discuss cooperation with the Peshmerga forces in a plan, coordinated by General Austin in part, to help liberate Mosul. Yesterday, he was in Anbar Province announcing the delivery of over 1,000 weapons for Sunni tribes in preparation for the liberation of Anbar, in part, as part of his commitment that he made to Sunni leaders in the formation of the government.

More efforts to organize, arm, and integrate the Sunnis willing to fight ISIL are going to be needed in the months ahead to liberate Anbar and Mosul. And the Prime Minister has also tried to improve relations with his Arab neighbors and Turkey. He's visited Amman, Cairo, Abu Dhabi, Kuwait, Ankara. And for the first time since 1990, Saudi Arabia has agreed to open an embassy in Baghdad at the invitation of a Shia Iraqi president.

These are only initial, but these are very -- I promise you having done this for the last 12 years -- very promising, promising steps. Obviously a great deal of work remains, including moving forward on the national guard legislation, legislation designed to advance national reconciliation including de-Ba'athification, continuing to mobilize and integrate and arm and pay Sunni forces, further integrate the Pesh into the Iraqi national security force, bringing volunteer forces under the command and control of elected Iraqi governments, empowering local governance and planning for reconstruction in the liberated areas consistent with their notion of federalism.

All of which, all of which we will be discussing with Prime Minister Abadi -- not that we haven't discussed it a lot. He and I have probably spent more time on the phone than we have -- I have with my wife. (Laughter.)

The entire region -- the entire world -- but the entire region-- is watching this closely, and Iraqi leaders can't afford to lose that sense of political urgency that brought them to this point.

And much hinges on the Prime Minister, but not the Prime Minister alone. Ultimately, this is about all of Iraqi leaders pulling together and they must continue to compromise. And it is hard. It is hard. Thousands of bodies have been strewn and lost in the interim. But they're doing it. We knew that in addition to forming a united Iraqi government, the next challenge would be to help them put back together an ability to be able to position itself and succeed on the battlefield.

That started with helping Iraqis reorganize and reconstitute the security forces. For years, in the face of terrorism and insurgency, many Iraqis have fought bravely and given their lives. Thousands have given their lives in the fight against ISIL. That would challenge any army.

But as we saw last summer, some units, including those in Mosul, had been hollowed out with corruption, questionable leadership appointments, a lack of discipline, sectarian in-fighting. And the collapse helped make the fall of Mosul possible.

So we began to help Iraqi leaders rebuild their forces with hires based on competence, not on ethnicity. Abadi appointed a number of former military officers -- or, excuse me, relieved a number of former military officers, and appointed new officers. He appointed a Sunni from Mosul as Defense Minister. He replaced 36 commanders in November, and he continues to reform Iraq's military leadership.

We sent our Special Forces to assess which Iraqi units could actually be salvaged. And under the leadership of General Austin, we began working with the Iraqi military to reconstitute their divisions. We are now training and have continued to train Iraqi forces at four different sites across the country. Six thousand have already graduated; thousands more are in the pipeline.

And we're supplying weapons and critical equipment. Since the fall of 2014, the United States has delivered over 100 million rounds of ammunition; 62,000 small arms systems; 1,700 Hellfire missiles. Two hundred fifty mine-resistant ambush protected vehicles -- MRAPs -- were delivered in December that are now protecting Iraqi forces and Pesh forces from mines and homemade bombs. And 50 additional MRAPs with mine rollers will begin transfer to Iraq this week.

At Al Asad Air Force Base that many of you served in and were part of securing, we're training, advising, and assisting Iraqi army forces who, in turn, are training and mobilizing Sunni fighters; Iraqi National Security Forces training Sunni tribesmen.

We also brought Iraqi pilots to the United States, who are in advanced stages of flight training in Arizona, to enhance their capacity to defend their country in the air.

And we're not doing it alone. We led and mobilized a massive international coalition of over 60 partners -- NATO allies, Arab nations, and many others -- to help take on ISIL. It's not just a military coalition. It's a global effort to weaken ISIS across the board, from undercutting its messaging to tracking its foreign fighters.

And several nations are providing significant support in Iraq. Eight coalition partners have launched over 500 airstrikes in Iraq. The Spaniards, Australians, Danes, and others have provided trainers and advisors inside Iraq. The French, the Dutch, the U.K., Canada, Germany, Italy and others are working with us to train and resupply the Kurdish Peshmerga who have reclaimed a significant portion of the territory initially gained by ISIL. And several countries, including Japan and Saudi Arabia have also made significant non-military contributions in areas such as development assistance and humanitarian aid.

A majority within each of the Iraqi constituencies and communities supports this U.S. effort and these coalition efforts. Leaders from across the Iraqi political spectrum have publicly asked for our help and our continued help.

And we're providing that help in a smarter way -- small numbers of advisors backed by a large coalition. And this large coalition is backed up by the most capable air force in the world. We are pounding ISIL from the sky, nearly 1,300 U.S. airstrikes alone. Thus far, thankfully, we have not lost -- knock on wood -- a single solitary U.S. serviceman to enemy fire, not one. But this is a dangerous, dangerous, dangerous place.

With our assistance, Iraqis have made significant progress on the battlefield. Eight months ago, ISIL was on the offensive everywhere in Iraq. No force in Iraq or Syria had proven capable to defeating ISIL head on, but today in Iraq, ISIL has lost large areas it used to dominate, from Babil to Diyala, to Ninewa, to Salahadin -- excuse me -- Kirkuk Province. ISIL has been defeated at Mosul Dam, Mount Sinjar, and now Tikrit.

ISIL's momentum in Iraq has halted, and in many places, has been flat-out reversed. Thousands of ISIL fighters have been removed from the battlefield. Their ability to mass and maneuver has been greatly degraded. Leaders have been eliminated. Supply lines have been severed. Weapons, check points, fighting positions, IED factories, safe houses have been destroyed. And reports of demoralization within ISIL ranks are rife. And some ISIL fighters refusing to fight; foreign fighters being killed by ISIL because they want to return home.

There's still a long fight ahead. I don't want to paint an overly rosy picture here. But the -- ISIL's aura of invincibility has been pierced, and that's important.

Let me give you once recent example, where Iraqi's military capability was tested, as well as, quite frankly, its political leadership was tested.

Three weeks ago -- in every newspaper in the West and here in the United States and on the news -- the speculation was that the United States, the coalition, and Iraqi's elected leaders had been sidelined in the fight against ISIL, particularly in Tikrit. Military forces backed primarily by Iran were running the show. And you saw pictures, and they made it clear, Soleimani made it clear that everybody would see he was there; the implication being, we now own Iraq.

Then something changed. The attack stalled. And minister -- and Prime Minister Abadi stepped up. He courageously stepped in, making it absolutely clear that the Iraqi government, him, as Commander-in-Chief, was in charge of this operation. When I spoke with him, he made it clear to me that he wanted the United States and the coalition to engage all over Iraq, was his phrase. And explicitly, he wanted us engaged and requested support in Tikrit. His call was joined by that of Sunni leaders as well as the most senior religious leader in the country, Grand Ayatollah Sistani who declared that the Iraqi government had to be in the lead; that the units had to be directly under the command -- all units -- under the command of the Iraqi government; and that Sunnis had to be included in the liberation of their own communities.

And we made clear-- General Austin -- that we were prepared to help in the battle with volunteers both Shia and Sunni fighting alongside Iraqi forces, but only if all elements in the fight operated strictly under the chain of command of the Iraqi military. Because that's the only way we could ensure the safety of those on the ground and minimize the risk of friendly fire.

Today, Iraq's national flag -- not ISIL's -- hangs over the city of Tikrit.

But success brings new challenges: Holding liberated areas, policing them with forces that are trusted by the community in the community that they're returning home to; transiting governing authority back to local officials, as envisioned in their federal system; restoring vital public services.

And in the face of reports relating to Tikrit that there was mass looting and burning of homes, the Prime Minister stepped up, took swift action. He condemned the abuses, ordering the militia out of the city, ensuring regular forces are patrolling those seats, and frankly acknowledged the degree of loss that had occurred, hiding nothing.

Once inside Tikrit, Iraqi soldiers uncovered execution grounds where ISIL murdered as many as 1,700 young men last summer and poured them into mass graves. And as I speak, mass graves are still being found, a stark reminder of the brutality of ISIL and the need for its defeat.

While this battle continues inside Iraq, we're also taking the fight to ISIL in Syria. The international coalition has now launched over 1,300 airstrikes against ISIL and other terrorists inside of Syria -- bombed refineries that have been taken over by ISIL, the oil both refined and crude being used to fund their operations, eliminating that as a source of revenue. We've embarked on a train and equip program under the Defense Department to take on ISIL and protect Syrian communities. In Kobane, killing thousands of its fighters and providing ISIL -- and proving ISIL can be beaten inside of Syria, as well.

However, the regional challenge for Iraq extends beyond Syria. For years now, Iraq has risked being pulled apart by a wide range of sectarian competition internally and externally. But the reality is that Iraqis do not want to be drawn into regional conflicts. They don't want to be owned by anybody. Everybody forgets there was a war not but a decade before where over 100,000 were killed, a war with Iran, their neighbor. They don't want to be puppets dangling on a string of anyone's puppeteering in the region.

Don't underestimate the power of Iraqi national pride, independence, and sovereignty. It's only natural that Iraq will have relations with all of its neighbors, including Iran. The history is too long. The border is too long. And it's a difficult neighborhood. But Iraq must be free to make its own sovereign choices under the authority of elected representatives of an Iraqi government.

We want what Iraqis want: a united, federal, and democratic Iraq that is defined by its own constitution where power is shared among all Iraqi communities, where a sovereign government

exercises command and control over the forces in the field. And that's overwhelmingly what the Iraqis want.

So I go back to the focus on, Mr. Ambassador, on the Iraqi government. When the three major constituencies -- Sunni, Shia and Kurd -- are united in wanting a whole and prosperous Iraq, the likelihood of being pulled into the orbit of any single nation in the region is diminished exponentially because this would represent the only -- the only government in the region that actually is not based on sectarian dominance.

This is going to be a long haul. The ultimate success or failure is in the hands of the Iraqis. But as they stand up and stand together, this administration, this country, is committed to stand with them.

I need not tell this audience since 2003 more than 1.5 million American women and men, including my son, have spent significant amounts of time on Iraqi soil. Every single morning since I have been Vice President, before as Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, we contact the Defense Department, and I ask the same question. Give me the exact number of Americans who've given their lives on Iraqi soil and Afghan soil. Give me the exact number, not a generalization, exact number of those who have been wounded and are lost in Afghanistan. Because no audience knows more than this -- every one of those lives, every one of those brave women and men represents a community. Represents a family and a larger family.

Only 1 percent of all Americans have waged these fights for us, but 99 percent of all America owes them support and recognition; 4,481 Americans have given their lives on Iraqi soil, including many who served alongside the people in this room. I'll bet every one of you in uniform know somebody who was lost or wounded.

And although our mission is significantly different today -- you may ask why am I focusing on this -- although our mission is significantly different today than it was during that period, there are still men and women in uniform in Iraq making sacrifices as I speak from protecting our embassy, to training and equipping Iraqis, to flying sorties.

And all of you who wear the uniform know that one of the loneliest feelings for your family -- particularly if they don't live on a base -- is while every other kid in school, while every other family at church, while every other family in the neighborhood thinks everything is fine, Dad or Mom is not home for that birthday. They're missing that graduation. They're not there for Christmas or to make a Thanksgiving toast.

We have an obligation. We have an obligation. And just because we no longer have 160,000 troops there, it's an obligation that's intense and as real as it was when we had 160,000 troops there. They warrant our support. Their families warrant our deep gratitude.

And so, folks, as a country, our one shared obligation is to give them what they need on the battlefield and care for them when they come home.

Their blood and toil helped give Iraq another chance. Our mission now is to help the Iraqis themselves make the most of this.

Thank you all for listening, but most of all, thank you for your service.

May God bless the United States of America and may God protect our troops. Thank you.  
(Applause.)

**10. U.S. Envoy at 2015 Session of U.N. Disarmament Commission (04-08-2015)**

*John A. Bravaco, U.S. Representative to the UN Disarmament Commission, New York, N.Y.  
April 7, 2015*

***Remarks at the 2015 Session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission***

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

On behalf of the United States Delegation, let me congratulate Senegal on its election to the Chairmanship of the 2015 session of the UN Disarmament Commission. Mr. Ambassador, thank you so very much for all you have done thus far to advance our work. In the coming days, you may count on the full support of the United States as you fulfill your important responsibilities.

We also congratulate the other members of the Commission's Bureau for their elections. In addition, we thank the 2014 UNDC Chairman, Ambassador Drobnjak of Croatia, for his intrepid efforts, both last year and this year, to help set this Commission on a productive course.

Also, please allow me to welcome the Secretary-General's decision to appoint Ambassador Kim Won-soo as the Acting High Representative for Disarmament, and express our gratitude for the able contributions of High Representative Angela Kane.

Mr. Chairman, as you know, the Disarmament Commission is meeting on the eve of the 2015 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference.

The NPT remains critical to our common security. Protecting its authority, while strengthening its implementation in all its aspects, are goals that all States Parties to the Treaty share, and that should guide our respective approaches to the upcoming RevCon.

The NPT is an essential foundation for efforts to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, to achieve the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons, and to promote the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. These three mutually reinforcing "pillars" benefit all NPT Parties. All Parties should support and strengthen them.

At the RevCon, we look forward to working with all States Parties to advance realistic, achievable objectives. We believe there are many areas where we could reach consensus on concrete measures to strengthen the NPT. We hope that Parties will not allow divisive agendas to stand in the way of reaching the broadest possible consensus.

The Action Plan approved by consensus in 2010 was an unprecedented, breakthrough achievement. The RevCon provides an opportunity to reaffirm the Action Plan, take stock of its implementation, and update it where possible.

At the RevCon, the United States will pursue a balanced agenda across all three pillars. We will seek to ensure that IAEA safeguards remain effective and robust and to uphold the Treaty's integrity by addressing noncompliance.

We will detail our strong record on nuclear disarmament, our commitment to pursue further steps toward that goal, and our leading role in promoting peaceful nuclear energy.

Mr. Chairman, in the realm of disarmament, a central focus of this Commission, allow me to take a few moments to highlight some very positive recent developments that we believe will further the common global effort to achieve a world without nuclear weapons.

The sixth P5 Conference was held in London from February 4-5, 2015. The United States thanks the United Kingdom for hosting this very successful event.

As the final Conference statement noted: “In reaffirming their commitment towards achieving a world without nuclear weapons in accordance with the goals of the NPT, the P5 reflected on the contribution that the P5 Process has made in developing the mutual confidence and transparency among the P5 that is essential to make progress towards multilateral nuclear disarmament.”

The dialogue among the P5, at high political levels as well as experts, continues to increase transparency and confidence-building. The P5 Process illustrates our collective commitment to address challenges to the NPT and advance shared NPT objectives. This is an important collaborative process, creating opportunities for increased technical and cooperative engagement.

Future P5 multilateral negotiations will build on the interaction, cooperation and trust-building that is happening now.

In Prague in December 2014, Under Secretary of State Rose Gottemoeller announced a new initiative by the United States to form an International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification. The Partnership will provide a means to pursue technical work relating to nuclear disarmament goals.

The United States was pleased to host the kick-off Plenary Meeting of the Partnership from March 19 to 20, in Washington, DC. Officials from 26 states participated, including both nuclear-weapon State and non-nuclear-weapon State NPT Parties.

The United States launched the initiative in concert with the Nuclear Threat Initiative, NTI. We believe that NTI’s rich experience, including its recent project on “Innovating Verification,” will be a valuable contribution to this effort.

The principal goals of the Partnership are to build international capacity among states with and without nuclear weapons, improve and broaden the understanding of the challenges inherent in nuclear disarmament verification and monitoring; and provide international leadership by facilitating technical progress toward meeting these challenges. The work of the Partnership will be technical in nature and led by technical experts.

This exciting and ambitious new endeavor will address these goals through dialogue among officials and experts from the participating countries, as well as independent technical experts. This will be a long-term process. We made good progress in our first meeting; we had a good, open discussion on potential areas of interest and collaboration. We believe such cooperation will promote increased international understanding of, and confidence in, the monitoring and verification of future nuclear arms control and disarmament agreements. All have an interest in the success of these efforts.

We look forward to continuing Partnership efforts, and thank Norway for agreeing to host the next plenary meeting in Oslo this fall

Mr.Chairman, the negotiation of a Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty or FMCT is the next logical step on the multilateral nuclear disarmament agenda. It would establish a cap on fissile material available for use in nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices. The United States has not produced highly enriched uranium for use in nuclear weapons since 1964, and has not produced plutonium for use in nuclear weapons since 1989.

We are committed to maintaining this moratorium on fissile material production, and encourage other states to maintain or adopt such moratoria. The United States continues to seek the immediate commencement of negotiations on an FMCT, and the Conference on Disarmament, CD, remains our preferred venue.

The recent FMCT UN Group of Governmental Experts, GGE, discussions were the most substantive in years. It is our hope that the GGE final report will motivate and revitalize the dialogue on FMCT within the CD, helping to remove the blockage of negotiations there. Our expert worked to ensure that the GGE final report not only reflects the full range of issues discussed, but also the full range of expert views on those issues, as envisioned in the Shannon Report.

The Shannon Report captures the one element on which all agree – the need to ban the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. All else should be the subject of consensus negotiations in the CD, and it's high-time for the CD to get on with it, Mr. Chairman.

Regarding the UNDC's agenda, we have noted in this Commission since April 2014 that outer space Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures, or TCBMs, are an ideal topic for in-depth consideration as part of the Commission's agenda for the 2015-2017 issue cycle. Many other Member States assembled here today have expressed similar support for including such an item on the UNDC's agenda.

Mr. Chairman, the United States is committed to the stable, sustainable, and peaceful use and protection of outer space to support the vital interests of all nations.

In this regard, the United States was pleased to co-sponsor with Russia and China UN General Assembly Resolutions 68/50 and 69/38. Both resolutions refer the recommendations contained in the report of the consensus 2013 Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer Space Activities to the UNDC for consideration.

Both resolutions were adopted by the General Assembly without a vote. Resolution 69/38 also calls for a joint ad hoc meeting of the UNGA's First and Fourth Committees to address possible challenges to space security and sustainability.

In addition to the current agenda items on "Recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons," and "Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons," the United States believes the Commission should establish a third agenda item on "Recommendations for the implementation of Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer Space activities," in furtherance of previous UNGA Resolutions, including 69/77.

A UNDC working group on outer space TCBMs should take into account discussions on this topic in the CD, and the UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, COPUOS, which also received the GGE report for consideration. These discussions include consideration by the COPUOS of relevant aspects of A/68/189 during its 58th session this June in Vienna.

When Member States agree to add the topic of outer space TCBMs to the Commission's agenda, this development could be noted at the joint ad hoc meeting of the First and Fourth Committees scheduled for this October here in New York.

*April 15, 2015*

Mr. Chairman, as we work to finalize full agreement on the Commission's agenda for the 2015-2017 issue cycle, please allow me to express my confidence in your ability to foster continuing consultations on developing a consensus agenda emblematic of Member States' priorities, in particular with regard to outer space TCBMs.

The United States looks forward to addressing the issues before the Commission in the coming years, wishes the Chairs of the respective Working Groups best wishes, and will do its part to facilitate a positive outcome.

Thank you for your attention.

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