

# U.S. Department of State

## Diplomacy in Action

### Background Briefing on the Effort to Defeat ISIS

Special Briefing

Senior State Department Official

Via Teleconference

Washington, DC

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**MODERATOR:** Thank you very much, and thanks to all the participants who joined us this afternoon. This is a on-background conference call with [Senior State Department Official]. Just a reminder of our ground rules: This is a background call, so please attribute our speaker as a senior State Department official, and this call will be embargoed until the conclusion of the call.

And with that, I'll turn it over to [Senior State Department Official].

**SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL:** Great. Thanks, [Moderator]. So thanks for joining me. I just wanted to kind of go through various aspects of this comprehensive campaign to defeat ISIS and just give some updates on some critical issues. And as you know, at the March 22nd ministerial that gathered all 68 members of our global coalition, Secretary Tillerson laid out the priorities for the campaign to defeat ISIS. We will pursue a whole-of-government approach that uses all tools of our national power.

And Secretary of Defense Mattis, in his review of the campaign, emphasized a need for improving integration of our military and civilian instruments of power, and we're now organizing ourselves to execute and accelerate a campaign along those lines. That will likely include task forces at the Department of Defense and here at the State Department to ensure that we are synchronizing our military and civilian efforts on a regular basis and keeping maximum pressure on this enemy globally in its territorial strongholds, in cyberspace, and anywhere ISIS tries to move people, money, or resources. Our aim is to move faster, more efficiently, and more effectively to build on the momentum that we now have against this enemy and ensure its destruction.

I'll take this opportunity to provide you with the latest update on where our campaign stands, with a particular focus on stabilization efforts, which the Secretary highlighted during his remarks at the ministerial.

So allow me to start briefly with the military situation and then stabilization, as the two are closely intertwined, and finally, an update on our efforts against ISIS financing, messaging, and foreign fighters.

I'll defer to my DOD colleagues for the details on the military campaign and point you to the extensive briefings that have been provided recently by Lt. Gen. Steve Townsend, who's doing a remarkable job, together with General Votel, overseeing the military effort against ISIS in Iraq in Syria.

Just some highlights: Since the Mosul offense has started late last year, our Iraqi partners have retaken more than 4,000 square kilometers from ISIS. As we speak, they are moving block by block in west Mosul and surrounding the ISIS stronghold in the dense Old City. It's a matter of time before ISIS is defeated in Mosul. Those ISIS terrorists choosing to fight there will die there. At the same time, we cannot overstate the difficulties of this very hard-fought urban campaign.

In Syria, the Syrian Democratic Forces – a coalition of Arabs, Kurds, Christians, Syrians, Turkmen, and others – have liberated around 7,400 square kilometers of ISIS-held territory since they began operations to isolate Raqqa. These forces are now bearing down on Raqqa from three sides, including from the west and south, after a complex operation to move on Tabqa, including the city, the town, the airport, and an important dam.

Nothing over the coming weeks when it comes to Mosul and Raqqa will be quick or easy. These are ISIS's capitals; they will not give them up easily. In Mosul, we've seen hundreds of suicide bombers and the use of the population as human shields. Even today, ISIS is reportedly killing civilians who attempt to leave the city and rounding up others to use as shields against airstrikes. Yet Iraqi forces have performed heroically with remarkable discipline and professionalism, and we're proud to support them. To date, our coalition has trained 93,000 members of the ISF, and that training will continue.

I would add that major military operations like this require very close cooperation and coordination between the State Department and the Department of Defense. The Mosul operation required months of political groundwork between the Iraqi Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government, which led to unprecedented cooperation between Iraqi Security Forces and the Kurdish Peshmerga.

Similarly, as we approach Raqqa, our diplomats, from Secretary Tillerson on down, are focused on building the foundation for an approach that can defeat ISIS and that will be sustainable and lasting. This requires highest-level diplomatic work in Ankara, as you saw last week, and also on the ground in Syria. We're working to build a diverse coalition that is rooted in the local population to take and hold ISIS's capital city in Raqqa.

Secretary Tillerson has made clear that defeating ISIS is our number-one priority, and that is how we are now organizing ourselves to reflect such prioritization.

After the battles, the diplomacy needs to kick into higher gear with an emphasis on stabilization. The Secretary, in his address before the coalition two weeks ago, set forth the principles of stabilization and why this is our focus as opposed to more idealistic nation-building exercises, which have proven not to work in the past. Let me go into a bit more detail on what this means and the phasing concepts behind stabilization in the wake of military operations.

In Iraq, we are working through two coalition-funded, UN-coordinated mechanisms. One is the Funding Facility for Immediate Stabilization, FFIS, and the second is the Funding Facility for Enhanced Stabilization, FFES. FFIS projects, immediate stabilization – these typically cover the first six months after a populated area is cleared. These are low-cost, high-impact projects identified by local leaders, and focus on restoration of essential services, livelihood support, demining, and local security. The aim is to set conditions for people to return to their homes. This locally-focused, high-impact approach has been effective to date, with more than 1.6 million Iraqis now back in their homes in areas that had been controlled by ISIS – a nearly unprecedented mark for returning the displaced after conflict of this nature.

This includes nearly the entire population of Tikrit, over 400,000 people in Ramadi, more than 300,000 people in Fallujah and surrounding areas. These had all been ISIS strongholds, now back in the hands of the local population.

In east Mosul, we're only weeks now after that battle there concluded in what remains a dynamic environment, and but already, hundreds of FFIS projects are underway, 325 schools are opened, and 250,000 boys and girls are back in school. These are updated figures as of yesterday.

Eighty thousand citizens have returned to their homes in east Mosul and surrounding areas. We have a lot left to do in Mosul, but the pre-planning and focus on the immediate stabilization is having good effect. And to date, as the Secretary mentioned in his remarks two weeks ago, of the 50,000 square kilometers that have been cleared of ISIS terrorists and liberating over 2.5 million people, ISIS has not retaken any of that territory.

The next phase after immediate stabilization is FFES, enhanced stabilization. This phase is focused on consolidating immediate stabilization gains by generating jobs, stabilizing connections between liberated areas. For example, this includes reopening public institutions such as the public university in Tikrit or in Ramadi; reopening hospitals; repairing damaged sectors of transport, electricity, sanitation, and agricultural corridors. These projects have provided incentives for people to stay in liberated areas and demonstrate there's a better future after ISIS.

They also set the foundation for longer-term reconstruction. Reconstruction, the third phase, requires multi-year and sometimes multi-decade investments, often in the hundreds of billions of dollars. This cannot be resourced or centrally designed by the United States or the global coalition; that is not our mission. It requires the Government of Iraq to work with the World Bank, IMF, and other international financial institutions to reform its own systems and generate the necessary investments.

The United States plays an important role through technical advice in this process, and our ambassadors in Iraq, Stu Jones and now Doug Silliman, have done heroic work in helping Iraq secure a \$3 billion development policy loan from the World Bank and a stand-by arrangement from the IMF, both of which are critical to Iraq's long-term reconstruction needs.

This approach is working as well. Major long-term infrastructure projects such as the highway system that connects Amman, Jordan with Baghdad, and then links Baghdad to Basra in Saudi Arabia, are being organized through the private sector with Iraqis determining their own priorities and approaches. The very successful visit of Prime Minister Abadi to Washington two weeks ago and his meeting with President Trump confirmed his own government's ambitious economic reform agenda, which we fully support.

The bottom line: This phasing from military operations to immediate stabilization, then enhanced stabilization, and finally national-level ownership of reconstruction, is critical to ensuring gains against ISIS are sustainable and lasting. It has been our focus and will remain so, including as we approach the campaign in Raqqa over the coming weeks.

Syria is obviously more complex. We do not have a government to work with, and the international community will not bail out the Assad regime in the absence of a critical political – credible political process anchored in UN Security Council Resolution 2254. Our immediate focus in Syria remain on defeating ISIS militarily, stabilization in the post-military phase, ensuring local ownership, and returning people to their homes. The Raqqa campaign will be based on these fundamental principles.

Let me briefly address efforts in counter-finance, counter-foreign fighters, and counter-messaging. On counter-finance, we're continuing to target ISIS finances, nearly all of which we assess have been generated from the territorial holdings in Iraq and Syria. Military strikes have destroyed more than 2,600 ISIS energy-related targets, impeding its ability to produce, use, and profit from oil. This is an interagency effort dependent on intelligence and cooperation between our military and civilian departments and agencies.

Coalition airstrikes have also targeted more than 25 ISIS bulk cash storage sites, destroying tens of millions, possibly hundreds of millions, of dollars. Its access to the international financial system and outside funding has also been cut. ISIS is still trying to move money out of Syria to support its affiliates around the world, but we are working diplomatically with partners to close up those networks, with some success over the recent weeks alone.

On counter-messaging, our partners are working 24/7 to combat ISIS's narrative, and they are succeeding. Whereas ISIS once projected an image of invincibility and an inherently expanding movement, one that history called on people to gather in a phony caliphate, they are now extolling potential recruits to simply kill people.

Where ISIS tries to get its messages out, our partners are countering it, and the private sector is rigorously policing ISIS-related content. Twitter, to date, has suspended more than 635,000 ISIS-related or affiliated accounts since 2015, and that's an updated figure. Facebook and YouTube are similarly removing ISIS-related content from their platforms that violates their terms of service, and Google is putting in place new and innovative ideas to redirect those who are searching for ISIS content to other content,

becoming increasingly difficult for ISIS to spread its poisonous ideology among vulnerable audiences. Here at the State Department we are actively engaged in these efforts with coalition partners around the world and with the private sector through our Global Engagement Center.

In terms of foreign fighters which once flowed freely across borders, the flow continues to diminish and ISIS has stopped asking people to come to Syria and Iraq. For those who have already reached Syria, all the borders are now shut. And while we cannot guarantee that none will trickle out, it's our objective to help ensure that those who are still in Baghdadi's rapidly shrinking caliphate will die there.

Stopping the flow of foreign fighters across borders requires a truly global approach, and we're working to build a network to defeat what had been a robust ISIS network connecting its core in Syria and Iraq to its global affiliates. Milestones in this area include securing of the Syria-Turkey border, the EU's adoption of passenger name recognition protocols, 31 non-EU members now implementing enhanced traveler screening measures, and countries enacting measures in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 2178 to strengthen their ability to counter foreign fighters and prosecute related crimes.

Importantly, INTERPOL, the newest member of the coalition, has been key to this effort. In the past four years, there has been a thousand-fold increase in the amount of information on foreign fighters shared with INTERPOL, which currently now holds details of more than 14,000 individuals provided by more than 60 countries, and that number continues to grow. So our accelerated campaign here over the next – over the coming weeks will strengthen these global networks and shut down the ability of ISIS-affiliated individuals to move across borders.

So to sum up, our approach against this enemy is designed to be comprehensive to squeeze ISIS on the ground where it holds territory and in cyberspace and across its financial, foreign fighter, and propaganda networks. We do not seek to simply degrade this enemy. We seek to destroy it. And our review process over the past couple months has focused on how we can move faster, more efficiently, more effectively, and more fully integrated within our own government and across the globe with our 68 coalition partners.

Let me say a brief word up front about the horrific news out of Syria regarding an apparent chemical weapons attack. This is a reprehensible attack against innocent people, including women and children. Russia and Iran are the self-proclaimed guarantors for the Syrian regime to adhere to a ceasefire negotiated in Astana. Russia has said it had nothing to do with the airstrikes in Syria today, but that's not the issue. The issue is an apparent inability or unwillingness to hold the regime to its own commitments and to account. The OPCW is gathering and analyzing information about this incident, and that is a process we will support. We will have more to say about this incident later in the day. And as it is continuing to develop and we're continuing to gather information, I will not have more to say about it in the course of this briefing.

With that, I will take your questions.

**OPERATOR:** Ladies and gentlemen, if you do wish to ask a question, please press \* and then 1 on your touchtone phone. You'll hear a tone indicating you've been placed in queue, and you can remove yourself from the queue any time by pressing the # key. If you're using a speakerphone, please pick up the handset before pressing numbers.

The first question will come from Josh Lederman with AP. Please, go ahead.

**QUESTION:** Hey, guys. Thank you for holding the call. Just as a quick housekeeping thing, I'd like to request that these briefings be moved on the record, since we don't have any opportunities at all these days to question any of these officials on the record. And [Senior State Department Official], I understand you'll have more information about this purported chemical weapons attack, but I'm wondering if you could just talk about the broader policy and how you square the administration's outrage about

this attack that the White House has already expressed with the fact that the U.S. is no longer ruling out the possibility that we could actually cooperate with Assad in fighting ISIS. How actively is that being considered? And do incidents like the one that we saw today affect those considerations?

**SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL:** Yeah. In terms of cooperating with Assad fighting ISIS, I think that's highly unlikely. That's not something that we're focused on. I would just point out, as I mentioned, every coalition operation against ISIS – that means the operations we do against ISIS – every single town, village, city, speck of earth has held because we go about these things extremely carefully. We've done about 20,000 airstrikes now. It's the most precise air campaign in history. We're very careful about civilian life. Obviously, this is extremely difficult in Mosul, where the enemy's using civilians as human shields, but that stands in marked contrast to the manner in which the Assad regime and its backers, particularly Iran and Russia, go try to fight these wars. Their primary focus has been on the moderate opposition, and even as they go after ISIS, their tactics are fundamentally different than ours. So absent that changing, the preface – premise of your question about apparent potential cooperation with the Assad regime – that is not something that is in the cards.

**OPERATOR:** And our next question will come from the line of Lesley Wroughton with Reuters. Please, go ahead.

**QUESTION:** Yes. Hi. [Senior State Department Official], I wonder if you can fill us in on the discussions with Turkey at the – last week with the Secretary. What has – what came out of those discussions as far as the YPG? Do you feel that they managed to convince Turkey that the U.S. support for YPG is important?

Also, on the chemical attack, how does this square with what the Secretary and as well as Ambassador Haley said also last week, that Assad – well, this is actually the ambassador to the UN, to be absolutely correct – saying that Assad – that in Syria – the priority in Syria is on fighting ISIS and not on getting Assad out? But don't you think after the attack today, which everybody's blaming on Assad, that that policy doesn't square anymore?

**SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL:** So on the discussions in Turkey, I'll let the Secretary's statements speak for themselves. He's stated we had a very good, a very detailed, very candid, and very frank discussion with our Turkish counterparts about the situation in Syria and about the options that we confront in terms of how to get ISIS out of Raqqa. We have to get ISIS out of Raqqa. It is their headquarters; it's their administrative hub; it's where they continue to plan and plot attacks against us and our partners, including Turkey. So it was a very detailed, factual account. And I just – I don't want to get ahead of that. But it was a very good, timely, and rich discussion about the very hard questions that we have to confront and the facts that we face as we find them.

I'm also not going to develop further the statements on the Assad regime. I think, again, the reprehensibility – the reprehensible nature of this regime, the fact that it commits war crimes, the fact that Bashar al-Assad's father has committed war crimes, killed 10,000 or more people in 1982 in Hama – this is something that goes on a long time. It's reprehensible. It is completely unacceptable. And as I said in my opening, Russia and Iran are self-proclaimed guarantors of – for the behavior of this regime. That's something that came out of the Astana process. And so as we develop facts of what transpired today, I think they will have a lot to answer for.

**OPERATOR:** And our next question will come from the line of Michael Gordon with *The New York Times*.

**QUESTION:** [Senior State Department Official], two quick questions. You talked a bit about stabilization. What is going to be the political status of Raqqa after it's liberated? Is it going to be independent of the Assad government? Are you going to stand up local authorities there who will not report to the Assad authorities? Will it be somehow under the political control of the Assad regime? What's your vision, since you emphasize the need to have a stabilization plan?

And lastly, on Mosul, it's nearly three – it'll – June it'll be three years since ISIS took Mosul. So there's been a lot of time to think about what to do there. How much is it going to cost to reconstruct Mosul? Who's going to pay for it? How much is the U.S. going to contribute monetarily toward that end? And what's the U.S. role going to be?

**SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL:** Michael, thank you. I think on Raqqa, as I mentioned, the principle is local people being in charge of their areas, because that is what we have found to be a process for making sure that ISIS cannot return. I think if you look at Syria from Kobani to al-Hawl to Shaddadi to Manbij, to these towns north of Raqqa like Ayn Issa, now Tabqa, the principle is that local people from local areas will control those territories. And we can help with basic stabilization and humanitarian support.

The question for how those areas then knit into Syria – and we support the territorial integrity of Syria; we support the political process as outlined in UN Security Council Resolution 2254 – those are issues that have to be decided by the Syrians through those political processes. But again, it's very difficult, also, to have a political process in which ISIS is controlling significant portions of Syria and a million people. So we have to get ISIS out of there, then establish the conditions for a realistic and credible political process under the umbrella of UN Security Council Resolution 2254.

On Mosul, as I think I mentioned, we have stabilization projects now already underway. That's through FFIS. The immediate stabilization in areas that have been cleared, we're seeing people return to their homes. Some areas people are not returning to their homes, given that – the fact that – whether they're fearful or services are not there yet, but that's something we're continuing to work on. Whenever I travel to Iraq, I met with the governor of Nineveh province about the very important role that local leaders have to play. And so far, they're stepping into those roles with cooperation of the central government.

The longer-term reconstruction – there's a second phase here, which you skipped over. That's the enhanced stabilization. That's the hospitals; that's the universities. Those are things that we will also help with as a coalition. And the longer-term reconstruction ultimately has to be financed by the Government of Iraq with the support of international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF. And what's good about that is that IMF standby arrangements come with a series of benchmarks for very important reforms that the Iraqi Government has to take in order to finance its own long-term reconstruction. That's something that the Government of Iraq under Prime Minister Abadi is very committed to, and we had constructive and fruitful discussions with them about that when they were here in Washington two weeks ago.

**OPERATOR:** And our next question will come from Felicia Schwartz with *Wall Street Journal*. Please, go ahead.

**QUESTION:** Hi, thanks for doing this. One more thing on the chemical attack: In terms of the ISIS strategy review that's been going on, Secretary Tillerson and Nikki Haley have, last week and recently, stressed the importance of the U.S. emphasis on focusing on fighting ISIS first. Will today's attack prompt any sort of reconsideration about the ISIS strategy and focusing more on the diplomatic efforts that the Trump administration hasn't contributed a lot to so far?

**SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL:** I can assure you, we're not – our foot remains on the accelerator when it comes to ISIS and that's only going to increase. And so that's something that we're going to continue to accelerate this campaign and keep pressure on ISIS all across the board, as I mentioned in my opening statement.

In terms of Syria, again, Russia and Iran signed up and they claim themselves to be the guarantors of a ceasefire arrangement, and that's something that clearly they are not able to deliver on or unwilling to deliver on. And so that's a very significant problem. Obviously, that'll be something that we'll be looking at and discussing and reviewing, and the Secretary will be in Moscow here in a couple weeks.

I also want to make clear that – because another premise of your question, which I really don't agree with, that we're somehow not involved in the diplomatic efforts here – there's the Astana process, where we have our ambassador there to observe that process because we've been invited as observers. We were in Ankara last week. Secretary Tillerson had very detailed

discussions with the Turks about the Astana process and the ceasefire process and where we can plug into that to be helpful. Frankly, the U.S. doesn't have that much influence over the actors on the ground that are the party to the ceasefire. The outside backers that do have quite a bit of influence – Turkey, Iran, and Russia – are the primary self-proclaimed guarantors of that process. It's a process we very much support.

We also very much support the Geneva process, which is where the political discussion is done about the future of Syria led by UN Special Representative Staffan de Mistura, and our Syria envoy Michael Ratney was there last week actively taking part in those discussions, and they're discussing multiple issues from a new constitution to elections to a transitional governing body, as well as reinforcing the ceasefire.

So we're actively engaged in those efforts and we're also looking realistically at where we can actually have influence and make a difference.

**OPERATOR:** And our next question will come from the line of Conor Finnegan with ABC. Please, go ahead.

**QUESTION:** Thanks very much, [Senior State Department Official One]. It was the previous administration's belief that the regime of Bashar al-Assad actually made the threat of ISIS worse by attracting foreign fighters to the civil war. Does the current administration share that belief? And if so, is there any – are there any active measures underway to remove him as part of the counter-ISIS effort?

**SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL:** Again, I think if you look at the trajectory of ISIS, it is now on a downward trajectory. It is rapidly losing territory, it's rapidly losing finances, it's rapidly, rapidly losing fighters and leaders. And that's something that we're going to make sure that we build on that momentum, to say the least.

ISIS, al-Qaida, these groups, they prosper under the cover of failed states and civil wars, so this is a dilemma that anyone faces when confronting some of this, because where state structures recede, extremists are able to fill the vacuum very quickly. And so what we need to do is continue to keep the pressure on ISIS and al-Qaida in Syria in the northwest, while also finding a way through the political process to help the Syrians develop a process that can realistically lead to a new Syria with its territorial integrity intact. But how you go about that, given the situation on the ground, of course, is exceedingly difficult. And we're looking at where – again, where we can plug into that process and actually make a difference because we don't want to just have meeting after meeting that doesn't actually make a difference. So we're actively looking at that.

**OPERATOR:** And our next question will come from the line of Nick Wadhams with Bloomberg. Please, go ahead.

**QUESTION:** Hi, thanks. I just wanted to see if we could try to pin you down on whether there has actually been a shift in policy in the administration as it relates to Assad. So as far as I understand, under Secretary Kerry the idea was that there would be a transitional government that the – that Assad would need to step down for that would then clear the way to elections. And the comments by Sean Spicer and Nikki Haley and Secretary Tillerson all point to the idea, but don't explicitly say that the U.S. has revised its position.

So, I mean, given that we're on a background briefing, this is not on the record, hopefully you could be sort of frank and just address the question directly: Does the U.S. now believe – or is the U.S. now not calling for Assad to go as part of a political transition? Thanks.

**SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL:** Yeah, I just – again, I want to be clear: We're committed to a political resolution to the crisis through a Syrian-owned process which can bring about a more representative and peaceful Syria. And that's why we support the talks, as I just mentioned, among Syrians convened by UN Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura in Geneva. And I think

we also believe strongly that once Syrians are afforded the chance to decide for themselves without coercion and with full participation, it's fairly likely they'll chart a very different course for their country's future with credible leadership.

But we've also taken a very realistic look at this extremely difficult situation and about how we can protect, first and foremost, U.S. interests as we deal with the Syria crisis. So it is extremely complex and that's all I'll say on it.

**OPERATOR:** And our last question will come from the line of Karen DeYoung with *The Washington Post*. Please, go ahead.

**QUESTION:** Hello?

**SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL:** Yes.

**QUESTION:** Hello? Sorry. Yeah, I had two questions: One, again, going back to the chemical weapons attack, Sean Spicer said this morning that the – what he called the heinous actions by the Syrian regime are a consequence of the past administration's weakness and irresolution, that President Obama had spoken about a redline against the use of chemical weapons and then did nothing. And I wonder if that's supposed to imply that the United States is now prepared to do something in response.

And separately, you mentioned the fight against al-Qaida in Syria. We all know that the United States has increased its strikes in Idlib against al-Nusra forces, and I wonder if – how concerned you are about their expanding as part of the Syrian civil conflict and whether that is something that you have to think of as you plot the course of what to do about Assad.

**SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL:** Yeah, thanks, Karen. I'll start with your second point first. Al-Qaida in Syria is particularly up there in the northwest is a very serious, obviously, concern for us. That's why we have increased our focus and our airstrikes. It's not lost on anyone that we eliminated Ayman al-Zawahiri's deputy in that area, so that's a very significant problem.

As we've seen with ISIS, in order to actually defeat these groups, you have to have not only an air campaign but a ground component, and developing the ground component against what used to be known as the Nusra Front – that's al-Qaida in Syria – has been difficult. So it's something we're very focused on. We cannot leave a safe haven for al-Qaida in that critical piece of terrain. And Secretary Tillerson had discussions on that issue with Turkey in Ankara last week because this is right on Turkey's border.

Again, on the issue of the chemical attack, it's reprehensible. We're gathering facts. As I mentioned, the OCPW<sup>[1]</sup> ([https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#m\\_-2907474144739625289\\_edn1](https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#m_-2907474144739625289_edn1)) is looking into this. If it's what it looks like, it's clearly a war crime. Those outside backers who have said to be guarantors for this regime obviously have a lot to answer for and I'll just leave it at that.

**MODERATOR:** Thank you very much, and with that answer, that concludes our call today. As a reminder, this was conducted on background with attribution to a senior State Department official, and now that this call has concluded, the embargo is lifted. Thank you very much, everyone.

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