

# Daily Press Briefing: Discussion of Syria

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**August 14, 2014**

**Marie Harf, Deputy Spokesperson  
Daily Press Briefing, selections on Syria  
Washington, DC**

**QUESTION:** Okay. So you've probably seen that government forces in Syria have advanced and taken some – a key suburb outside of Damascus --

**MS. HARF:** Yes.

**QUESTION:** -- that's been contested for some time.

**MS. HARF:** Yes.

**QUESTION:** At the same time, ISIS is taking towns and cities in northern Aleppo province. I'm not really sure what my question is here, but just wondering --

**MS. HARF:** It's one of those days.

**QUESTION:** Well, it's – I think it's – there's just a larger issue here about response – again, in one part combatting this against the same threat that is clearly happening in other parts of the region.

**MS. HARF:** It's actually a – the fact that you brought up regime forces in one place and ISIS in another is actually, I think, instructive to the answer here. Because in Syria, you have the regime, you have Nusrah, you have ISIS, you have a civilian population that's not doing anything with any of these groups, and then you have the moderate opposition that we support. And they're in many places operating not that far from each other. It's a little different in Iraq in that they are not delineated battle lines and battle fronts. So it's a different kind of fight here, which is why we don't believe there's a military solution. We are increasing our support to the moderate opposition, as we've said, who are fighting on all of these fronts. But it's not exactly the same – you look at the U.S. military capabilities and what you can use. It's just a very, very different situation.

**QUESTION:** I just note that we have the same enemy – not the royal we – but there is the same enemy in three war zones or in three disparate nations right now – Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon.

**MS. HARF:** And each place there are different tools to fight them. The government, obviously – one of the governments is also someone that we strongly disagree with. And the two where we support the government, there are vastly different operational pictures on the ground.

**August 13, 2014**

**Marie Harf**, Deputy Spokesperson  
**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Syria/Iraq**  
**Washington, DC**

**QUESTION:** Marie, on that, does the U.S. view the Syrian opposition, the FSA, as a partner in the fight against ISIS?

**MS. HARF:** Absolutely.

**QUESTION:** So when you say there's been moves to support the opposition, has there been any increase to that of late, since we recognize the border but obviously ISIS does not between Iraq and Syria?

**MS. HARF:** Mm-hmm. Well, I think I don't have much update beyond what the President announced during his West Point speech when we said we were submitting to Congress a request to train and equip through the Department of Defense the Syrian opposition. We need Congress to act on that. But we've continued to work with them in a variety of ways, not of all of which we outlined, but certainly, we are continuing to work there. The threat picture is just a little bit different in Syria, given the fact that you have not only ISIS in Syria, but you have al-Nusra, you have the regime, you have the opposition, and everybody – there's not as clearly delineated battle lines, for lack of a better term. There's a lot of people all in densely populated areas operating many times in very close quarters here. So we are working on it, but it's a very different threat picture.

**QUESTION:** Marie --

**QUESTION:** But as you've said, there's been no progress with that statement the President made at West Point. Nothing's happened on the Hill.

**MS. HARF:** We need Congress to act.

**QUESTION:** So without --

**MS. HARF:** Speaking of what Foreign Minister Fabius said about coming back from vacation. (Laughter.)

**QUESTION:** So since they haven't, is there thought to acting then in terms of what the President could do?

**MS. HARF:** Well, we've been acting. To be fair, we provide them with a wide range of assistance, not all of which you know we talk about publicly. But that's continued and that will continue to increase.

**August 11, 2014**

**Marie Harf**, Deputy Spokesperson  
**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Syria**  
**Washington, DC**

**QUESTION:** Yesterday, I believe, Secretary Clinton gave an interview. And she stated that because the U.S. Government did not help moderate Syrian opposition, ISIS became much more powerful and spread. What would be your response to that?

**MS. HARF:** Well, I would note a few points. The first is that the U.S. has increased the scope and scale of our assistance to the moderate Syrian opposition, including announcements made last year and a request the President made of Congress this year to fund and authorize a train and equip program for the moderate Syrian opposition. That's something we think is important, and we've continued to increase our efforts in that area.

Also, the Assad regime played a key role in ISIL's rise. They allowed for a security situation where ISIL could grow in strength. The Syrian regime fostered the growth of terrorist networks; they facilitated the flow of al-Qaida foreign fighters; they – during the Iraq conflict specifically, the regime certainly has been aware and encouraged violent extremists' transit through Syria to enter Iraq. So the regime has had a long history of helping these kind of terrorists foment unrest in Iraq. So that's not something new or, certainly, unfortunately, confined to this conflict.

**QUESTION:** So just today, again, the former State Department Syria official Fred Hoff wrote a paper. And he was saying, basically, your half a billion aid to the moderate rebels would arrive as early as 2015, which is – he says, quote, about nothing that means nothing.

**MS. HARF:** He's entitled to his opinion. We think that we have provided assistance to the moderate opposition in an increasing scope and scale. Again, that's why we announced a train and equip mission just several months ago and want that to get there as soon as possible. It does require congressional action, though, and we've seen how willing – Congress has been willing to act on a whole host of things. But certainly, we think they should act quickly on this.

**QUESTION:** Are you disappointed in what the former Secretary Clinton said?

**MS. HARF:** Am I disappointed?

**QUESTION:** Are you disappointed that she was actually quite critical of your foreign policy?

**MS. HARF:** I think Secretary Clinton served in this Administration for a very long time and worked on very tough issues with many people in this building. And look, she is the – would be the first to say there are no easy answers.

**QUESTION:** All right. Okay.

**MS. HARF:** She's looked at these issues closer than many people, and I'm sure we'll be hearing more from her in the coming days, weeks, months. And so, obviously, we'll have those conversations when she does.

**QUESTION:** But she made an assertion that, basically, your policy is ad hoc – I mean, you don't have a strategy.

**MS. HARF:** Well, I don't think she used those terms.

**QUESTION:** It's pick and choose – I mean, she didn't use those words. But you mentioned –

**MS. HARF:** Right. Those weren't her – those weren't her words, though.

**QUESTION:** Okay.

**MS. HARF:** And look, she played a key role in our strategy when she was at the State Department. So she was deeply engaged in these issues from this building when she was Secretary of State. She, more than anyone, knows how complicated and complex they are and that there are no easy answers.

**QUESTION:** And she also says --

**QUESTION:** But was it a decisive role?

**MS. HARF:** I'm sorry?

**QUESTION:** She played a role, but was it a decisive --

**MS. HARF:** She played – I would say Secretary Clinton played a very formidable role in our foreign policy, yes.

**QUESTION:** And don't you think that these recent remarks of her is a very serious allegation about your Administration policy for the last three years?

**MS. HARF:** Well, it's all of our – I mean, she's been a key part of that policy, to be clear. And look, it's healthy and good to have discussions and debates about such important issues. We certainly believe that here internally, inside the Administration. That would absolutely apply to these comments as well. So look, no one has all the knowledge on this or all the analysis on this, and that's why it's important to have this conversation.

We believe that our policy we're pursuing is one intended to increase our assistance, to increase support to the moderate opposition, even given a very challenging operating environment. So, again, this is an ongoing conversation we have, certainly, inside the Administration today.

**QUESTION:** Is her statement related to the upcoming presidential elections, do you think?

**MS. HARF:** I think you can ask former Secretary Clinton's staff what her intentions are.

**QUESTION:** Well, she said that the Obama Administration's foreign policy doctrine was, quote, "Great nations need organizing principles, and 'Don't do stupid stuff' is not an organizing principle." What do you have to say to that? I mean --

**MS. HARF:** Okay. I don't think I have much more analysis to do on that. Look, I think we've made a few principles clear since the President came into office and Secretary Clinton was here, whether it was rebuilding alliances, whether it was investing in international multilateral organizations -- so when you look at a conflict like Ukraine or Iran, we have coalitions behind us, backing us up -- building international coalitions to fight shared threats -- I think you've seen us do that across the board -- but also not hesitate to act unilaterally when we believe our national security interests are challenged. So there's a number of principles I think that underpin our foreign policy and national security since we've been here. We believe very strongly in them, and again, don't have much more analysis to do than that, I think.

**QUESTION:** Are there any regular communications between the current Secretary of State and the former Secretary of State?

**MS. HARF:** I know they speak. I can check and see how regular it is, but I know that Secretary Kerry very much valued Secretary Clinton's advice and counsel not only when he's been here but before, when he was still in the Senate. I don't have much more than that.

**QUESTION:** Just one more on this. You have been elaborating that you have been increasing your help to the moderate.

**MS. HARF:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** On the other hand, just last May, Syrian moderate opposition officially asked from White House and the Pentagon, in May, increasing the weapons and the (inaudible) to fight ISIS.

**MS. HARF:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** And they've got nothing.

**MS. HARF:** And the President submitted a request to Congress to train and equip the Syrian opposition. So we're waiting on --

**QUESTION:** And it will arrive some time in 2015, right?

**MS. HARF:** Waiting on Congress to act.

...

**QUESTION:** In the meantime, ISIS and the regime are in Syria --

**MS. HARF:** No. In the meantime, we are continuing to support the moderate opposition, but on this one piece of it we're waiting on Congress to act.

...

**QUESTION:** Yes, I have one more. And while – I mean, you are giving a picture here and you are defending your U.S. policy, but rest of the world can see that the Syrian moderate opposition is being kicked out from Syria by the al-Qaida, ISIS, and the regime.

**MS. HARF:** Well, a few things you said there just aren't accurate. First of all, the Syrian opposition is alive and well in Syria. They face a very challenging environment. They have fighting on two fronts – against terrorists like Nusrah and ISIS, and also against the regime.

Also, when you use the term “the rest of the world,” I don't have any idea what that means. We have consistently worked with our international partners on Syria, whether it's to provide humanitarian access, whether it's to provide humanitarian support, whether it's to get the chemical weapons out of Syria, which are now being destroyed somewhere else.

So look, we're working with our international partners on this. But again, there is no easy solution here. It is a very challenging situation. We have put in place a policy that we believe has increased the support to the opposition throughout time, helping them grow, but in the absence of a political solution here – which we believe is the only ultimate solution – we're in a very tough place right now. So we will keep supporting the moderate opposition, keep trying to get humanitarian access in, and keep pushing for a political solution. But none of those things are easy and no one should say otherwise, I don't think.

**QUESTION:** Just to follow up. A second ago you said Assad played a key role in allowing the rise of ISIS. Would you say the same for al-Maliki?

**MS. HARF:** No, I would not.

**QUESTION:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** Why not?

**MS. HARF:** Because I wouldn't. Because it's completely different. ISIS started really gaining strength in Syria when Assad a, facilitated their rise, helped facilitate their movement into Iraq, and gave them a security environment in which they could operate. Prime Minister Maliki has been fighting a very serious battle against them in his own country. Yes, he could've governed more inclusively, but that's very different than allowing a terrorist group to flourish and indeed supporting them.

**QUESTION:** Marie, you're saying he facilitated their movement from Syria to Iraq. I mean, did he provide them with a truck and transportations, and things like this?

**MS. HARF:** I don't have more specifics for you than that, Said.

**QUESTION:** So you don't think that the Syrian regime was actually fighting ISIL in Syria?

**MS. HARF:** Look, I know that they supported their rise and they helped facilitate them into Iraq. I know that.

...

**QUESTION:** What do you think Iran's role in terms of ISIS and al-Qaida-affiliated groups in Syria?

**MS. HARF:** Well, we know that Iran has supported the Syrian regime in Syria. So that's been the crux of our concern there.

**QUESTION:** And the U.S. Treasury Department issued statement in February saying directly that operatives in Tehran are facilitating fighters and funds into al-Qaida-affiliated groups in Syria.

**MS. HARF:** Okay. I can check with Treasury. I can check on the specifics, if those were private citizens or something else. I'll check.

**QUESTION:** Because the – under the knowledge of the Tehran regime, that's what --

**MS. HARF:** Okay. Well, I'll check with my Treasury colleagues.

**July 31, 2014**

**Marie Harf**, Deputy Spokesperson  
**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Syria**  
**Washington, DC**

**QUESTION:** Marie, I'm sure you saw the man known as Caesar was on Capitol Hill today sharing testimony about some of the photos he carried out showing pictures of what's going on inside Assad regime jails. And I wanted to know if he officially briefed anyone here at State, if anyone from this building met with him to hear his account.

**MS. HARF:** Well, we did initiate the process to bring Caesar to the United States so that U.S. officials analyzing this really gruesome evidence he had provided, also some members of Congress, could hear directly from him about the horrific abuses committed by the Assad regime. I can see if we can get you a list of who here has been in touch with him, but obviously we have folks who have been looking at the photos, working to authenticate them, even though we do believe they are authentic. So I know folks have been, but I can see if we can get you a list.

**QUESTION:** Is there reason to fear for his security in the U.S.? I mean, when he testified, he was disguising himself and it was said that there were concerns, particularly in this building, about his wellbeing inside the U.S.

**MS. HARF:** Absolutely. I mean, we had been working with Congress on the hearing today to address security concerns, particularly with press access. But look, this is – we are concerned about his security or anything that could jeopardize it when he's in the United States and elsewhere, quite frankly. But we are concerned about it.

**QUESTION:** When you said, the answer to the first question, we worked for – is we the State Department or is we the – is the royal we, you?

**MS. HARF:** Which we – which statement?

**QUESTION:** Is it the royal you you're talking about here?

**MS. HARF:** Which statement that I said, sorry?

**QUESTION:** The first – very first --

**MS. HARF:** The State Department initiated the process.

**QUESTION:** So when you said we, you meant the State Department.

**MS. HARF:** Correct.

**QUESTION:** Not some other part of the government.

**MS. HARF:** Correct, yes.

**QUESTION:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** Do you know how long he's going to be here?

**MS. HARF:** I don't, I don't.

**QUESTION:** I mean, has he actually asked for asylum in the United States? Is he planning to move here, or --

**MS. HARF:** We don't normally comment on that. I don't know the answer, again.

**QUESTION:** But I mean, look, it's really good for you to be able to hear from him, but is this really, at this point, having any effect on your policy decisions on what to do?

**MS. HARF:** Well, I think that, look, you can't help but look at those photos and not want to do more, and that's why -- part of the reason we've consistently done more. But we also thought it was important for members of Congress, for members of the public, where appropriate, to hear his story because there's more people that need to hear this story, quite frankly.

**QUESTION:** When you said that the people -- that he was meeting with people to talk about authentication of his photographs, even though you believe they're real and other things, even though you believe they're authentic, is this in -- what, in support of what? A potential war crimes trial for --

**MS. HARF:** I don't have anything specific to preview in terms of what that might be in support of.

**QUESTION:** But I believe he met Steven Rapp, though, didn't he?

**MS. HARF:** He has worked with Ambassador Rapp quite a bit, quite a bit on this issue.

**QUESTION:** So that would suggest that the answer to Matt's question is --

**QUESTION:** Yes.

**QUESTION:** -- yes.

**MS. HARF:** Potentially.

**July 30, 2014**

**Marie Harf, Deputy Spokesperson**  
**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Syria**  
**Washington, DC**

**MS. HARF:** You may have also seen that today, Secretary of State Kerry is announcing the United States is providing nearly 378 million in additional U.S. humanitarian aid to help those affected by the war in Syria. With this funding, total U.S. humanitarian assistance since the start of the crisis will reach more than \$2.4 billion, with 1.2 billion helping over 4.7 million people inside Syria, and 1.2 billion helping nearly 3 million refugees and host communities in the neighboring countries affected by the crisis.

As we all know, Syria remains one of the worst humanitarian crises in living memory; nearly 11 million Syrians today struggling to survive. The United States remains the single largest donor of food, shelter, medicine, and water to millions of vulnerable people in Syria and the region. Our funding also helps communities hosting refugees cope with the strain on public services and infrastructure.

...

**QUESTION:** On your humanitarian aid.

**MS. HARF:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. Let's do Syria.

**QUESTION:** This is a lot of money.

**MS. HARF:** Yes, it is.

**QUESTION:** And I understand you did a small breakdown of, like, where it's going in terms of location. But it is a lot of money, and I mean, are you concerned – could you break down a little bit who it's going through? Because there is a serious concern that this money, in such large quantities, could fall into the wrong hands and a lot of it would disappear.

**MS. HARF:** Well, it's part of the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 2165.

**QUESTION:** So is it a UN appeal?

**MS. HARF:** I'm sorry?

**QUESTION:** Is it a UN appeal?

**MS. HARF:** Well, it's part of the full implementation. It's not – it's a little bit separate from it as well. Let me see if there's more specifics about what NGOs and what specifically at the UN this is going to, Elise. We put out a Fact Sheet, but I'm not sure it's in --

**QUESTION:** Yeah, I don't think that really addressed it.

**MS. HARF:** Okay, I can -- I'll check.

**QUESTION:** But I mean, I would assume some of it's going to UN organizations like UNHCR and all that stuff.

**MS. HARF:** Correct. And we --

**QUESTION:** But I wouldn't --

**MS. HARF:** -- vet people and, like, when we give it to NGOs we vet them very thoroughly.

**QUESTION:** Right, right. Yeah, but if you could do more of a breakdown of that.

**MS. HARF:** Let me see what I can get to you.

**July 29, 2014**

**Jen Psaki**, Spokesperson  
**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Syria**  
**Washington, DC**

**QUESTION:** I mean – speaking of oil and so on, the ISIS or ISIL has been controlling oil facilities and so on, and in fact they are attempting to sell it overseas, which goes along with what is happening with this tanker. They also overtook a position for the Syrian army, they beheaded a lot of soldiers and they impaled them and so on. What is your – what is the latest on Syria? What’s going on?

**MS. PSAKI:** I haven’t seen those reports, Said. I mean, I think the latest is that we remain closely engaged with the Syrian opposition as they continue to strengthen their leadership and membership, that we have increased and expanded our – the kind of assistance and the scope of assistance we’re providing, that we continue to work with a range of international partners. So that has been an ongoing effort led by Daniel Rubenstein from this building.

**QUESTION:** Sorry, Jen, but the --

**MS. PSAKI:** I have to go in just a moment, so let me --

Go ahead. India.

**QUESTION:** Yes. Secretary Kerry – in his speech at Center for American Progress, he talked about a new set of opportunities, new possibilities. So should we conclude that the nuclear deal which was hibernating is dead? What – and if, can you just give us a quick update on these new possibilities that we are going to explore?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, he was referring to the fact that he’s about to lead a delegation, a high level delegation, to India and talk about important issues, including economic cooperation, energy cooperation; there are a range of issues that are of interest to both sides. So I think he was making a broad point about continuing to increase our partnership in the months ahead.

Thanks, everyone.

**QUESTION:** Thank you.

**July 28, 2014**

**Jen Psaki**, Spokesperson  
**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Syria**  
**Washington, DC**

**QUESTION:** I was struck by the criticism of the Administration's handling of Syria when we were – when we heard not from Republicans, but from Representative Eliot Engel of New York, the ranking Democrat on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, during Deputy Assistant Secretary McGurk's testimony last week. Congressman Engel said, I quote, "The right time to train and equip the moderate Syrian opposition was well over a year ago, but we waited so long and by now ISIS has gained so much territory and momentum, they are far more difficult to stop." He added, "I cannot help but wonder what would have happened if we had committed to empowering the moderate Syrian opposition last year." Your reaction?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, there are a range of factors. Any member of Congress, Democratic or Republican, is certainly allowed to speak their view and should, and we encourage them to. We have expanded the scale and scope of our assistance since last year. Since – longer than just the last few weeks, certainly. We can't outline all of that publicly. That hasn't changed. There are a couple of events that we're all aware of that have happened over the course of that time that I think are important context, including Iranian engagement, including the influx of foreign fighters that have impacted the situation. We have, even in the last couple of weeks, provided additional – or made the determination to provide additional assistance, so I think the most productive role that any member of Congress can play is to support those efforts and continue to push them through Congress.

**QUESTION:** Okay. Last one. I'm sure you saw The Washington Post article today that more or less echoed what Congressman Engel said. The article stated that by the time the Administration's request for \$500 million in counterterrorism funds is up and running, quote, "There may be few if any moderate rebels left to aid." And your reaction to that?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I think it goes to what I just stated in that that doesn't represent the totality of our assistance, far from it. There's a range of assistance that I can't outline and I'm not going to. But we've built the capacity over the course of time. We'll continue to do that. I think it's important to vet both the recipients of the assistance. That's something I think Congress and the American people want us to do, and it also is important to work with Congress. Those two steps require a process. That's what's been underway.

**QUESTION:** Is there still time to defeat the Assad regime?

**MS. PSAKI:** We certainly wouldn't be still working as hard as we are if we didn't think that was the case.

**July 24, 2014**

**Marie Harf**, Deputy Spokesperson  
**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Syria**  
**Washington, DC**

**QUESTION:** Syria. So the Observatory for Human Rights just released a report this week that says around 1,700 casualties this week alone, and the Islamic State also has posted videos of a massacre where they killed an estimated 215 soldiers and civilians. Are you satisfied with the pace of aid going to the Syrian moderate rebels right now?

**MS. HARF:** Well, we've continued to increase our assistance, even recently, to the moderate opposition, and we will continue doing so. We know they are fighting very big challenges on several fronts, both from the regime and from ISIS and Nusra and the terrorists that we've seen there. So it's a huge challenge. We're continuing to increase our assistance.

**July 23, 2014**

**Marie Harf**, Deputy Spokesperson  
**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Syria**  
**Washington, DC**

**QUESTION:** Marie, do you know anything – have you been updated on these – on UN agencies hoping to make the first cross-border aid deliveries under the new UN resolution this week? Do you know when that's going to be or --

**MS. HARF:** Are you talking about Syria?

**QUESTION:** Yeah.

**MS. HARF:** Let me check. I don't. I know there are some timing issues here. Let me check on where they are.

...

**QUESTION:** Just a couple days ago, eight different FSA units issued a declaration in which they rejected Jabhat al-Nusra, al-Qaida-affiliated group, because they are – now Jabhat al-Nusra, apparently in that same declaration, withdrew from Aleppo and now attack moderate Free Syrian Army brigades on northern Syria. So under circumstances now, the Syrian moderate forces fighting with al-Nusra, ISIS, and Syrian regime.

**MS. HARF:** Well, we've always said that the moderate opposition is fighting on several fronts here. They're fighting the regime, they're fighting the terrorists, which are, of course, Nusra and ISIL – or ISIS in Syria, I guess. So we've always said for a long time that they are fighting on two fronts, which is why it's so important for us to continue to support them, increase that support in any way we can.

**QUESTION:** So these – what you exact say increase the support and continue the support? You have been using this rhetoric for about two years and these guys --

**MS. HARF:** And we've consistently increased our support. We announced another additional round of support a few months ago, maybe now it was, or a month and a half ago – in May, I think – in June when the President spoke at West Point and then after that. So we've continued to increase our support.

**QUESTION:** But that 500 million, I think you're talking about, will not reach --

**MS. HARF:** I'm not just talking about 500 million. There was a variety of support we talked about then. I'm happy to bring those details back up for you.

...

**QUESTION:** The Washington Post had a lead editorial that was very critical of the Administration's response to Syria as of late, saying, quote --

**MS. HARF:** I think they write that editorial every few months and just change the date, actually. Seriously, you should do a word cloud and compare them.

**QUESTION:** One of the accusations was that there's no senior envoy to unite the moderate Syrian and Iraqi forces to combat ISIS.

**MS. HARF:** I think Daniel Rubinstein would probably disagree with that. We have a number of people at the State Department working on Syria. We do have an envoy, as you all know, and a number of other folks working on it as well.

**QUESTION:** And called the plans to fight the Islamic state, quote, "pathetically underpowered."

**MS. HARF:** I don't even want to venture a guess as to what that means.

**QUESTION:** And --

**MS. HARF:** We have consistently said we will support the moderate opposition. We have increased our support because we believe it's important. But look, this is a tough challenge, one that sometimes the complexities of that challenge do not end up in the Washington Post editorial page.

**QUESTION:** But don't you need Congress to give you the funds to arm the moderates?

**MS. HARF:** Well, in terms of the funding we've talked about based on the Levin Amendment, yes, obviously we do need funding from Congress. We've consistently worked with Congress to increase our support to the moderate opposition and we'll keep doing so.

**QUESTION:** But Congress -- they're looking like they're not going to do this for --

**MS. HARF:** Well, I think it's easy for members of Congress to come out and say we should do more and then vote no. Somehow those two things are not compatible in my view.

**July 18, 2014**

**Jen Psaki, Spokesperson**

**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Syria**

**Washington, DC**

**MS. PSAKI:** We condemn in the strongest possible terms the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant's barbaric stoning of a woman yesterday in Tabqa, Syria. This is the latest example of ISIL's infamous atrocities against the Syrian people. ISIL is a vicious terrorist organization with a proven agenda of grotesque violence and repression which runs against the Syrian revolution's goals of freedom and dignity. It seeks to distort religion solely to obtain power through violence. We've been clear that all those who commit crimes against the Syrian people must be held accountable. The United States regularly reports on violence against women and girls around the globe, and supports efforts to prevent and respond to such violence, including advancing accountability by working with law enforcement, supporting civil society's efforts, and engaging with critical stakeholders such as men and boys. We raise these issues with world leaders and at international fora such as the United Nations to spur collective action against such – these egregious crimes.

**July 16, 2014**

**Jen Psaki**, Spokesperson  
**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Syria**  
**Washington, DC**

**QUESTION:** Yes. Today President Assad gave a speech after the election, and he said that he pledged that uphold laws and freedoms in his third term. What's your reaction?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we've been clear that President Assad – that Assad has no more credibility now than he did before the so-called presidential election. And while Assad and his regime include in this charade – indulge in this charade, I guess I should say – Syrians are starving and besieged in Damascus, dodging barrel bombs in Aleppo, fleeing across Syria's borders from refuge, and enduring unspeakable abuses in regime prisons and detention facilities. And in the face of this, we will continue to help the Syrian people stand up against Bashar al-Assad and support those who fight for the right of all Syrians to choose their own future. So our concerns are no different today than they were yesterday, than they were right before this farcical election.

**QUESTION:** Just one more follow-up: Speaking of helping Syrian people, former U.S. State Department official Fred Hof wrote couple days ago that your Administration asked Congress for an opposition equip and train funds. And according to his analysis, this cannot happen – realized until the ideal circumstances, until the end of 2014. Is that a fair assessment?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, Mr. Hof is a private citizen, and I'm not sure he has all of the details on all of the plans that have been proposed. Obviously, part of our effort is what you just outlined: the President's announcement to increase the kind of and expand the kind of support that we're providing to the moderate opposition. Daniel Rubenstein is on his way back from the region; he's been there for quite some time, meeting with a range of countries, meeting with the opposition as well. As you know, they just elected – the opposition just elected new leadership. So there are a range of steps that we're taking, but obviously, we want to see it move as quickly as it can. There's a process for that. I don't have any predictions on the timeline.

**QUESTION:** So this --

**MS. PSAKI:** But I have to move on so I can just do a few more.

**QUESTION:** -- this fund can reach them before 2014, is what you are saying?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have any predictions on the timeline. I'd just remind you that Mr. Hof is a private citizen and not currently employed by the United States Government.

**July 15, 2014**

**Jen Psaki**, Spokesperson  
**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Syria**  
**Washington, DC**

**QUESTION:** One just very brief on Hammond.

**MS. PSAKI:** Okay. Go ahead.

**QUESTION:** Yes. The UN Security Council voted unanimously to push aid deliveries into Syria without the approval of the Syrian Government. Do you have anything about that?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I think it's important to note that as a result of this conflict in Syria, 10.8 million Syrians in Syria now need assistance. I know we've actually talked quite a bit, thanks to your questions, about the refugee crisis in Syria and how we can address that. So what the council did was they authorized the use of four additional crossings to UN humanitarian agencies and their implementing partners without the need for approval from the Syrian regime.

Obviously, typically the UN or other entities work through the government, but in this case we were seeing trucks and – UN trucks fully loaded literally sitting at the border waiting for the Syrian Government to issue travel papers. So this gives – it allows the UN to move forward while notifying the Syrian Government with 48 hours notice in advance of humanitarian – in advance of action.

So this step was taken in an effort to break the logjam here and see if there can be afforded more flexibility for UN convoys to make sure they can reach or take every step they can to reach the men, women, and children who need assistance in Syria. Obviously, it needs to be implemented, and that's the key component. But certainly, we support this effort.

**QUESTION:** So there is a time to start to implement it, or just what – when you voted it, you realize it?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have anything. I'd refer you to them in terms of when they'll be able to start implementing it. I'm sure they'll try to do that as quickly as they can.

**QUESTION:** Are you beginning to see eye-to-eye with the Russians on your timing on the Syrian issue --

**MS. PSAKI:** I think --

**QUESTION:** -- by unanimously agreeing to this resolution?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I think we have existing areas of disagreement, but hopefully we can find ways to work together on making sure humanitarian assistance reaches the people who need it most.

**July 9, 2014**

**Jen Psaki**, Spokesperson  
**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Syria**  
**Washington, DC**

**MS. PSAKI:** I just have a couple of other quick items at the top. As the Treasury Department announced this morning, I wanted to highlight that the United States took action to increase pressure on the Syrian regime by sanctioning three entities contributing to its repression of the Syrian people and literally fueling its war machine. Treasury designated the Pangates International Corporation for providing material support for and goods and services to the regime, including a Syrian state oil company already sanctioned by us. Pangates International is based in the U.A.E.

Treasury also designated two Syria-based front companies – the Expert Partners and Megatrade – for acting for or on behalf of the regime agency responsible for developing and producing nonconventional weapons and ballistic missiles, which we’ve also sanctioned. Today’s actions build on our robust multilateral sanctions coalition against the Assad regime. We’ve worked with more than 60 countries and international organizations to impose targeted sanctions against nearly 200 individuals and entities.

...

**QUESTION:** Okay. The Syrian Opposition Coalition elected Hadi al Bahra. And other than the statement that you issued, has there been any conversations with him?

**MS. PSAKI:** The Secretary looks forward to congratulating him. He hasn’t had a chance to do that yet. As you know, it’s the middle of night in China.

**QUESTION:** Right. Okay. Who is the point person that is conducting affairs with the Syrian opposition at the present time? I mean, it was – in the past it was Ambassador Ford, then it was --

**MS. PSAKI:** Daniel Rubinstein?

**QUESTION:** Yeah.

**MS. PSAKI:** Continues to be.

**QUESTION:** He continues to be?

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** Are there any – what is the latest on their – whatever negotiations or talks? What is the likelihood of having a Geneva III or anything like that?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, Said, I think you're familiar with the range of steps we've taken over the course of the last several weeks, even. The President announced additional assistance and additional funding to the moderate opposition. We remain in close touch with the opposition, obviously, working to elect new leadership at this time. And obviously, there are specific restrictions on how many consecutive terms that leaders can serve in the SOC is an important part of what took place in this case. They elected, in addition to the new president – and let me just note this – they also elected three new vice presidents and a new secretary general. And we understand the new president is planning a press conference later today, so I'd point you to that for any specific update.

But again, this is a group that has given – the coalition has given a voice to all Syrians who have been oppressed by the regime for decades. We remain committed to supporting them, and obviously, the President's announcement from a few weeks ago is evidence of that. And we remain – continue – committed to continuing to support them in their effort to work on behalf of the Syrian people. So there are a range of steps we take every day to work toward that.

**QUESTION:** The Syrian air force bombarded bases or convoys of ISIL right at the border, the Syria and Iraq border. And do you welcome that kind of activity?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have any confirmation of those specifics, Said.

Do we have any more on Syria? Go ahead.

**QUESTION:** Can you confirm reports that the UN Secretary-General is going to appoint today Ambassador de Mistura as a – to replace Brahimi as an envoy to Syria?

**MS. PSAKI:** I've seen those reports. I would point you to the UN to – for confirmation.

**July 8, 2014**

**Jen Psaki**, Spokesperson  
Daily Press Briefing, selections on Syria  
Washington, DC

**QUESTION:** Are you satisfied that all chemical weapons are now out of Syria and in the process of being destroyed?

**MS. PSAKI:** Said, the declaration --

**QUESTION:** I mean, today there was --

**MS. PSAKI:** -- is on declared weapons.

**QUESTION:** Right, right.

**MS. PSAKI:** The OPCW remains --

**QUESTION:** I mean the declared weapons.

**MS. PSAKI:** -- let me finish -- they remain a member of the CWC, so obviously the OPCW will continue to take steps to verify that the declared weapons represent the stockpile in Syria.

**QUESTION:** So all the declared weapons have been accounted for?

**MS. PSAKI:** Correct. They've -- 100 percent have been removed.

**QUESTION:** Now, on this issue of the SOC is holding elections, presidential elections in Turkey. Is there any U.S. representative there, or not?

**MS. PSAKI:** That's a good question. I will check and see. Obviously, we're not -- these are internal SOC meetings, so no U.S. officials will attend. So there -- we don't have any officials on the ground.

**QUESTION:** And the situation in Aleppo is deteriorating and the opposition is warning about the situation there. Do you have anything on this?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not in a position to give any ground updates. Obviously, you know we remain concerned about the situation on the ground. And that's one of the reasons we're so focused on doing everything we can to address it.

**QUESTION:** Does that concern extend to the fact that the opposition might lose Aleppo and then they might really have essentially lost the battle, lost the war?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I'm not going to speculate. Obviously, we're not there at this point. So – go ahead.

**July 2, 2014**

**Jen Psaki**, Spokesperson  
**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Syria**  
**Washington, DC**

**QUESTION:** Some Syrian opposition groups in Aleppo issued a statement today asking the SOC to provide them with more arms to fight ISIS that getting stronger in Syria, and they threatened to desert their position in one week – or their positions in one week if they did not receive the military aids that they are asking for.

**MS. PSAKI:** Who was this? I'm sorry, this statement was issued --

**QUESTION:** Some military opposition groups in Aleppo especially. Do you have anything on this, and will the U.S. accelerate the military aids to the opposition to fight the regime and ISIS?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, you saw the President's announcement just earlier this week, or last week – it's all running together – last week. And clearly, we've taken steps here to continue to boost support for the opposition, whether that is political support or military assistance. I have not seen that specific statement you're referring to. Clearly, our view is that the opposition needs to continue to strengthen their membership and work together to take on the threat that they face, both from the brutality of the Assad regime as well as, certainly, some extremists who are present in Syria. So I'd have to check and see that specific statement and what groups it was coming from. I don't know if you have more information on it. We can talk about it afterwards.

**QUESTION:** I will forward it to you.

**MS. PSAKI:** Okay. Sounds good.

...

**QUESTION:** Can we say now that the issue or the files of chemical weapons are closed now, or still you have some concerns about the chemical weapon of mass destruction that is in Syria?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, part of what Syria committed to last September was joining the Chemical Weapons Convention. So while we made the announcement last week about – or OPCW did, I should say – about the removal of 100 percent of declared chemicals, there are – of course we're going to keep our effort going here in terms of ensuring that that covers all chemical weapons that would pose a threat. And that's an ongoing effort that the OPCW will be seeing through in the months ahead.

**QUESTION:** Some people, already they are saying that what was done regarding the chemical weapon was done based on what was provided as a stockpile, as an information, so more weapons are there. What is your understanding of that?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I think we have never taken the Assad regime at their word. That's why we refer to it as the declared chemical weapons. But I think it's important to note here that a significant amount of toxic chemicals of the worst kind, who had been used by the Assad regime to kill their own people, has now been removed from Syria. Those are chemicals that they can never again use against their own people. But we will continue, through the OPCW, to take every step necessary to ensure that all is verified and that we prevent this from happening again.

...

**QUESTION:** I mean, with the – what was going on in the last two weeks, it seems that more disturbance happening with the ISIL movements and regarding the refugees. Do you have any update about refugee status there?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have any new update. Obviously, we've been concerned about the growing number of refugees, the impact that this has had on countries in the region. I would point you to the Secretary's visit just a couple of weeks ago to Lebanon, where they talked about this issue and what a strain it is on the Government of Lebanon. We know it's a strain on the Government of Jordan. That's why we've increased our assistance over the course of the last several months in this regard, but our efforts are continuing on that. And as it relates to this, we remain the world's largest donor, but obviously, end – bringing an end to the suffering and the bloodshed is the best way to address the refugee crisis.

**QUESTION:** Few days ago there was concern or reports saying that ISIL already infiltrated in some of the refugee camps in Jordan. Is that – this is just rumors, reports? Did you check it? Are you sure about --

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have any confirmation of that. I'm happy to see if there's more we can say on that from here. Obviously, we'd be greatly concerned about that.

Michael, go ahead.

**QUESTION:** The chemical weapons deal. Two proponents of the deal that you helped forge are Shimon Peres and Bibi Netanyahu. They have come out and called it a good deal multiple times, but then they said that your negotiations with Iran with the other P5+1 members in Vienna should model the deal that you reached on Syria's chemical weapons. Do you think that's an apt comparison? Do you think that's a fair model?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, without knowing the full context I'm not sure what the comparison is, and so I'd point you to them on describing exactly what they mean by that.

**QUESTION:** Well, they say – they call it the Audi model and they say zero, zero, zero, zero in terms of capability, infrastructure, and the like. What they say is that the deal on Syrian chemical weapons managed to remove all of the most dangerous materials and therefore all of the most dangerous materials in Iran in its nuclear program should be dismantled or removed, and that should be the model. So do you think it's an apt model?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I think, Michael, there's an ongoing negotiation that started today. I can update you that there was a trilateral meeting today that's still ongoing between the U.S., the EU, and Iran. It may have concluded now, actually. I know it's late there. The delegations, as you all know, are led by Deputy Secretary Burns, Lady Ashton, and Foreign Minister Zarif respectively. The opening plenary will be tomorrow morning, chaired by Lady Ashton and Foreign Minister Zarif.

We're certainly familiar with the concerns by the Israelis. We remain in touch with them and have done a range of briefings. Our goal – we're not – no deal is better than a bad deal. That's something that remains the case and remains the bar. But we also believe that this is a process that could lead to preventing Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon, which we feel is in the interests of all countries, including Israel. But beyond that I'm not going to speculate or comment on those reports.

**QUESTION:** And just one more on this. With the Secretary's op-ed in The Washington Post, he said that the parties would be working tirelessly until July 20th. The plan is for the U.S. delegation to be on the ground until July 20th in Vienna.

**MS. PSAKI:** Yes. They're – we're committed to the 20th, we're working toward the 20th. Again, we don't – I'm not going to predict what's going to happen every day between now and then, but that remains our focus.

**QUESTION:** Can I go back to the issue about potentially ISIL infiltrating some of the refugee camps outside of Syria and Iraq? I mean, I'm sure you saw yesterday Abu Bakr Baghdadi's call for Muslims to --

**MS. PSAKI:** Yes. Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** -- join the fight in the territories that ISIL controls. And I'm just wondering if there are steps being planned now or taken now beyond the military aid that's going to Syria and Iraq to prevent the spread of ISIL into other areas or states that would present even greater threats to the West or to Israel.

**MS. PSAKI:** Were there specific steps you're – that are on your mind, or what are you referring to exactly?

**QUESTION:** Well, I'm no military expert, so I leave it to you.

**MS. PSAKI:** Give yourself more credit, Lara. (Laughter.) Are you referring to military steps, or are you referring to political steps, or what specific --

**QUESTION:** Well, more military because I assume that a group like ISIL doesn't care as much about political steps as they would respond to actual force.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well --

**QUESTION:** But if you've got ideas, I'm --

**MS. PSAKI:** No, the -- I think the reason I ask that question is because, clearly, part of the effort, the diplomatic effort that is underway that the Secretary is a leading member of, is communicating with the governments of neighboring countries about the importance of conveying to their public the threat that ISIL poses. And that is certainly part of our education effort. In terms of military steps, I can check with our team and see if there's anything more specific in that regard.

**QUESTION:** For example, it's been suggested that Jordan is really a redline in the Mideast, that if ISIL starts coming into Jordan, which is so vulnerable right now anyway with regard to refugees and the economic crisis there, that that could really be the thing that spurs more U.S. or Israeli aid, and a more robust aid to the region.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I think -- and I would point you to the President's remarks, which were carefully crafted, of course, in the sense that we are concerned about the threat of ISIL not just to Iraq but to the region. We are talking about how we can combat that threat to not just Iraq but to the region. I don't want to get ahead of where we are because, obviously, as it relates to the events in Iraq you know where we are with the need to -- the urgency of moving forward on government formation and the important role we think that plays. But even prior to this crisis I'd point you also to the President's West Point speech, where he talked about the changing threat we face and how we need to be -- dedicate time and resources and energy to taking that on in the right way and how that's changed over the course of time. So that relates how we address needs in the region as well.

**QUESTION:** Did you all -- I didn't ask yesterday, but I meant to. Did you all have any kind of reaction to al-Baghdadi's call to arms other than -- I'm sure you'll say -- it's bad?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, certainly we would say it's bad, but I hope I can be a little more eloquent than that. But our view is that these calls only further expose the true nature of this organization, its desire to control people by its fear and -- by fear and edicts, and anyone who is aligned with ISIL is aligning with a terrorist organization. The Iraqis have a long history of fighting against extremism, and people from all -- Sunnis, Shia and Kurds all have that long history, and so we are hopeful that will be the case here as well.

**QUESTION:** Prime Minister al-Maliki today made kind of a "If you're not with us, you're against us" sort of statement regarding Sunnis and Kurds in Iraq. It wasn't that blunt, but it was if you don't admonish ISIL, then we will see you as the enemy. Do you think that that's an appropriate way of addressing the situation in Iraq, and do you think that that will do much to encourage Sunnis to feel like they are part of the government?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I think we've been pretty clear that Prime Minister Maliki has not been the model of inclusivity in the past, and perhaps there are different ways to portray the need for inclusivity moving forward. I haven't seen the full context of the comments, but I think the broad point that whether you're a Sunni, whether you're Shia, whether you're a Kurd, you all face this same threat is a point, broadly speaking, that we certainly agree with. And that's why we're

encouraging everyone to focus on government formation and focus on unifying against the shared threat that they face.

**July 1, 2014**

**Marie Harf, Deputy Spokesperson**  
**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Syria/Iraq/Iran**  
**Washington, DC**

**QUESTION:** I'm not sure if you saw some of the comments that the Iraqi ambassador to the U.S. made today --

**MS. HARF:** I did.

**QUESTION:** -- at Carnegie. He basically described starting looking to the governments of Syria, Russia, and Iran for additional help, even if just advice, even if just trying to solidify the borders. Wondering if this is a signal that the United States is losing its influence in this region, and also what you think of the fact that these are at best unreliable, uneasy allies; at worst, flat-out enemies.

**MS. HARF:** Well, I think a few points. The first is, I mean, all you have to do is look at what we're doing with the Iraqis today to demonstrate that we have a very close partnership with them. Whether it's the assessment and advisory teams that have gone in that the President announced several weeks ago, whether it's our diplomatic folks on the ground working with the different parties, I mean, clearly, we play an important role here, and the Iraqi leaders have asked the United States in a number of different ways to help them get out of this crisis, to fight the threat, and to help push the parties towards a better government, quite frankly.

But look, we have said any country who is willing to assist the Iraqis in this fight in a nonsectarian, inclusive way towards an inclusive process, that's what all the countries need to do. Look, when it comes to Syria, we've been very clear that Iraq's security problem cannot be solved by the Assad regime, who, in large part, is responsible for the security situation that spilled over into Iraq and has led us to where we are today.

**June 27, 2014**

**Marie Harf**, Deputy Spokesperson

**Daily Press Briefing, selections on the Department and Syria/Saudi Arabia/Iraq  
Washington, DC**

**QUESTION:** Okay. On Saudi Arabia, can you at least update us on what possibly they may have agreed to? Is it – did they focus on Iraq or did they focus on Syria? I mean, things seem to be mixed up because he met with Jarba, they announced the \$500 million in aid and so on.

**MS. HARF:** Yeah.

**QUESTION:** So if you'd just bring us up to date, up to speed on that.

**MS. HARF:** Yeah. Well, in terms of the meeting with SOC President Jarba, just a quick readout. Talked about our ongoing efforts to strengthen the moderate opposition. President Jarba thanked Secretary Kerry for the President's recent request yesterday to Congress for additional funding to train and equip vetted members of the armed opposition. Secretary Kerry encouraged President Jarba to continue to take steps to reach out to people within Syria, to continue to expand the leadership of the opposition. Finally, they also discussed the threat from ISIL, of course, not just to Iraq and Syria but to all countries in the region. Secretary Kerry provided President Jarba with an update on his meetings in Paris, the ones he had with the foreign ministers from the region, and reiterated the shared commitment to a political solution to the crisis in Syria.

With King Abdullah, I don't have a fuller readout yet, but know they talked about Iraq certainly, our efforts against ISIL, and to support the Iraqis as they form an inclusive government; also talked a little bit about Syria and the recent request as well.

**QUESTION:** Seeing how these groups, these militant groups, moderate or otherwise, find – morph into something like ISIL, or potentially morph into something like ISIL, is it really wise to provide them with \$500 million worth of aid and equipment? I mean, because that is – these are fungible groups. They go from one to the other.

**MS. HARF:** That's true. So a few points on that. To mitigate the risk of assistance falling into the wrong hands, all of the moderate units that are receiving or will be receiving our assistance are vetted through our formal process – we have a process in place – and are coordinated with the Supreme Military Council as well. So this is one of the things we've always talked about, right, vetting who we give this to, and we've – that's also why we said, look, we need to be very careful and deliberate as we decide who to give assistance to. So we give it to the moderate opposition and are very clear about the fact that ISIL and Nusrah are of course terrorist organizations and we don't want anything to fall into their hands.

**QUESTION:** And just yesterday, the Free Syrian Army handed over, without a fight, without firing a shot, a town called Albu Kamal, Bukamal, which is al-Qaim on the Iraqi border, without firing a shot to ISIS. So do you have any comment on that?

**MS. HARF:** Well, I'm not going to give, I think, a battleground update.

**QUESTION:** Isn't that the moderate opposition that you talk about?

**MS. HARF:** Well, we know the situation is complicated on the ground, and that's exactly why we have said we are going to provide additional assistance to train and equip the moderate, vetted, Syrian opposition. We know they need more resources. We have been steadily increasing – excuse me – our resources to them. As you know, last year we increased our assistance both in the scale and scope. The President at West Point said we'd be doing more, and you've seen with the announcement last night or yesterday afternoon that, indeed, we are going to be doing more.

**QUESTION:** The \$500 million is part of that \$5 billion that the President spoke about in West Point?

**MS. HARF:** It is. So yesterday we provided Congress with an amendment to the President's FY 2015 request. This is \$500 million for a proposed authority to train and equip. That falls under a request for 1.5 billion, which will be dedicated to a regional stabilization initiative. There's a lot of numbers we're throwing out here. Of the 5 billion that we are requesting for the Counterterrorism Partnerships Fund, State will receive 1 billion of it, and the Defense Department will receive 4 billion of it.

**QUESTION:** Marie, a few points on this.

**MS. HARF:** Uh-huh.

**QUESTION:** One, there have been many critics who have been saying for at least two years, not leaving out members of Congress, who have said --

**MS. HARF:** Why would we leave them out?

**QUESTION:** -- yeah – who have said that the U.S. should have been providing lethal assistance to the opposition then and that the only reason why this money is being provided now is because of the intensity with which ISIL is wreaking havoc in neighboring Iraq. Is it because of ISIL that this Administration has decided to provide aid that before now it had said, for the same reason, we don't know who's going to actually control this equipment and we don't want to take the risk of it having – having it fall into the wrong hands?

**MS. HARF:** Well, a few points. First, ISIL is only one part of the decision to provide this assistance. So overall, we have a number of goals with this assistance: of course building the Syrians' capacity to help secure and stabilize Syria; also helping the moderate opposition defend civilians against attacks by the regime and by extremists, so by both, really the threat is clearly coming from both; to counter terrorist threats to stabilize areas under opposition control – that's obviously an important component of this – and help facilitate the provision of essential services. So also when we talk about things like humanitarian, when we talk about things like getting other kinds of assistance, nonlethal, to the opposition, this can help secure areas to do that.

And I think what we've also said is last year we did announce that we had expanded the scale and scope of our assistance. We don't detail all of that. But we have continued to ramp it up and we do believe this new effort is really complementary to what we've already done and will just build on the work that we've already done.

**QUESTION:** A number of military analysts have been looking at the situation inside Syria, and they suggest that the Syrian Government has regained enough control where it really does have the advantage at this point. So another way of asking the question: Is this money coming too late for the Syrian opposition to engage in a fair fight?

**MS. HARF:** Well, as I said, we've been – this assistance does not come in a vacuum, right? We've been continuing to increase our assistance. Again, last year we made a fairly significant announcement when we announced that we had upped the scale and scope of our assistance, and we've been doing that continuously.

But we know the situation on the battlefield is a challenging one for the moderate opposition, again not just because of the regime, but because of the terrorist element that is also wreaking havoc with so much of the security. So this is an ongoing fight. We've been committed to standing by the Syrian opposition as they've engaged in it, but we know that they need some more assistance, which is exactly why we're doing it now.

**QUESTION:** This money is going up in a supplemental appropriation, to use the colloquial term. Given that Congress is out for at least the next week, and given that there is growing sentiment about U.S. involvement in any sort of conflict in the region, how confident is this Administration that it's going to get this funding approved without too many strings attached?

**MS. HARF:** Yeah. Well, it – just to do a little history on this funding, the language in this request builds on a provision that Senator Levin introduced with overwhelming support from his committee during the Senate Armed Services markup of the NDAA in May. Again, that amendment had gotten a large amount of bipartisan support from the committee, so we'll keep working with Congress. But this is something I think they've been interested in doing and hopefully we'll be able to move forward as quickly as possible.

**QUESTION:** So is it reasonable confidence, strong confidence that this money will be appropriated so that --

**MS. HARF:** Well, we --

**QUESTION:** -- people aren't waiting another six months to find out?

**MS. HARF:** Right. No, no. We – and we certainly have – are working with them. They've indicated support for this kind of support in the amendment they had passed to the NDAA in May. So, look, we'll work with them, but we think this is something we should be able to get done fairly quickly.

**QUESTION:** Just a couple days ago, President Obama was interviewed and asked why the Administration didn't help the opposition. And he actually said that the challenge is if you have former farmers, teachers, and pharmacists who are taking up opposition against a battle-hardened regime, it's difficult. It is just a couple days ago he stated this.

**MS. HARF:** Well, it's still difficult. That doesn't change the fact that we believe it's important to provide this additional assistance at this time. Those two things aren't mutually exclusive.

**QUESTION:** So a couple days later, White House stated that \$500 million are going to the moderate opposition.

**MS. HARF:** As part of a broader package with some more money. Uh-huh.

**QUESTION:** So many people are confused to reconcile these two statement or the policies --

**MS. HARF:** Well, I don't think there's any confusion about those two statements. The President has made very clear that the situation in Syria is a complicated one, and that as we make decisions about providing assistance, we need to take a look at all of the factors, including how it could affect the situation on the ground, making sure the folks that we're giving it to are vetted. Those all play into our decision making.

So what the President said is true. It is complicated. And when you have a regime with the -- both the will and the ability to use barrel bombs, to use chemical weapons as they have in the past, that's a really tough fight. But that's why we're committed to helping the opposition, and indeed, why yesterday you saw an announcement of additional assistance.

**QUESTION:** So the --

**MS. HARF:** Yeah.

**QUESTION:** -- just follow-up on same statement.

**MS. HARF:** Uh-huh.

**QUESTION:** Since the President stated this, there have been a lot of reactions to this. And just yesterday, Washington Post publish another piece and saying that founding fathers of the U.S., Thomas Jefferson was a former farmer, John Adams was teacher, and Benjamin Franklin was pharmacist. So --

**MS. HARF:** Okay. Well, I didn't see that entertaining piece from The Washington Post, but look, the President has been clear that we support the moderate opposition, which is made up of a whole range of Syrians who stood up and said they want a better future. And that's why we've consistently increased the funding to them. But again, this is a tough fight. I think what the President was saying and was underscoring is that the regime has a number of tools they have shown themselves willing to use to put this down forcefully, and that's why we need to keep increasing the support to the opposition; this is just the latest step in that. We think it's an

important step. But I don't have much more analysis to do on what The Washington Post may have said, which, of course, I didn't see.

**QUESTION:** One – go ahead.

**QUESTION:** When do you expect this money to be available to the opposition?

**MS. HARF:** We don't have a specific timeline. As you know, we – I think we have to obviously get it approved by Congress and there's some logistical issues that still need to be worked out, but I don't have a – obviously, as soon as possible, but no specific time.

**QUESTION:** Months? Years?

**MS. HARF:** I don't have even – no, well, hopefully not years. No, no. But I don't have a guess on specifics.

**QUESTION:** Just one more on this.

**MS. HARF:** Yep.

**QUESTION:** The Pentagon said last night that it needs to figure out plans for spending most of the money that's going to be appropriated for this aid and training. What is the State Department going to do with its share of the money?

**MS. HARF:** We're still looking into that. Obviously, how it will specifically be broken down I think is still TBD at this point. Our portion of the money will – then this is, again, a billion dollars – will help mitigate in general the spillover effects on the neighbors by helping to curb violent extremists – extremism, limit the flow of foreign fighters, will also enable us to bolster our partners' civilian counterterrorism capabilities, including law enforcement, prosecution, judicial as well. So we will be working with countries in the region with our bucket of money. I'm not sure that we know yet how it will be broken down.

**QUESTION:** But there's no rough plan, knowing that this was coming?

**MS. HARF:** I mean, there are rough thoughts on it, but we don't have specifics to share at this point.

**QUESTION:** All right.

**June 25, 2014**

**Marie Harf**, Deputy Spokesperson  
Daily Press Briefing, selections on Syria/Iraq  
Washington, DC

**QUESTION:** Is it at all concerning to you that you seem to be on the same side now as not only the Iranians --

**QUESTION:** And the Syrians.

**QUESTION:** -- but President Assad?

**MS. HARF:** In what way?

**QUESTION:** In terms of all of you -- you are helping Maliki to defend and to push back ISIL.

**MS. HARF:** We're helping the Iraqi Government.

**QUESTION:** Well, correct. Maliki is shorthand for the Iraqi Government. So are the Syrians apparently, militarily, with these air strikes, and so are the Iranians. Is this a -- is this problematic at all?

**MS. HARF:** Well, I think there's a couple issues all tied up in that question. First, we know that ISIL is a threat to the entire region, including to Iran. We know that -- we've talked about that over the past few weeks in this room and elsewhere on that front. But to be clear, one of the, if not the main, reason ISIL has been allowed to grow in strength is because of the Assad regime, because of the climate they've created in Syria. And it's been a direct result of that.

So look, our interests in Iraq are to have as quickly as possible an inclusive government formed that can create a path forward and to help the Iraqi Government push back on ISIL.

In terms of these strikes, we obviously are aware of these reports. I don't have any reason to dispute them at this point and, more broadly though, underscore the point that the solution to the threat confronting Iraq is not the intervention of the Assad regime, which, again, really allowed ISIL to drive into Iraq in the first place. But it's the kind of solutions we've been talking about over the past few days.

**QUESTION:** But he's actually doing something that might have a -- that may have an immediate impact on the ground in Iraq.

**MS. HARF:** Well, everything he's done over the past several years has led to this point where we are where ISIL is threatening Iraq.

**QUESTION:** All right. Well, two things --

**MS. HARF:** So again, I can't underscore enough the culpability lying with the Assad regime for creating this climate that could allow ISIL to flourish.

**QUESTION:** Well, two things about – well, two things. One is that for the past several years, as you have pointed out, the Assad regime as well as the Russians have been saying that this is a fight against terrorism. Is that what it is?

**MS. HARF:** Well, I think the Assad --

**QUESTION:** Were they right the whole time?

**MS. HARF:** I think the Assad regime has used that term very loosely to define a whole number of opposition members, including the moderate opposition that we support. So we've been very clear there's a terrorist element, Nusrah and ISIS, inside Syria that we think is a threat and we have been working to help other countries in the region confront. But when the Assad regime uses the word terrorist, it's been my understanding that they've used it very differently.

**QUESTION:** You --

**MS. HARF:** They've used it as an excuse to crack down on their own people and indeed the moderate opposition.

**QUESTION:** And one more thing is that you – the Secretary was obviously there talking to Maliki. The U.S. and others have been very forthright and public about calling for there to be governmental change.

**MS. HARF:** Yep.

**QUESTION:** You've been looking at July 1st. But today, Maliki came out and said that he is opposed to and won't create a national salvation government.

**MS. HARF:** He --

**QUESTION:** Is this --

**MS. HARF:** I think that's been misreported a little bit, so let me clear that up.

**QUESTION:** Okay.

**MS. HARF:** And then we can talk about that a little more.

What Prime Minister Maliki was referring to and what he said today was that he rejected this notion of an emergency government, some sort of imposition of an interim government that's outside of the constitutional process that the Iraqis have in place. In his remarks today, he clearly committed to completing the electoral process, to convening the new parliament – excuse me,

hiccups – to convening the new parliament, and to moving forward with the constitutional process for government formation. And we think these commitments are very much in line with those that he made to the Secretary during the visit. I think there's just been a little confusion about what he was ruling out here.

**QUESTION:** Okay.

**MS. HARF:** Yeah.

**QUESTION:** So these aren't problematic comments to you?

**MS. HARF:** No, no, very much in line with the commitments he made to the Secretary.

**QUESTION:** But is it not the case that this is an emergency?

**MS. HARF:** Well, that's why we've said they need to move forward with government formation as soon as possible. But they need to do so under the constitutional process they have set up, which he's committed to. What he was ruling out is doing some extra-constitutional emergency government separate from that process,

**QUESTION:** You don't believe then that the situation is dire enough that there needs to be some kind of extra-constitutional move?

**MS. HARF:** Well, we believe it's dire enough that they need to move as quickly as possible – and we believe they can – to form a government, but they should not do things outside of their own constitution. The parties have committed to that constitutional process that's in place.

**QUESTION:** Okay.

**MS. HARF:** And they can do it quickly enough.

**QUESTION:** They can?

**MS. HARF:** We believe they can. The question is whether or not they will choose to.

**QUESTION:** The constitution does allow for emergency situation, including, I presume, the formation of an actual salvation government.

**MS. HARF:** Again, Said, there is a constitutional process in place. That kind of suggestion is outside of that process, and we believe they can use the process they have in place to form a government that's in line with the commitments he made to the Secretary and in line with what we're calling for.

**QUESTION:** Okay. Is it your understanding that Maliki actually rejected an idea that was presented to him by anyone?

**QUESTION:** By Ayad Allawi.

**QUESTION:** Ayad Allawi.

**MS. HARF:** I'm not in a position to comment on internal Iraqi deliberations or discussions. Again, the prime minister, what he said today was in line with the commitments he made to the Secretary.

**QUESTION:** Okay. And I have one question on the Syrians pursuing ISIL.

**MS. HARF:** Uh-huh.

**QUESTION:** Now, you're saying that the Syrian regime was culpable in the creating of ISIL?

**MS. HARF:** In creating the climate that has led to ISIL to flourish and indeed to cross over from Syria into Iraq.

**QUESTION:** How so? Could you explain that?

**MS. HARF:** I mean they've created a huge security vacuum. They've instigated a civil war in their own country, attacked their own people, led to a breakdown in security where groups like Nusrah and groups like ISIS and ISIL have been able to flourish.

**QUESTION:** But they have been – to my understanding, they have been at the receiving end of the regime of these groups that have infiltrated into Syria many times through the support of some neighboring countries.

**MS. HARF:** Well, in terms of some of – in terms of ISIL, what we've said in their support is we don't have any evidence that foreign governments are supporting them. We know there's some possibility of funding from private citizens in other countries, and obviously, we take that very seriously.

**QUESTION:** And lastly, can you confirm that actually the Syrian air force did strike?

**MS. HARF:** As I've said, I'm aware of those reports.

**QUESTION:** Okay. They denied it.

**MS. HARF:** We have – I have no reason to dispute them, but I can't confirm them.

**QUESTION:** Marie --

**MS. HARF:** Yeah, Lucas.

**QUESTION:** If the State Department is open to Russian and Iranian intervention in Iraq in a nonsectarian manner, why not open to --

**MS. HARF:** I definitely didn't say that. I don't think I said we're open to Iranian intervention in Iraq. I said that – I have said that Iran could play a constructive role in promoting an inclusive government in Iraq, as all of its neighbors should do.

**QUESTION:** Okay. Now how about Russia?

**MS. HARF:** Any – look, anyone who has leverage with the different parties in Iraq should use it to push for an inclusive government to be formed very quickly.

**QUESTION:** So that includes Iran?

**MS. HARF:** Look, if they're willing to act constructively here, all of the neighbors.

**QUESTION:** So why not Syria?

**MS. HARF:** Well, again, everything we've seen from the Assad regime over the past several years has been pointed towards the fact that they have led to the security situation where this group could flourish. They have killed their own people. They have allowed groups like ISIL to perpetrate attacks in Syria and now cross over into Iraq. So I think Syria's a very different situation.

**June 24, 2014**

**Marie Harf**, Deputy Spokesperson  
Daily Press Briefing, selections on Syria/Israel  
Washington, DC

**QUESTION:** Yeah. I want to ask a question about Syrian chemical weapons --

**MS. HARF:** Uh-huh.

**QUESTION:** -- that were removed yesterday. Yesterday, during the press briefing, you said that there is still a possibility that the Syrian Government has chemicals which have not been declared yet. What will the U.S. do to be sure that there remain no chemicals in Syria? And what kinds of tools will the U.S. use to determine or check whether there are chemicals in Syria or not?

**MS. HARF:** Well, as this process continues, the OPCW and the international community really has the lead here on reviewing and verifying both the accuracy and also the completeness of Syria's declarations on its chemical weapons. We really need to undertake some further review here to achieve really confidence that we've been able to get all the weapons out, because, of course, we never take the Assad regime at its word given its history of deception and violence. One of the ways we do this, of course, is undertaking our own efforts. We gather intelligence and information, which, of course, we share with our partners as we attempt to evaluate the accuracy and the completeness of their declarations, and we'll continue with the inspection and verification work. The removal of the chemicals is only part of the OPCW mission. There's also a part of it that includes inspection and verification inside Syria after you've removed the weapons and the chemicals. So that's what they'll be doing going forward, again, to check the accuracy.

**QUESTION:** Yeah. But you know that from both in the remarks of the Secretary of State Kerry and your remarks yesterday, it seems that there is a suspicion over there. So do you have any evidence or any reports or intelligence about these kinds of -- a presence of chemical weapons in Syria now?

**MS. HARF:** I don't think it would be breaking news that any of us have suspicions about the Assad regime's intentions or honesty, quite frankly.

**QUESTION:** (Off-mike.)

**MS. HARF:** But look, even so, we have removed now a huge number of chemical weapons from Syria that can no longer be used to threaten the Syrian people. But we don't take what they say at their word. That's why we're constantly checking and reevaluating what we have on the ground there.

**QUESTION:** And these suspicions, you suspect that they keep 2 percent, 3 percent, 4 percent?

**MS. HARF:** I have no number to give you and I'm not --

**QUESTION:** Okay.

**MS. HARF:** -- and I'm not aware of specific information. Doesn't mean it doesn't exist; just means I'm not aware. But we just want to be vigilant as we undertake this effort.

**QUESTION:** And you don't take the word of Bashar al-Assad, of course, but what about the word of the United Nations?

**MS. HARF:** Well, the United Nations and the OPCW have --

**QUESTION:** They certified --

**MS. HARF:** Well --

**QUESTION:** They certified that the Syrians have handed all their chemical weapons.

**MS. HARF:** Of their declared weapons over.

**QUESTION:** Declared weapons, okay.

**MS. HARF:** Right, declared --

**QUESTION:** So you suspect --

**MS. HARF:** Declared is the key word there.

**QUESTION:** -- that there may be undeclared stockpile?

**MS. HARF:** There may be. We can't rule it out. But again, the fact that we've gotten such a huge amount of chemical weapons of that stockpile out of Syria is a good thing.

**QUESTION:** But that's the kind of suspicion that you can never be sure of, correct?

**MS. HARF:** I think we will continue evaluating and we will continue looking at the information. If there is anything else, we'll get it out of the country.

...

**QUESTION:** On Monday, Israeli jets carried out an airstrike against nine military points in Syria. And what would be your assessment in this -- on this event?

**MS. HARF:** Let me see what I have on that. Well, as we have said -- let me just get it up right here. No one asked this yesterday. I was actually surprised. That we support Israel's legitimate

right to self-defense in response to unprovoked assaults, and that we, of course, believe that countries have the right to defend themselves, and beyond that don't have much more comment. Recent attacks we've seen from Syria are unacceptable and have been clear about our concerns about that as well.

**QUESTION:** And you suspect that these attacks were conducted by government forces, correct? The Syrian attack.

**MS. HART:** I have no information otherwise.

**June 23, 2014**

**Marie Harf**, Deputy Spokesperson  
Daily Press Briefing, selections on Syria  
Washington, DC

**QUESTION:** Regarding the Secretary's statement on the removal of the last of the chemical materials --

**MS. HARF:** Yes. Eight percent, the last 8 percent. Yes.

**QUESTION:** The last declared.

**MS. HARF:** Declared. Yeah.

**QUESTION:** The last declared.

**MS. HARF:** And we made clear that point in the statement.

**QUESTION:** So what happens next? Is the priority trying to destroy the production facilities? Is the focus on trying to get back to some sort of peace talks, if that's even feasible? Is it about simply trying to figure out another way or stopping the civil war? What's the priority for this Administration?

**MS. HARF:** Well, there's a number of priorities. One of them is destroying the chemicals that are now out of the country and that are on the ships. So obviously that's a process that will be done in a safe and environmentally responsible manner. So that's what comes next in terms of those chemicals.

As you mentioned, yes, there are other things we still have to do, including destroying the -- some of the production facilities. And again, everything is out of those facilities; it's just about destroying them. And also to continue to make sure that there are no other chemical weapons out there. So in terms of CW, that's sort of where we are right now. But again, this is a milestone, and I think a lot of people doubted whether we would ever get here, so I think it's significant to note.

Look, in terms of the diplomatic side, we are where we have been in that we believe there is no military solution, that we need the parties to get back to the table, but the Assad regime has shown itself wholly unwilling to do so. We're not just going to have talks to have talks. So we will continue to support the opposition, to ramp up our support, as you heard the President talk about recently, and evaluate what happens next.

**QUESTION:** Are you providing military support to the Syrian opposition?

**MS. HARF:** We've said we provide a wide range of support to both the Free Syrian Army and to the political side of the house as well, and that support will continue.

**QUESTION:** Secretary Kerry said that the U.S. is providing military support.

**MS. HARF:** I don't have any more details on what he said, but we are providing a wide range of support.

**QUESTION:** Yeah. But why don't you confirm it?

**MS. HARF:** I don't – he can confirm it for us. I don't have anything to add to what he said.

**QUESTION:** One more. Do you think it is possible that Syria has any chemical weapons or chemical weapon precursors that it did not – that it failed to declare?

**MS. HARF:** I think it's certainly possible. I think you saw that in the Secretary's statement today.

**QUESTION:** What, if anything, are you doing to try to neutralize the – or to prevent Syria from using those weapons, if they exist?

**MS. HARF:** Well, again, we don't know that they exist. And the OPCW has the lead on reviewing and verifying the accuracy of its declaration. So we'll continue supporting them, whether that's with intelligence or information. We will continue supporting them in that regard. But I think we've made very clear that there are consequences to use, and I think if you just look at the last however many months we've been working on getting these weapons out of the country, that that is a significant milestone that we were able to get what they've declared out of the country.

**QUESTION:** What consequence did Syria suffer for its having used chemical weapons?

**MS. HARF:** That they have lost their entire declared stockpile of them.

**QUESTION:** Right. They voluntarily chose to give those up.

**MS. HARF:** Under great international pressure brought on by the threat of American military strikes.

**QUESTION:** So your view is that their choice to give them up is a consequence?

**MS. HARF:** Yes, absolutely, I do. Yes. Anything else?

**QUESTION:** Yeah, a lot. I'm kind of confused by that last answer, though, because I mean, this is a --

**MS. HARF:** The Syrians had to forfeit a stockpile of weapons that, quite frankly, I think they had shown themselves absolutely willing and able to use.

**QUESTION:** Right.

**MS. HARF:** But under great international pressure, including the threat of American air power, they had to be brought to the table to surrender them. So yes, I do think that getting rid of those chemical weapons is a good thing.

**QUESTION:** Okay. Well, I don't think anyone could argue that it's not a good thing.

**MS. HARF:** I'm sure there are people willing to make that argument out there.

**QUESTION:** You think?

**MS. HARF:** You know.

**QUESTION:** Really?

**MS. HARF:** The arguments people make, the depths to which they will go, Matt --

**QUESTION:** Okay.

**MS. HARF:** -- never ceases to amaze me.

**QUESTION:** All right. Assad is no closer to leaving power now than he was before August -- before the chemical weapons were used, right?

**MS. HARF:** But that was never going to be the goal of any military action at the time, regardless.

...

**QUESTION:** Can I make one analogy here, though? Your suggestion that suffering -- that Syria voluntarily, albeit under pressure, choosing to give up its chemical weapons is a consequence that it suffered as a result of the use of chemical weapons is kind of like saying somebody takes a gun, shoots and kills somebody, and then under pressure gives up their gun. But the point is it's, yeah, they've given up their gun, but is that a punishment for --

**MS. HARF:** And that gun can never be used ever again to harm anyone else.

**QUESTION:** Yeah. But nobody's arguing that. So you think it is a consequence?

**MS. HARF:** Yeah, I actually -- yes, I think that the Syrians gave up a weapon that they liked having in their arsenal and clearly showed themselves willing to use. It doesn't mean that don't have really other terrible weapons in their arsenal as well.

**June 18, 2014**

**Jen Psaki**, Spokesperson

**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Syria/Saudi Arabia/Iran/Iraq  
Washington, DC**

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure, my please. A couple of items at the top upon your request. The Secretary met this morning with Ambassador Al-Jabeir. They reaffirmed the strong and enduring partnership between our countries. They discussed a range of shared concerns including recent developments in Iraq and our shared support for the Syrian opposition, and how we can best move forward in the process to end the war and the suffering of the Syrian people.

The Secretary also hosted a – met this morning with members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee as part of our ongoing effort to consult with Congress. They discussed a broad range of foreign policy challenges, including Iraq, including Iran, Ukraine, Africa, and the pending State Department nominations. And of course, a number of members will, of course, be meeting with the President later this afternoon as well.

...

**QUESTION:** Can you be a little bit more specific about his meeting with the Saudi ambassador? Did they discuss questions like the – about the accusations of Saudi funding ISIL?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have any more readout than that. As you know, we've expressed concerns in the past, but I'm not aware of that being a new issue raised today.

...

**QUESTION:** I think the question was asked yesterday, but I don't remember your response on that. Was Syria discussed between the Iranians and the American officials yesterday in Vienna?

**MS. PSAKI:** No. Samir just asked the same question.

**QUESTION:** Okay. Sorry.

**MS. PSAKI:** No, no.

**QUESTION:** He came back.

**MS. PSAKI:** It's Wednesday, it's okay.

**QUESTION:** And --

**MS. PSAKI:** Oh, go ahead.

**QUESTION:** Yeah. And since ISIL is your common enemy with Iraq, with Iran and Syria, would you consider any contact with the Syrian regime on the fight against ISIL?

**MS. PSAKI:** As you know, we've had a means of communicating in the past, but I'm not aware of that being a part of our calculation at this point.

**QUESTION:** Is ISIS your common enemy with Iran?

**MS. PSAKI:** Is it our common enemy? I think we both have concerns about the impact of their – the steps they've taken in Iraq and how they've terrorized the people in Iraq, yes.

**QUESTION:** Because earlier in the briefing you said that Secretary Kerry, when he met with the ambassador of Saudi Arabia, expressed concerns about the past. Have you ever been concerned about Iran's support of ISIL or AQI in the past?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well certainly, Lucas, we've been concerned about the role Iran has played in supporting terrorists in Syria and supporting the regime in Syria. But again, what I'm making a point about here is our shared concern about the impact of what's been happening over the last week on stability in Iraq.

**QUESTION:** But like, is it – the Treasury Department in 2012 said that the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence and Security had been funding and supporting AQI, which has now morphed into ISIS or ISIL. And I was curious how you intend to negotiate or have talks with a country who has supported two years ago a terrorist organization in Iraq; that it's not just Saudi Arabia, it's Iran as well.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we're not talking about negotiations. We're not talking about military cooperation. We're talking about a discussion, a brief discussion that took place earlier this week about concerns about the stability of Iraq, the need for the leaders to be more unified, and that was the thrust of the conversation.

...

**QUESTION:** Jen, yesterday the OPCW, the Ambassador Mikulak – I'm not sure if I'm saying his name properly --

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** -- had issued that statement which was then posted on the website in regards to the OPCW probe that found there was very credible evidence of chemical weapons use in a systematic form in Syria, suggesting that perhaps that body should do a little bit more given that we're three weeks out from the deadline, June 30th.

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** Has anything happened in this building? I mean, what are we exactly asking them to do?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I think we're continuing to ask the regime to --

**QUESTION:** The OPCW, I meant. Sorry.

**MS. PSAKI:** The OPCW? Well, our focus is on continuing to encourage the Syrian regime to meet its obligation to remove the remaining 8 percent of chemical weapons materials. As you know, the OPCW – and officials who are involved in it – remains committed to delivering on their part, and they have confirmed that packaging has been completed at the site where the last 8 percent remains. So we just join the international community on urging the Assad regime to uphold its obligations to remove the remaining chemicals, fully destroy the 12 production facilities that remain intact, and respond substantively – substantially to questions from the OPCW about the completeness and accuracy of Syria's declaration.

**QUESTION:** But the ambassador said it doesn't look like that deadline is going to be met. We're three weeks out and none of the destruction has even begun on the 12 production facilities that we have concerns about and this remaining 8 percent that you mentioned there. So what's happening actively on the ground? I mean, is it more calls to Lavrov or has there been any conversations with the – outreach to the Syrian regime?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, this is an issue, Margaret, that the Secretary raises with Foreign Minister Lavrov virtually every time they speak. The international community and many other countries are very focused on encouraging them to keep making progress. We've removed 92 percent of the most toxic chemicals, but obviously we want to see the remaining 8 percent removed, so we will use every diplomatic lever possible in order to encourage them to keep making progress on that effort.

**QUESTION:** Because broadly speaking, I mean, some argue that by allowing the Syrian Government to continue to, what it looks like, flout this deadline, not comply, hold on to the weapons which some would say is a tool to stay in power, that it feeds support of extremist groups, because you're going to go to the guys who have movement been on the ground, whether it's ISIS or others, and that failing to follow through with this diplomatic agreement in a more forceful way doesn't serve the U.S.'s own purposes in terms of undercutting the extremist forces who are gaining support.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I wouldn't limit our concerns about Syria to just the – removing the remainder of the 8 percent of chemical weapons. Obviously as long Assad remains in power, we have concerns about the role he plays as a magnet for terror. So it's much broader than that.

But I don't think we should lose sight of the fact that we've removed 92 percent. We have every mechanism and every tool available and ready to remove the remaining 8 percent. If they don't abide by that, then I'm sure the international community and the OPCW will take a close look at what to do from there.

**QUESTION:** So – but what is that mechanism that you just referenced?

**MS. PSAKI:** In terms of what?

**QUESTION:** To make them follow through.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, it's not just – obviously there is a UN Security Council resolution, as you know. There's – there are consequences that are included in there. But our focus now is on continuing to press them to make additional progress. We believe that there is every tool possible on the ground to get this job done.

**QUESTION:** When the OPCW called on Syria to redouble its efforts – I think they call on them to redouble their effort – what does that mean? I mean, does that mean that Syria is not complying and not doing anything, that it's lagging behind doing part of its job?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, they've missed a number of target dates, to include the timeline it proposed for the removal of all declared weapons by April 27th. So we have expressed concern about the delay. We've expressed concern about the fact that they have blamed it on a variety of reasons that we don't feel are valid. There have been some security issues on the ground that the OPCW and others have made every effort to address, but our focus remains on providing any support necessary to finish the job and get this done.

Anne. Syria or --

**QUESTION:** Yeah, also on Syria. Is there any update on where the investigation into the possible use of chlorine gas stands? And what is your expectation for when that investigation will be complete, and you and the international bodies looking at it will have something to say?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, the OPCW Technical Secretariat released a summary report – I believe it was just yesterday – on the fact-finding mission in Syria. We will be reviewing that. We feel it warrants serious consideration and we'll study it carefully. The findings included in this summary offer credence ascribed to the systematic use – systemic use of toxic chemicals such as chlorine, and this underscores, of course, the importance as we've been discussing to – and the urgency of removing the remaining chemical weapons in Syria.

This fact-finding mission is an important first step. Obviously, there'll be a final report released which we'll also review when that is released.

**QUESTION:** Will there be a separate U.S. finding or declaration about what – either in conjunction with the OPCW or on your own?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't believe that is in the works. I'm happy to check and see if that's something we have access to information about. Obviously, the OPCW, with support of the United States and other countries, is the mechanism that has access on the ground and kind of the information needed to make an evaluation.

**QUESTION:** But you've been participating in some sort of --

**MS. PSAKI:** Certainly we have been, but they've obviously been on the ground. The United States doesn't have a separate investigative mission on the ground.

**QUESTION:** No, but why is this different than last summer when you did actually kind of run your -- you didn't have U.S. investigators there, but did sort of run a separate U.S. analysis of the evidence available and make your own pronouncement...

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, there obviously was -- it was a different circumstance, certainly, in terms of the level and the horrific acts that happened. I mean, any of these is horrible, but I think last August certainly stands out to all of us. I can check and see if there's any plan -- not that I'm aware of at this moment -- to do a separate U.S. report on these findings.

**QUESTION:** And lastly, would you consider the -- if this bears out from credible evidence to actually OPCW saying that chlorine gas was used, that that also crosses President Obama's redline?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I'm not going to make any pronouncements about future redlines. We'll evaluate the report when it comes out and make a determination about what that means from the United States.

**QUESTION:** I'm just curious about the -- their use of the word "credence," which is not confirmation. And what do you think needs to come next? Are you interested in getting 100 percent -- the United States Government -- are you interested in the OPCW getting 100 percent confirmation --

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we're --

**QUESTION:** -- that chlorine was used?

**MS. PSAKI:** We're absolutely interested in as much certainty as possible, and this is a preliminary report. So again, we'll review a final report when that is concluded.

**QUESTION:** So your -- you would support the OPCW fact-finding team going back and doing what it needs to do to get 100 percent?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not --

**QUESTION:** I'm just not sure I understand what it means that their preliminary mission finds credence to reports that chemical --

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, they released --

**QUESTION:** -- I mean, that chlorine was --

**MS. PSAKI:** -- a summary report, Matt.

**QUESTION:** I know. I read it --

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm. I'm not certain --

**QUESTION:** -- when it came out yesterday.

**MS. PSAKI:** -- what is required to release a final report.

**QUESTION:** But it seems just kind of -- it's kind of wishy-washy. It doesn't -- not kind of, it is. I mean it doesn't say -- doesn't give a definitive answer one way or another whether chlorine was used or not, correct?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, it states exactly as you read and I stated.

**QUESTION:** Right. I mean, it says "gives credence to." So what was the point of it? I mean, it was credible. There was credence to these reports when people started showing up in hospitals with lung abrasions and problems, pulmonary --

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, they evaluate the information that's available on the ground, Matt. They're not going to obviously provide an evaluation or a conclusion that they don't find. So I would --

**QUESTION:** So --

**MS. PSAKI:** -- point you to the OPCW for more specifics on --

**QUESTION:** But --

**MS. PSAKI:** -- what they have and the information they have available.

**QUESTION:** Right. But I'm less interested in what the OPCW thinks about it than what the U.S. Government thinks about -- does the U.S. Government think that this preliminary report is worthwhile -- I mean, you said it warrants serious consideration, but I'm wondering: Why?

**MS. PSAKI:** Because we review any report that is issued by a body like the OPCW. We'll take a look at that and see if there's more conclusions we can draw from it.

**QUESTION:** But does the U.S. Government believe that there is credence to the reports of chemical -- of chlorine gas use?

**MS. PSAKI:** I think we've expressed before, Matt, concerns about the reports that we've seen. I don't have more information than what was available in the OPCW report.

**QUESTION:** But you would endorse this report? The government -- the U.S. Government backs the findings of this report?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we obviously are reviewing it, and if we have any more to add I'm sure we'll do that.

**QUESTION:** But, Jen, I think you've used the term "systemic use" of – that there's been use of chemical weapons systemically.

**MS. PSAKI:** Systematic use.

**QUESTION:** Systematically, okay. So is that like every – was there a pattern or --

**MS. PSAKI:** Said, I'm sure that --

**QUESTION:** Every month?

**MS. PSAKI:** -- the OPCW can give you a more conclusive briefing on the findings of their preliminary report.

**QUESTION:** But I'm saying that the evidence was gathered apparently by people showing up at the hospitals and so on, and showing symptoms and so on – do you have any other evidence?

**MS. PSAKI:** Again, I – the OPCW has had the lead as the appropriate international body here, and I'm sure if they're going to provide a briefing, you can participate in that.

**June 17, 2014**

**Jen Psaki**, Spokesperson

**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Syria/Iran/Iraq  
Washington, DC**

**MS. PSAKI:** Today, I would like to note that Vital Voices is presenting the Global Trailblazer Award to legendary Syrian human rights activist Razan Zaitouneh. Razan, to whom the First Lady and Secretary Kerry presented an International Women of Courage Award in 2013, was abducted in December after reporting on the abuses and crimes happening inside Syria. Her whereabouts remain unknown. As Secretary Kerry said last week in London, Razan has risked her life inside Syria to care for political prisoners and call attention to human rights violations, including against women. We stand in awe of her leadership and heroism. We continue to call for her release and the release of thousands of other human rights defenders inside Syria and around the world.

**QUESTION:** So the Iranian – senior Iranian officials said yesterday after it was reported that talks had taken place on Iraq with the U.S. that there was no specific outcome was achieved at the meeting. Would you agree with that? I mean, was it just a discussion about – that you're going to cooperate with Iran on this, or what specifically was discussed?

They also said then that they would refer to the capitals. What exactly was referred, and what is the timetable now? Or how are things – where did you leave it that – where did you agree that things would move forward?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, as we noted or we released last night, but let me reiterate for all of you here, Deputy Secretary Burns met briefly with Iranians on the margins of the P5+1 meeting in Vienna, separate from the trilateral meeting. It was a brief on the margins; it was separate from the discussions and the negotiations that are ongoing. They discussed the need to support inclusivity in Iraq and the need to refrain from pressing a sectarian agenda.

In terms of where we go from here, we're open to continuing our engagement with the Iranians, just as we are engaging with other regional players on the threat posed by ISIL in Iraq. It is likely it would – those discussions would happen at a lower level, and we don't expect further conversations with Iran on this issue in Vienna. Those talks will focus on the nuclear issue for the remainder of the week.

**QUESTION:** So you don't expect more conversations with Iranians on Iraq in Vienna?

**MS. PSAKI:** Correct.

**QUESTION:** (Off-mike.)

**QUESTION:** Well, where would they take place? Where would the next ones take place, and how soon?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, again, I would caution anyone from overly formalizing what this is. This is – we’re engaging with a range of countries in the region who are concerned about the stability of Iraq and the impact on the region. That’s what this was, briefly on the margins. What it will mean moving forward I think is yet to be determined, but it’s not the launch of a formal process or anything along those lines.

**QUESTION:** How brief is brief?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don’t have a number of specific minutes for you, but I think the emphasis on that --

**QUESTION:** Well, are we talking half an hour, less than half an hour?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don’t have a specific number of minutes. The reason we portrayed that --

**QUESTION:** A few years?

**MS. PSAKI:** The reason we – I used that term is because obviously, there were several hours of meetings on the nuclear issue, and this was just simply on the sidelines of that.

**QUESTION:** And who was --

**QUESTION:** Well, maybe you can, after you answer that question of who he talked to --

**QUESTION:** Yeah. Who was available on the Iranian side? Thanks.

**MS. PSAKI:** I don’t have details to share on that front.

**QUESTION:** Well, can we – I mean, was it like a pull-aside standing up, or did they, like, sit down at a table or something? Just goes to whether this is brief like it’s an encounter in a hallway and it lasted 30 seconds or it was – they sat down at a table and talked for five minutes.

**MS. PSAKI:** I don’t have atmospherics for you. I understand your question. I’ll see if there’s more I can share.

**QUESTION:** So why (inaudible).

**QUESTION:** Well, no, I think it goes to whether these were --

**MS. PSAKI:** Let’s just do one at a time.

**QUESTION:** -- whether this was a serious attempt to talk about Iraq or whether it was just, “Hey, we got to talk about Iraq.” “Okay, we’ll do that sometime.” I mean --

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, obviously, under --

**QUESTION:** -- was this a serious attempt to talk about Iraq between the Iranian and the U.S. sides?

**MS. PSAKI:** We wouldn't have even brought it up as an issue if we didn't -- if it wasn't a serious attempt, Jo, but I don't have the number of minutes or anything along those lines.

**QUESTION:** So if it was a serious attempt, why is there no forward-looking idea of when you might next meet again? I can understand that you wanted to keep it separate from the nuclear talks that are going on in Vienna, but why are you not able to say, "Okay, we've said that we will meet again in a week or two weeks," without even the specific date?

**MS. PSAKI:** Because we don't see a benefit in laying that out. We're going to engage with a range of countries in the region who have a concern about the threat. But again, this is not a launch of a formal process. I mentioned it will be at a lower level, and I don't have anything to announce or predict for you in terms of how that engagement will continue, if it will continue.

**QUESTION:** Was this yesterday or today?

**QUESTION:** Well, where is the sense of urgency?

**QUESTION:** Was this today or --

**MS. PSAKI:** Yesterday.

**QUESTION:** This was yesterday?

**MS. PSAKI:** Yeah.

**QUESTION:** And presumably, even to engage in this limited interaction with the Iranians on this issue, the U.S. Government feels that it holds some hope of a productive outcome. So explain for us where in those hopes reside. What exactly is it you think the Iranians could do that would be useful here given their track record?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, James, I mentioned this yesterday, but it's worth repeating: We're not talking about military cooperation or military coordination. In fact, we don't think that the focus should be on the military component in Iraq. But clearly any country that can make the argument that there needs to be unity and the sectarian tensions that have been flaming in Iraq are harmful to the stability is one we would feel is useful. That is the message that was sent from our end.

**QUESTION:** And has Iran in the past, in recent memory, demonstrated that particular inclination?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, you're familiar with our concerns about Iran's actions and behavior in the past. There is a shared concern, there is a concern that they have expressed publicly about the

stability of Iraq and the impact of ISIL. That was the reason why there was a brief engagement on this yesterday.

**QUESTION:** Is it about hope that Iran can be helpful? Or is it more about laying out what your redlines are when it comes to what Iran's role is in Iraq, and how that affects your view of what's going on in Syria?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, it's really neither. This is a country that also has a concern about the stability of Iraq, therefore we felt it made sense to have a discussion. How that takes place in the future we'll determine in the future.

**QUESTION:** Do you --

**QUESTION:** Jen, was it a topic of discussion during the trilateral or not?

**MS. PSAKI:** No. This occurred on the margins of the trilateral, outside of the trilateral meeting.

**QUESTION:** Can you imagine a situation where Iran does not wield so much influence in Iraq, that you -- that someone has to talk to it about the stability of Iraq? I mean, Iran obviously supports certain groups, it has a great deal of influence, it has the holy places in which they go back and forth. So it has a great deal of interest in Iraq. Can you imagine stability in Iraq happening without some sort of consultation with Iran?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we consulted briefly yesterday, so I think that answers your question.

**QUESTION:** Okay. And just to follow up a little bit --

**MS. PSAKI:** Roz.

**QUESTION:** Is there a goal here? Is this simply to stop ISIL and any other partisans who want to join in in their tracks? Is this about perhaps having Maliki step aside and have some other leader step in on an interim basis? What's the point of engaging with Iran if the U.S. doesn't have any idea of what it wants to see happening inside Iraq?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we certainly have a strong idea of what we want to see happening, but there's no outside country that can do that on behalf of Iraq. And obviously the officials in Iraq need to take those steps, political steps, to reduce sectarian tensions, to strengthen the Iraqi security forces. Clearly, we want to see an end to the threat of ISIL not just to Iraq but to the region, to the national security interests of the United States. Our view is that the political component should play a large role there, and any country that can help make that argument to the Iraqi Government is one that we will engage with.

**QUESTION:** Is that the primary reason why there is this overture to Tehran?

**MS. PSAKI:** Primary reason --

**QUESTION:** For the overture to get it to get the message to Maliki and whoever is advising him that they shouldn't focus so much on fighting this threat as much as putting energy into political reconciliation and inclusivity.

**MS. PSAKI:** That certainly is a prominent component of our message, yes.

**QUESTION:** Jen, I want to take you back to the interview yesterday with the Secretary of State with Yahoo. And when asked about Saudi Arabia and Kuwait and Qatar in particular, these three countries supporting and financing – with weapons and money and so on – ISIL, he said we are concerned about this reality, we are dealing with it and so on. So is it the feeling in this building and for the Secretary of State that in fact Saudi Arabia does aid ISIL?

**MS. PSAKI:** That's not at all what the Secretary stated. You're familiar with our concerns we've expressed in the past as it relates to Syria. Our – the message that he is conveying to these leaders as he speaks to them is that the threats from ISIL's advance touched them and their interests directly, and that at this critical time it's important for Iraq's neighbors to support all of Iraq's leaders and the Iraqi people to help them build unity they need to move beyond this crisis and on to a better future. And that's the message he's conveying. He talked to them a bit about our thoughts, hears from them as well, but that is the reason why he's calling and has continued to call a range of leaders in the region.

**QUESTION:** But you agree that at least the United States Government knows that many wealthy individuals in Saudi Arabia are financing these fellows in ISIL.

**MS. PSAKI:** I think, Said, we've expressed in the past our concern about financing of terrorists from a range of sources. Those haven't changed. But our focus of these conversations remains on the need for countries in the region to support all Iraqi leaders at this time.

**QUESTION:** My last question regarding this issue: ISIL issued a statement saying that Jordan is part of this great Islamic caliphate that they are establishing. Are you doing anything with the Jordanians, considering how close they are to the United States of America?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, the Secretary spoke with Foreign Minister Judeh this morning, so they're one of the countries that we're engaging with.

**QUESTION:** Jen.

**MS. PSAKI:** Go ahead.

**QUESTION:** (Off-mike.)

**QUESTION:** I'm sorry. Just to clarify more on this, and I'm sorry to go around and around on it --

**MS. PSAKI:** No, go ahead.

**QUESTION:** Jen, yesterday as everybody here was kind of groping for how to frame some of the messages that were coming out of the Administration, you twice during this briefing said that this communication with Iran would follow a kind of precedent set by communications between Washington and Tehran over Afghanistan.

**MS. PSAKI:** I didn't say a "precedent." I actually said that there are other times where we've engaged with other – Tehran about other issues, including Afghanistan.

**QUESTION:** Okay. So then --

**MS. PSAKI:** I didn't link the two as exactly modeling each other.

**QUESTION:** I bring it up just because that particular communication involved the sharing of intelligence in the effort to topple the Taliban, and you're saying now that that wouldn't be – we shouldn't read that as a precedent that --

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not just saying now. I would point you – encourage you to read my transcript more closely from yesterday.

**QUESTION:** Jen, are you --

**QUESTION:** Hold on. I'm sorry. Quick – just to follow on that since we're still on this. Let's also just kind of hone in on the fact that there's a group of diplomats in Iraq that were taken hostage. There are something like 25 Turkish diplomats, 49 Turkish citizens in all. The Erdogan government today is saying that it's working extremely sensitively towards getting their release. I'm wondering if anybody in this building is part of that conversation or has any kind of insight into what that sensitive effort involves.

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have any new insight to offer, other than to convey that we've been in close touch with Turkish officials, as we were last week when many of these diplomats were actually kidnapped. And we've offered our help and our support, and we will continue to be available for that.

**QUESTION:** Thank you.

**QUESTION:** I think – I just want to make a point. The first contacts with Iran – acknowledged between the U.S. and Iran over Afghanistan were not – it was actually about drugs, drug smuggling, back in 1999, 2000.

**MS. PSAKI:** Okay. Thank you for that.

Go ahead.

**QUESTION:** Jen, a follow-up on Said's question: Prime Minister Maliki was clear today in holding Saudi Arabia responsible for supporting ISIL financially and morally. What do you think about this?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, that's the opposite of what the Iraqi people need right now, and we have continued to make the case to Prime Minister Maliki – Ambassador Beecroft met with him just yesterday – that taking steps to govern in a nonsectarian way, to be more inclusive to increased support to the security forces is what his focus should be on. And this is obviously the opposite of what that is. It's inaccurate and, frankly, offensive.

**QUESTION:** Would you say that --

**QUESTION:** Sorry. What --

**QUESTION:** -- he is fanning the flames of sectarianism?

**QUESTION:** -- is inaccurate?

**MS. PSAKI:** The comments that he made.

**QUESTION:** What is inaccurate and offensive?

**MS. PSAKI:** The comments he made. I would --

**QUESTION:** About Saudi?

**MS. PSAKI:** Yes.

**QUESTION:** Would you say that Maliki is basically fanning the flames of sectarianism?

**MS. PSAKI:** I think I would say there's more that can be done to be more inclusive and govern in a nonsectarian manner.

**QUESTION:** And one more – sorry James – on this. Saudi Arabia called the events in Iraq a Sunni revolution, adding that the sectarian – that the exclusionary policies in Iraq over the past three years are behind the recent unrest in the country. Do you agree with the Saudis on this?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I – the way we see this is that the situation is complex, and there are some tribes and key local Sunni politicians have joined with the Iraqi Government. Others are working with ISIL through violence to destabilize the government. Those working with ISIL are, of course, supporting terrorists who adhere to an extreme ideology, which believes that Shia should be killed based on their sect alone. Obviously, our view is that there needs to be – the way that Iraq is governed by the leaders needs to take into account the legitimate grievances of all of the people.

**QUESTION:** That means you don't agree with them that what's happening is a Sunni revolution?

**MS. PSAKI:** I think I made my comments clear.

Go ahead.

**QUESTION:** Given the latest developments – the new violence and what appears to be the spread of exactly what you don't want, which is sectarian killings and massacres on both sides – I'm wondering, one, is there any change to the revised status of the Embassy and Embassy personnel? And two, are all of the people who were being relocated to different places, are they at those different places?

**MS. PSAKI:** There's no change. That process, as I understand it, is ongoing, but I'm not going to --

**QUESTION:** Excuse me. The relocation process is ongoing?

**MS. PSAKI:** Yes.

**QUESTION:** So it's not complete?

**MS. PSAKI:** Correct.

**QUESTION:** Yeah.

**QUESTION:** On the issue of the security contractors, there are a number of security contractors, many of them American and so on, in Iraq. Are they in coordination, or did they coordinate their presence or their departure from Iraq with the U.S. Embassy? Do you know anything about their status?

**MS. PSAKI:** The -- are you referring to the contractors who were --

**QUESTION:** Contractors -- yeah, security contractors. They were providing security --

**MS. PSAKI:** Let me finish my question --

**QUESTION:** Yeah, I'm saying --

**MS. PSAKI:** -- so I can make sure I answer your question accurately.

**QUESTION:** Right.

**MS. PSAKI:** Are you referring to the contractors from last week that were moved out --

**QUESTION:** Yeah. Partially, yes --

**MS. PSAKI:** -- or different?

**QUESTION:** -- the contractors from last week and others that stayed on.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, those individuals were moved out by their companies. Obviously, we remain in close touch with American companies and we provide information and services to American citizens. But beyond that I don't have any other update for you.

James.

**QUESTION:** May I request two different topics if I might here?

**MS. PSAKI:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** One is, is it correct that there is a U.S. Government delegation meeting with the KRG today?

**MS. PSAKI:** I did not receive an update from our team on – are you referring to our diplomats in Iraq?

**QUESTION:** Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

**MS. PSAKI:** On their meetings today – I can go back. They've had a range of meetings with a range of officials, including Kurdish officials, over the past several days. So it wouldn't surprise me, but I'll check and see if we have an updated list of meetings.

**QUESTION:** We did an interview with the foreign minister from the Kurdish Regional Government yesterday, and he indicated that today he expected to be sitting down with a U.S. delegation. Is – would that be Assistant Secretary McGurk or are you familiar with this?

**MS. PSAKI:** It could be. And I would just – I am happy to check, but I would remind you that Deputy Assistant Secretary McGurk has been there for, I believe, a week and a half now. He's had meetings with a range of officials. We've tried to provide updates on those. So it could be him; it could be other officials as well.

**QUESTION:** The other question I wanted to ask is this: Given all the particulars of this situation in which so much American blood and treasure was expended in order to establish this central Iraqi government, and given furthermore that that central Iraqi government is now in a situation where terrorist enemy fighters are closing in within 100 miles of Baghdad, isn't it the case that for the President of the United States to predicate any swift U.S. intervention to help this central government on the readiness of that government to make some greater efforts toward political inclusiveness in the political system there – isn't that really akin to trying to teach a drowning man to swim?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, that's not an accurate depiction of our view or the President's view. I would say that our view is that Iraq and the successful outcome here is not contingent upon the intervention of any country. They need to take steps on the political front to be more inclusive, to govern in a non-sectarian manner. But the United States is – and the President is – considering a range of options, looking at factors including the national security interests of the United States.

So in the meantime, we've increased our assistance, whether that's military assistance or surveillance, over the course of the last several weeks and months because of our concern here and in an effort to assist. And we'll make decisions about what's next based on what's in our national security interests.

**QUESTION:** So you think that if al-Maliki were to just hold hands with Sunni leaders prominently and sing "Kumbaya" that this would somehow stop the advance of ISIL within 50 miles of Baghdad?

**MS. PSAKI:** That's not what I'm suggesting. But we do think that at this time a unified government across all of the sects is an important component of a successful long-term outcome.

**QUESTION:** So you're anti-"Kumbaya"? Is that what you're saying?

**MS. PSAKI:** It's a lovely song. I'm not sure it will immediately help in this case.

**QUESTION:** Jen --

**QUESTION:** Can I just ask you -- going back to the Iran thing for one second, you said at a lower level -- recognizing -- that the future talks would, if there are any, would be at a lower level. Recognizing that there isn't anything set -- I want to make sure. There's nothing set, right?

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** Are we talking about having meetings in Baghdad amongst diplomats who are there, or like in New York or the UN? Has that not been decided? Could it be -- could they be anywhere? I mean, there are a lot of places where there are U.S. and Iranian diplomats posted in the same place. Would you expect that they would be in a place that is in or close to Iraq or could they be, I don't know, Beijing?

**QUESTION:** Or Tehran?

**MS. PSAKI:** I just don't have any more details to share. I certainly understand the interest. Don't have any more details to share.

**QUESTION:** Oh, no. That's right where I wanted to take -- is where were those -- where were discussions left? I mean, how do you see moving forward on this thing? Would you see maybe Iran being part of a bigger discussion in a room with other neighbors? Because you said that this is a regional issue.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, that's far ahead of where discussions were left. This was a brief discussion on the sidelines of the P5+1 negotiations. We'll continue to engage with countries in the region, including Iran. But beyond that, I don't have any predictions for you in terms of if, when, how.

**QUESTION:** So you don't know – where were discussions left? I mean, where – surely you didn't say okay, thanks very much, and that the book was closed.

**MS. PSAKI:** We conveyed where we were coming from. It was an opportunity to do that. Beyond that, I don't have any other updates.

**QUESTION:** And a follow up on that. Is – given that there's no sign that Maliki's government is going to listen to the U.S. on reaching out to the Sunnis, would the U.S. still then be willing to consider options of strikes? I mean, is it – is that a – is it a condition of those strikes or of the U.S. offering further assistance?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, the President continues to consider a range of actions, but there – our view is there needs to be a comprehensive strategy, and that includes capacity building for security forces. But there's a great deal that's on the shoulders of the Iraqi Government, and we believe that there's more they should and can do. But I don't want to lay out more detail about what's being considered and how and why.

**QUESTION:** So you want to see them --

**QUESTION:** Is there any --

**QUESTION:** You want to see them coming up with a plan first before the President moves? I'm just trying to figure it out.

**MS. PSAKI:** No, I understand why you're asking. But I'm not going to box us into how and when and why we'll make decisions.

**QUESTION:** Is Assistant Secretary McGurk or anyone from the Administration reaching out to see how this – it's not only ISIL, but it's also a coalition of 80 Sunni tribes, maybe 41 militant former Baathist groups and so on. It's huge. It's a huge thing. Is anyone reaching out to these groups?

**MS. PSAKI:** As I noted, I think last week, Deputy Assistant Secretary McGurk had met with a range of officials from different tribes. We've met with different officials across the political spectrum, and I expect that will continue.

**QUESTION:** Has there been any discussion of having the Arab League intervene in this in any way?

**MS. PSAKI:** Not that I'm aware of, Roz. Obviously there are a range of countries that could be in touch with them.

**QUESTION:** And then I have one other one. It's a legal question regarding the U.S. troops. Apparently they have legal permission from the Iraqi Government to be in country. They are carrying weapons. Given the crisis, I can understand how things move very quickly. Does it sort

of beg the question why this couldn't have been done back in 2011, when the U.S. was ready and willing to have troops there to work on counterterror measures with the Iraqi army?

**MS. PSAKI:** It's an entirely separate question. These are -- military are there for the security of the Embassy. That's what their focus is. That's the role they're playing. This is linked to the announcement we made on Monday -- or sorry, Sunday -- about the relocation of some of our staff and the fact that some would be coming in to help the security there.

**QUESTION:** But I think the question was: Technically, on the legal issue, I mean, are -- do they come under chief of mission authority, even though they're Pentagon and not the regular Embassy Marine guards? Because if they do, then they have immunity, but if they don't, then you would need some kind of an agreement with the Iraqis to give them immunity. And I think what Roz is asking, and it makes perfect sense, is: If the Iraqis were willing to do it now for these people, why didn't you -- why couldn't you try -- why couldn't you have gotten -- why couldn't you convince them back in 2011 when you were trying to get a broader SOFA?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, Matt, they were -- they're trained to integrate --

**QUESTION:** So -- but it's a moot point if they're under chief of mission authority and they have immunity because of that. But if --

**MS. PSAKI:** They're trained to integrate with existing U.S. Embassy security teams, but they're not playing a combat role. They're playing a role at protecting our Embassy and providing security at our Embassy.

**QUESTION:** Well, right. But --

**QUESTION:** But the SOFA wasn't supposed to give them combat status. It was supposed to give them training and cooperation on counterterror, which is not technically combat status.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, that's not the role they're playing here, though, either. So I will see if they're under the chief of mission authority and I'm happy to get that answer (inaudible).

**QUESTION:** Right. And if they're not, can you find out exactly how they have -- because presumably you wouldn't -- they wouldn't -- the Pentagon wouldn't have sent them if they were -- did not have immunity. So if they are not under -- if they're not covered by the diplomatic -- by a Vienna Convention type of thing, what they are covered by would be interesting to know.

**MS. PSAKI:** Certainly, and they're meant, as I noted, but to augment --

**QUESTION:** I know, I know.

**MS. PSAKI:** -- the security we already have on the ground.

...

**QUESTION:** Do you have any update on the presence of Iranian Revolutionary Guards in Iraq?

**MS. PSAKI:** I do not.

**QUESTION:** Where is Bill Burns at the moment? Is he coming – is he back here or is he staying?

**MS. PSAKI:** Where in the world is Bill Burns?

**QUESTION:** Yes.

**MS. PSAKI:** He was only in Vienna for yesterday. I'm not aware if there are other travel plans. I'm sure he'll be back in Washington soon, if he's not already.

**QUESTION:** Just follow up on the – on your relationship with Iran. Would you – I mean, would the U.S. consider resuming the diplomatic relationship, as the U.K. will do in reopening their embassy in Tehran?

**MS. PSAKI:** That's far from the point we're at. We're just talking about a brief engagement on this issue. Our focus is on the nuclear negotiations, and I expect that will be the case for the time being.

**QUESTION:** And do you – so do you support the U.K. – I mean, the U.K. decision to reopen its embassy in Tehran? Is it a good sign? Is it a good move?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, clearly every country makes their own decisions, and our focus is on continuing the P5+1 negotiations and the effort to close the gaps there. So as long as it doesn't interfere with that, it is a choice that they are making.

**QUESTION:** Is it fair to say that American policymakers were taken by surprise with this sweep into Mosul and other Iraqi cities by ISIL, or did they, in fact, have some advanced knowledge or warning that this was going to be happening imminently?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I would say that we've long been concerned about the growth of terrorist operations in Syria, the neighboring country, of course, and the expansion of that or the overflow of that, we feel, is one of the main determining factors here. Beyond that, we've also increased our assistance, whether that's training or it's military equipment, over the course of the last several months given our concerns. I don't have any other outtakes for you.

**QUESTION:** Would you say that anyone --

**QUESTION:** (Off-mike.)

**MS. PSAKI:** No. Two Iraqis, two Iraqis.

**QUESTION:** Would you say that anyone who asserted that he or she were inside the United States Government and tried to warn top policymakers that this was imminent would be wrong or inaccurate to say so and that those warnings were not heeded?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, that feels a little straw man argument to me, but we've increased our assistance because of our concern about the overflow from Syria, and we've taken steps over the past couple of months given that.

**QUESTION:** And maybe the simplest way to ask this is: Were there warnings specifically about these kinds of developments happening imminently that were unheeded by top policymakers in this government?

**MS. PSAKI:** I think I have nothing more to share with you on that front, James, other than to say that we've, again – we took steps because we were concerned over the course of the last several months, and we've taken a range of steps to increase the capacity of the Iraqi security forces.

**QUESTION:** So by definition, those steps were insufficient to prevent this from happening?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, clearly we've seen what's happened across Iraq. That's why we're going to continue to increase our assistance, and the President is considering a range of options.

**QUESTION:** Jen, given that the – that you met briefly with the Iranians --

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** -- about Iraq, would you now be open to talking to them about Syria?

**MS. PSAKI:** As you know, the Secretary raised the issue of Syria when he met with Foreign Minister Zarif in Germany several months ago. Beyond that, I think our focus will continue to be mainly on the nuclear negotiations.

**QUESTION:** And there was no discussion yesterday on Syria at all?

**MS. PSAKI:** No. No.

**June 11, 2014**

**Jen Psaki**, Spokesperson  
**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Syria/Turkey/Iraq**  
**Washington, DC**

**QUESTION:** Okay, just to kind of bring Syria back in, okay?

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** So you're helping the Iraqi Government. You see what a grave concern this is as far as Iraq is concerned, and you're giving the Iraqi Government the support it needs to go after these guys.

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** But you're not making a distinction, are you, between the group's activities in Iraq and the group's activities in Syria? I mean, they're just as deadly to the Syrian people as the Iraqi people, and they're going back and forth across the border. So how do you reconcile what you're doing with Iraq with the kind of cautious, understandably but recognizably cautious approach that you're taking towards helping the rebels go after – or yourself going after ISIL in Syria?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, they're entirely different situations.

**QUESTION:** Really?

**MS. PSAKI:** And what we said yesterday – and I would point you to the statement we put out – was that the situation in Syria has been an enormous contributing factor to what we're seeing in terms of --

**QUESTION:** No doubt.

**MS. PSAKI:** -- the security situation in Iraq. There's no doubt about that.

**QUESTION:** No doubt.

**MS. PSAKI:** Obviously the Government of Iraq has been a partner of ours on addressing terrorism for several years now. We know there have been ups and downs in that; there's no question about that. But we remain committed to that effort and we will continue to be.

The situation in Syria – you're talking about the Government of Syria, which has obviously been most responsible for inflicting terror on their own people. And we have worked and taken every step possible to bolster and support the rebels, whether that's strengthening them politically, increasing our assistance. You heard the Secretary of State say over the weekend in an interview with CNN about our support for legislation, language that's currently working its way through

the Senate that would provide additional assistance to the vetted members of the armed opposition. They're different situations, and we deal with them differently because that is what we feel is the most responsible approach.

**QUESTION:** Well, they're different situations in the case of how you aid one and not the other, but it is the same situation, because as you, their activities in Syria are affecting their activities in Iraq and vice-versa. So can you say unequivocally now that you realize that you're going to need to up arming and training and equipping these rebels, not necessarily only to go after the regime – which I know you want to get rid of the regime – but specifically to go after these ISIL guys?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we've long been concerned about the impact of extremists, including from ISIL and other groups that have a presence in Syria. When the President gave his speech at West Point last week, I think – the week before, one of the pieces he talked quite a bit about is the changing threat of terrorism, and that's why he talked about a \$5 billion counterterrorism fund that would assist countries and threats in places like Iraq and places like neighboring countries around Syria, because we've known that this threat was one that we would – that we have been long concerned about.

**QUESTION:** But if you're going to go after ISIL in Iraq through your support for the Iraqi Government, that can't be in a vacuum, right? I mean, you need to go after these guys in Iraq and in Syria, correct?

**MS. PSAKI:** Certainly. But I think we've been consistently – we've consistently said that the threat of terrorism is a concern for us in Syria. It has been as – but we also need to do – address that at the same time while addressing a path forward for a transitional governing body because of the threats posed by the government.

**QUESTION:** But you agree that the same ISIL that is fighting the Syrian Government is the same one that is fighting the Iraqi Government, correct?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, there are different coalitions and different factions, as you know, Said.

**QUESTION:** They claim to be one and the same. They claim to be one and the same.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, there have been many different conflicting reports about that over the course of months, as you know. But regardless, any threat – any terrorist threat – there are many that, unfortunately, exist in that particular region – are of concern to us, and that's why we are upping our focus on the changing threat – changing threats that we're facing today.

**QUESTION:** And today, Bashar al-Assad said that he's willing to go after them to aid the Iraqi Government. Would you welcome that?

**MS. PSAKI:** I think we've been pretty clear over time, Said, that Assad and the horrific acts that he's taken against his own people is a concern we have – we continue to have.

**QUESTION:** So – yes. When do you expect the Senate to vote on the new legislation to aid the Syrian opposition?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, it's passed the Senate Foreign Relations Committee as part of the NDAA, so beyond that there are obviously additional legislative steps that would need to be taken.

**QUESTION:** Why is that? It wasn't a Senate – Armed Services?

**MS. PSAKI:** Oh, sorry. I'm – you're right. Senate Armed Services.

**QUESTION:** What – right. But is that what this all is dependent on? I mean, that could take months. And in fact, unless something happened while we were away last week, you don't even have congressional – even a signal that they're going to sign off on this \$5 billion counterterrorism program. Is that what you're waiting for to give the Iraqis new assistance?

**MS. PSAKI:** No. I wasn't stating that at all.

**QUESTION:** Oh. Okay.

**MS. PSAKI:** Elise was asking me about Syria, and that's a separate question.

**June 10, 2014**

**Jen Psaki**, Spokesperson  
Daily Press Briefing, selections on Syria  
Washington, DC

**QUESTION:** And one on Syria, if I may. Today, former Ambassador Ford wrote a piece on New York Times, and one of the points he was making that the U.S. should give far greater material support and training to Free Syrian Army. Are you considering this option any time soon?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, let me say that we've been providing political, financial, and other support to the opposition for some time. As you know, we expanded the scale and scope of our aid and assistance last year, and we are continuing to increase our assistance to the opposition, including vetted members of the armed opposition. And the President spoke to this during his speech just last week.

I would also note that in the Secretary's interview with CNN just a couple of days ago, and on other occasions in this briefing room and others, we've indicated a support for the Levin language in the NDAA, which would provide the authority to the Department of Defense to train and arm. And so I would point you to that. We continue to work with Congress on that, but I think the Administration has been clear about our commitment to increasing our support.

**QUESTION:** So we cannot imagine the ambassador already knows all these efforts. What he wants is far greater support, something that dramatically different than U.S. already has been doing. And my question is that: Do you have any reconsideration to change dramatically?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, again, Ambassador Ford, who I was – had the pleasure of working with for a year while he was here and while I was here, and he's an incredible diplomat and gave an incredible decades of service to this and many other issues. But there is a difference between being a private citizen and being within the government, and a great deal has changed. Conversations have changed. Efforts have increased since he left the government.

**QUESTION:** Well, it does seem as if Ambassador Ford – Secretary Clinton makes clear in her – former Secretary Clinton makes clear in her book, and I think it's been pretty widely reported and in fact acknowledged, that Secretary Kerry was an early proponent of arming the rebels to change President Assad's calculus. And it does seem as if like two years later, the Administration has finally come around to that point of view. And it seems as if like a lot of bloodshed could've been maybe prevented, and the situation that you now find yourself on the ground in Syria could maybe not be as grave had the Administration come around to this point of view two years ago.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we've continued to increase the support and the kind of support we're providing long before the President's speech just a week ago. So obviously I can't outline the

details of that, but this has been an ongoing discussion within the Administration. We're continuing to increase our support. As you know, there have been a range of factors that have impacted the situation on the ground that have contributed to decision-making, whether that's the influx of foreign fighters or the assistance of Iran and Hezbollah; whether that is our efforts to pursue a diplomatic path or efforts to increase the unity and the strength of the opposition. Those are all factors that were taken into account in our decision-making.

**QUESTION:** You mentioned the vetting of the opposition. How do you vet the opposition? I mean, these rebels are known to switch alliances all the time. Some of them may end up with ISIL, for instance. How do you vet them to ensure that they are actually – whatever aid you give stays with the vetted opposition?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I can assure you, Said, I'm not going to outline that for you here, but this is one of the most important factors that we have – the Secretary has weighed in with his international counterparts on, that we have made a priority as it relates to international assistance, because we believe that the assistance should go through and needs to go through the moderate opposition. And the number of times we've talked about that and raised that as an issue on the agenda speaks to our commitment to doing that in the best way possible.

**QUESTION:** So you agree that sending any arms may in fact exacerbate violence instead of stemming violence?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, you know where we stand, that we don't feel that there is a military solution here. But again, I just outlined – I just reminded you that we have increased our assistance over time. We have been supportive of the language in the Levin Amendment – the Levin language in the NDAA, and we will see where we go from here.

**QUESTION:** But in your statement about ISIL and the attacks in Mosul, you said that they're – ISIL gained from the situation in Syria. So is there any regret here looking back that if things had been different in Syria, you wouldn't have this problem in Iraq and potentially getting bigger throughout the Middle East?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I would say, Lucas, that there are a range of factors that have contributed to where we are in Syria today, and they include the ones I just outlined: the influx of foreign fighters, the engagement of Iran and others, the need to strengthen the opposition. We are where we are now. We're taking steps to increase our assistance. We're – the moderate opposition had a great trip to Washington, and we'll go from here.

**QUESTION:** But no regrets looking back?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not going to entertain or bat that around, Lucas.

**June 9, 2014**

**Marie Harf, Deputy Spokesperson**  
**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Syria**  
**Washington, DC**

**QUESTION:** Assad announced on Monday an amnesty with conditions. What is the U.S. take on it?

**MS. HARF:** Well, look, the Assad regime has an appalling record of torture, abuse, killings, arbitrary detentions of tens of thousands, including family members of oppositionists, and quite frankly, extrajudicial execution of thousands of prisoners. So I don't really know what amnesty means. I don't know what he means by it. I don't know what pardons that would include. It's really unclear who would it be granted to, how many people, particularly if that would include after release subject to further persecution. So look, I think that this is a ruthless regime that's been willing to hold children captive, that's been willing to use chemical weapons and barrel bombs. I would love to see the details of this proposed amnesty – I really would – because he has shown absolutely no respect for human life in his own country since the start of this. So let's see the details.

...

**QUESTION:** Reuters is reporting that a Syrian rebel commander is saying that the lethal arms from the United States going to the country are going to create a warlord-ism, turning Syria into Somalia. Could you comment on that?

**MS. HARF:** Look, as we've said, we're not going to outline all the kinds of assistance we're giving to the moderate opposition. Our goal here though with everything we give is to change the balance of power on the ground, to increasingly push the regime to come back to the negotiating table and get to a diplomatic solution. So I know there are a variety and a range of views about what we should or should not be doing in Syria, but that's our overall goal. And one of the reasons that we vet everyone we give assistance to and that we are very careful when we do it is so we don't either have assistance fall into the hands of terrorist organizations or create even more bloodshed than we've already seen.

**QUESTION:** Does that include lethal assistance?

**MS. HARF:** Again, I'm not going to go into all of the kinds of assistance we give.

**QUESTION:** Susan Rice and now this rebel commander are confirming that lethal assistance is going to the --

**MS. HARF:** I am happy to let the national security advisor's words stand for themselves. As I said, we don't detail all the kinds of assistance we give.

**QUESTION:** But how can you change the situation on the ground if you don't provide lethal --

**MS. HARF:** We are providing a range of assistance, a range of assistance. We will continue doing that, and we will increase it.

...

**QUESTION:** It's -- there was an effort to make a diplomatic effort or political solution, whether it was right or wrong. I mean, the last two months we haven't heard anything about it. Is it off the table --

**MS. HARF:** No. It's on hold.

**QUESTION:** -- or there is an effort going on and we don't know?

**MS. HARF:** Well, it's on hold. And we have worked very hard with the UN and the Russians to see if we can get it back on track, but the reality remains: Until the Assad regime is willing to come to the table and talk actually realistically about a diplomatic solution and a transitional governing body, we can't move forward with diplomacy. So we are not going to further legitimize them in any way by doing this, and I think one of the things that this -- the pardon or the amnesty that Roz asked about -- I think this in part is the regime trying to dangle some very small effort here to try to get legitimacy in the wake of these elections that we know are a sham. So we don't want to let them get away with it, and we don't want to move forward with diplomacy if it's not going to get us to the place we need to be.

**QUESTION:** Let's forget the amnesty, but whether it's EU or Arab League or any other -- UN in particular --

**MS. HARF:** And we've been talking to the UN. We have been.

**QUESTION:** So there is any --

**MS. HARF:** We've been in discussions with the UN and the Russians. Again, as I said, we've had those discussions. But the reality remains that the Assad regime isn't willing to come back to the table under the circumstances we have made very clear need to happen.

**QUESTION:** So there is another question related to this -- I mean, holding the diplomatic or the political effort or means, which is like the impact that it has on the humanitarian aid. Because usually we are discussing here either supplying arms, supplying -- I mean, any place where is more arms are coming, it's more fight is going on. It's not a matter of whether we like it or not.

**MS. HARF:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** Humanitarian aid -- is it on hold too, or it's going on?

**MS. HARF:** No. Humanitarian aid continues. We – the Secretary when he was in Lebanon announced another package of humanitarian aid, which puts the United States over \$2 billion for aid for Syria and Syrian refugees around the region. So that absolutely continues, and that – the Syrian regime should give access like they have in (inaudible), should allow access in for humanitarian aid, even absent a diplomatic solution to the overall crisis.

**QUESTION:** But humanitarian aid – usually when we discuss humanitarian aid, we discuss the source and then the receiving of that.

**MS. HARF:** Uh-huh.

**QUESTION:** Is it going there or not?

**MS. HARF:** We have humanitarian aid going into Syria today. We do.

**June 6, 2014**

**Marie Harf**, Deputy Spokesperson  
Daily Press Briefing, selections on Syria  
Washington, DC

**QUESTION:** On Wednesday Secretary Kerry made – called on Hezbollah to work to engage in efforts to end the war in Syria. Does this call change anything in the position of this Administration vis-a-vis Hezbollah?

**MS. HARF:** No, it doesn't. It's the same concept we've talked about for a long time where we've called on parties who have influence over the regime – Iran, Hezbollah, Russia – to use their influence with the Assad regime to push them towards a diplomatic solution and push them to a better place. It's in no way a change of policy, but it's a recognition of the reality that there are outside actors who have influence on the regime and should be using it.

**QUESTION:** Is this dealing with Hezbollah as a state-like actor?

**MS. HARF:** No one's talking about dealing with Hezbollah. They are a party who – a group who has influence over the regime, period.

**QUESTION:** Putting it on the same level as Iran and Russia?

**MS. HARF:** No. No, I'm not trying to compare those three at all except in that they all have some leverage over the regime.

**QUESTION:** Today the head of Hezbollah, Sheikh Nasrallah, said that the re-election of President Bashar al-Assad is a good point to go to move forward for a peaceful solution. Do you find this encouraging?

**MS. HARF:** No. I don't think I find anything encouraging about an election where the electorate that's being asked to vote for a leader is being killed by its own leadership. I find nothing about that encouraging, no.

**QUESTION:** In line of what you're saying, those who have influence should exert it in the proper direction, and Hezbollah --

**MS. HARF:** I wouldn't call that exerting influence in the right way.

**QUESTION:** So that is not encouraging?

**MS. HARF:** No.

...

**QUESTION:** I think I know what you're going to say to this, but anyway. (Laughter.) National Security Advisor Susan Rice gave an interview to CNN this morning or this afternoon from the beaches in Normandy in which she said that President – that the Administration was providing lethal and nonlethal support to select members of the Syrian opposition. What does she mean by lethal?

**MS. HARF:** As we've said, we're not going to specifically outline all the kinds of support we're giving. I think I'd leave the national security advisor's words to themselves.

**QUESTION:** But usually from the podium the Administration has been talking about military and non-military support.

**MS. HARF:** Again --

**QUESTION:** Did she slip up, or are you actually providing lethal support as she said?

**MS. HARF:** Again, no more details for you on what we're providing. I think I'll let her words stand on their own.

**QUESTION:** And you have no reason to discount or dispute her words?

**MS. HARF:** I'm not going to comment on her words in any other way.

**June 5, 2014**

**Marie Harf**, Deputy Spokesperson  
**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Syria**  
**Washington, DC**

**QUESTION:** Secretary Kerry in his press conference in Beirut yesterday, he said on Syria it's not up to us to decide when or how President Assad goes. It's up to people in other countries, and specifically it's up to the Syrians. Is this a new message he --

**MS. HARF:** No.

**QUESTION:** -- intended to send to Assad?

**MS. HARF:** No, no, no. Not -- no new messages here. What we said is it's up to the Syrians to decide their future, which is why elections like we saw this week are a complete sham and disgraceful because they haven't had the opportunity to do so when many people weren't able to vote, when people were being killed while they were attempting to vote.

So nothing's changed at all on this. We've obviously called on actors in the region like Iran, like Hezbollah who have influence over the regime, to try to press them to make some progress here. That's also part of what he was referring to as well.

**QUESTION:** He didn't repeat that Assad must go.

**MS. HARF:** Assad must go. I'll repeat it right now. Nothing's changed. (Laughter.)

**June 4, 2014**

**Marie Harf**, Deputy Spokesperson  
Daily Press Briefing, selections on Syria  
Washington, DC

**QUESTION:** Okay. Yesterday I think it was former ambassador to Syria --

**MS. HARF:** I thought we were going to get through the whole briefing without the --

**QUESTION:** Okay. Robert Ford said that you guys could have stepped in early on and aided the moderate opposition. Are there any kind of regrets that you have not done that?

**MS. HARF:** We've been consistently aiding the moderate opposition in a variety of ways. We've continued to increase it. As the President said last week, we will continue to do so going forward. Look, I don't think anyone can -- as I said yesterday a number of times -- look at what's happening in Syria, what's happened there, and be satisfied. It's heartbreaking and frustrating. But that's why, again, we announced another tranche of aid today to the Syrian people. That puts us over \$2 billion.

**QUESTION:** Today?

**MS. HARF:** Today. The Secretary announced it in Lebanon. Secretary -- let me just -- because I'm not sure all of you see this. He announced --

**QUESTION:** I just saw.

**MS. HARF:** -- an additional 290 million in U.S. humanitarian assistance to help those suffering inside Syria, as well as refugees and host communities in the neighboring countries. Our humanitarian contribution since the start of the crisis now totals more than \$2 billion. This funding includes 135 million for food assistance provided by the World Food Program, which despite, I think anyone can say, overwhelming obstacles is working to feed 4 million people in Syria and 1.6 million refugees throughout the regions; also includes more than 133 million in humanitarian aid through NGOs working in and around Syria.

**QUESTION:** Are you frustrated by the fact that most people focus on the military aspect of aid and not the \$2 billion that you aided them with?

**MS. HARF:** Honestly, Said, yes.

**QUESTION:** Okay. All right. So --

**MS. HARF:** Because -- look, there are a variety of ways we can help the Syrian people. And \$2 billion in American taxpayer money feeding Syrians, helping the -- I mean, this is a humanitarian

disaster of huge proportion, and we need to do more than that. And we are, but I think it is incredibly important, and that's why we highlight it as much as we can.

**QUESTION:** Okay. Now, the Syrian Foreign Minister Walid Mualem, while voting yesterday or the day before --

**MS. HARF:** It's embarrassing.

**QUESTION:** -- said that now the peaceful solution is sort of on, so to speak, after the re-election of Bashar al-Assad for a third term. If the Government of Syria proposes, let's say, some sort of an initiative -- peaceful initiative to bring in the opposition and have a dialogue and a transitional government, would you support that?

**MS. HARF:** I'll believe it if they come to the negotiating table, endorse Geneva I, say they want a transitional governing body with executive authority -- whatever the exact language is -- and come back to the table ready to negotiate. That's when I'll believe it.

**QUESTION:** Is it safe to assume that when the Secretary of State meets with his Russian counterpart that they will discuss perhaps relaunching of Geneva III?

**MS. HARF:** I'm sure Syria will be a topic of discussion, whether it's CW or the diplomatic route. I'm happy to -- after the meeting -- see what we can get you.

**QUESTION:** But is there -- is there any consideration in the Administration to open a diplomatic dialogue or a diplomatic channel with the regime after the elections?

**MS. HARF:** Well, this election doesn't change our efforts in any way, because we believe it's a total sham. It's disgusting; it's just not acceptable on any level, humanitarian, politically, or otherwise. But look, we've been working through the UN and with the Russians to see if we can get the diplomatic track back on track. We haven't been able to. Obviously, we've worked really hard with the Russians on this because they have unique influence with the Syrian regime. I don't see right now a lot of ways this could move forward diplomatically, because the regime continues to be wholly unwilling to negotiate in any real way. But we're trying.

**QUESTION:** But I meant a dialogue -- diplomatic channel with the Syrian regime.

**MS. HARF:** I'm happy to check with our team and see if that's a possibility.

...

**QUESTION:** Okay. Critics have said that you're treating the symptoms and not the disease. Can you respond to that?

**MS. HARF:** What's the disease?

**QUESTION:** That if you – while it's laudable that the United States Government is paying \$2 billion and feeding refugees, that you're not going after Assad or even al-Qaida elements.

**MS. HARF:** Well, I would disagree with the premise of that. First, we are going after Assad in a variety of ways, just not militarily with U.S. troops. Again, I said yesterday that in no way should we be sending American kids to Syria to work on regime change. That's just crazy. But we've economically and diplomatically isolated him; cut off – sanctions, deprived him of funding; have worked very hard with the international community to not just diplomatically isolate him, but see if we can get to a diplomatic resolution here. So we've been very clear about Bashar al-Assad.

And on the terrorist side, we have actually very, very robust engagement, particularly with our partners in the region, in terms of foreign fighters on the CT issue. We know it's a serious one. We're committed to working with folks in the region who care about this very much. So I think critics who say that think we should be fighting it in a different way, but the notion that we're not fighting it in some way is just not true.

...

**QUESTION:** Sorry. When – can you ballpark about the last time that you or the U.S. Government has seen evidence of the Assad government dropping barrel bombs on people?

**MS. HARF:** I don't know.

**QUESTION:** Okay.

**MS. HARF:** I'm happy to check.

**QUESTION:** Do you know if it's still ongoing?

**MS. HARF:** I don't know.

**QUESTION:** Okay.

**MS. HARF:** I'm happy to check.

**QUESTION:** Please.

**June 3, 2014**

**Marie Harf, Deputy Spokesperson**  
**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Syria**  
**Washington, DC**

Today's presidential election in Syria is a disgrace. Bashar al-Assad has no more credibility today than he did yesterday. Elections should be an opportunity for the people of a free society to be consulted and to play an important role in choosing their leaders. Instead, such a process was inconceivable today in Syria, where the regime continued to reject the courageous calls for freedom and dignity that started more than three years ago. It intentionally denied millions of Syrians the right to vote and continued to massacre the very electorate it purports to represent and protect. Just today, we also note reports the regime shelled the Yarmouk refugee camp and eastern Ghouta.

Detached from reality and devoid of political participation, the Assad regime-staged election today continues a 40-year family legacy of violent suppression that brutally crushes political dissent and fails to fulfill Syrians' aspirations for peace and prosperity.

...

**QUESTION:** Former U.S. Ambassador to Syria Robert Ford has said today in an interview that – a quote: “I was no longer in a position where I felt I could defend the American policy.” That's why he resigned and he left the State Department. He added, “We have been unable to address either the root causes of the conflict in terms of the fighting on the ground and the balance on the ground, and we have a growing extremism threat.” Do you have any reaction to what he said?

**MS. HARF:** I saw those comments. As you know, Ambassador Ford served a very long, distinguished career here, is now a private citizen obviously entitled to his own views. I think, broadly speaking on some of what you addressed and then if I miss anything, let me know. Look, the President was clear in his speech last week. We've all been clear that we're frustrated by the situation in Syria. You heard the President at West Point say we're going to increase our support to the moderate opposition because we know more needs to be done.

No one working on this issue can look at the situation on the ground – I mean, just look at today. The photos – disgusting photos of President Assad voting, acting like this is a real election. Nobody working on it is happy with where things are. We're all frustrated, and I think you heard some of that in Ambassador Ford's comments. On the terrorism front, we've all – I've stood up here for months and months and months now and talked about the growing threat coming from terrorists in Syria that are – is a result of the security situation the Assad regime has allowed there. We've been very clear about that as well, and it's something we're working on every single day.

**QUESTION:** He said, too, that there really is nothing we can point to that's been very successful in our policy, except the removal of about 93 percent of some of Assad's chemical

materials, but now he's using chlorine gas against his opponents. Can you tell us if there is any other success that you were – been able to achieve in Syria?

**MS. HARF:** Well, I think we should not downplay the CW issue too much. I know it's tempting for people to do because it's gone, up until this point, not perfectly, but we have removed so much of it. Because look, if we had a choice between removing the chemical weapons and not removing them, obviously we're going to choose to remove them – and that's the choice we had.

So if Bashar al-Assad is not able to use these kind of chemical weapons on his people anymore, that is a good thing and it's not a small thing. Obviously, he's using --

**QUESTION:** But he's using chlorine gas now.

**MS. HARF:** -- conventional weapons as well. Those aren't less bad. There's just different ways of combatting it, right? So one thing we've said very clearly is we're going to continue supporting the moderate opposition in a variety of ways in their fight against both the regime and against the terrorist element there. Obviously, we don't outline all of that support, but we've continued – you heard the President talk about it and continuing to increase it last week as well.

**QUESTION:** Can I follow up on that?

**MS. HARF:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** I mean, does it not disturb you that a long-time senior, serious former U.S. official, who was directly – who was the point person for this policy should state publicly that he no longer felt he was able to defend the U.S. policy? That doesn't bother you at all?

**MS. HARF:** As I said, he's a private citizen. He's entitled to his views. What we're focused on today is the officials who are still here who are working on Syria, who share the kind of frustration you've heard from the President, the Secretary, and others.

**QUESTION:** And it's not the first one. Fred Hof said the same thing in the past, too.

**MS. HARF:** Again, we appreciate former officials who want to weigh in on what's going on today. Obviously, they have a unique perspective on this, but what we're focused on here is what's happening today, what may be the same, what's changed since any of these folks left and what we need to do going forward.

...

**QUESTION:** Yeah. Syria. I mean, I'm just trying to clarify what Arshad and Michel were trying to say.

**MS. HARF:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** When you say “frustration,” these people are expressing frustration not from Assad. They are expressing frustration from the policy, which is run by – regarding Syria.

**MS. HARF:** Well, the frustration I’m – and I think actually a lot of the frustration you’ve heard people like Ambassador Ford talk about is that the situation is incredibly complicated and there are no easy answers, and that we are constantly looking at ways to increase our support. We are constantly looking at ways to get the parties back to the table. We are constantly looking at ways to help fight the terrorist threat going on in Syria right now. But there are no easy answers and that’s why you see the policy debate that’s happening about what we should do. You heard the President talk about wanting to do more. So what I’m conveying is a sense that there’s nobody that looks at this issue and thinks that we’re in the place we need to be, period – people working on it today here.

**QUESTION:** Yes, but without – as you said, without downplaying the chemical weapons issue – I’m trying to use your terms. But Ambassador Ford is not the first one. Frederick Hof was there before. The same kind of – which is like, they were part of the whole process of policy and they figure out that now – at least they are now talking about frustration that they have regarding this policy. Do you think that their point of view, adding something new to your understanding of what’s going on? Or it’s --

**MS. HARF:** Well, look there are conversations going on at all levels inside the Administration right now about what else we can do – what else we can do to support the opposition, what else we can do to fight the terrorist threat. It’s not like we say, okay, this is what we’re doing in Syria and that’s never going to change. And if it doesn’t work, oh well. It’s – look, this is a complicated problem. We are lucky to have people like Ambassador Ford who have worked on it here, and we’re lucky to have people that are looking at it today, every day, trying to figure out what more we can do. Because as I’ve said many times in this room, when you have a brutal dictator who is willing and able to kill people – like he’s killed with chlorine, potentially, with chemical weapons, with barrel bombs – it’s a really tough challenge and we have a lot of tools at our disposal that we’re using, but there is no solution that will happen overnight. And that’s why you have to calibrate your policy and determine what’s the best next step. What more can we do? How can we do it?

For example, over the last few months, we’ve seen better coordination with our allies in the region on Syria policy, particularly on cutting off some of the funding to some of the foreign fighters going there on the terrorist side of the house. So these are steps we take every day to change the balance of power on the ground, but you have to chip away over time and eventually get to a diplomatic solution.

**QUESTION:** I thought the President’s --

**QUESTION:** (Inaudible.)

**QUESTION:** I thought the President’s argument here wasn’t that there’s no overnight solution. The President who does feel labeled to defend his policy makes the case that --

**MS. HARF:** As do I, every day.

**QUESTION:** No, I know. I know. But he makes the case that there are some problems that do not – that the United – that do not lend themselves to U.S. solution or where the cost of a U.S. solution is simply – exceeds what he believes the United States should do. Correct?

**MS. HARF:** Well, he was making – that's one point. He was making a number of points, one of which is – in terms of what you were getting at – that there's no military solution, particularly not a U.S. military solution. So what other levers and tools of power can we bring to bear on the situation? So in the same speech he then said, but we're going to continue supporting the opposition, that there's no – I mean, we've made all of these arguments about Syria and a variety of places.

...

**QUESTION:** You just mentioned about the terrorists (inaudible) and your cooperation (inaudible). You must have seen the action France is taking after arresting this person who is supposed to be the shooter in the Belgium's Jewish case. The France is – there are three, four stops they are taking. The Belgium is going to follow up and the EU is considering. Is there going to be any change in U.S. policy in this matter?

**MS. HARF:** In terms of what? In terms of the terrorist threat?

**QUESTION:** Where the citizens – is a French citizen who went to Syria --

**MS. HARF:** Uh-huh, yeah, no, I've seen the reports. Just a couple points on that, and I'm not sure we've had all of these in the past, but to date we have not identified an organized recruitment effort targeting Americans when it comes to Syria. We do know that probably dozens of Americans from a variety of backgrounds and locations in the U.S. have traveled or attempted to travel to Syria, but again, we haven't identified some sort of organized recruitment tool that's being used for Americans. We continue to work closely with our foreign partners to resolve the identities of potential extremists and identify potential threats emanating from Syria. This includes, of course, most importantly, the neighbors of Syria, who are often unfortunately transit points for these kind of foreign fighters.

...

**QUESTION:** There are a couple of quotes from Ambassador Ford that – one of them he is saying that the Syrian moderate opposition has been fighting with their arms tied behind their backs because of not enough U.S. support. So it looks like the ambassador is not like he's puzzled, but he says that we know – another quote is, we have plenty of information on reliable groups that we could be helping but we are not. So it's not like puzzlement. Ambassador is clear saying that there are things that we can be helping and could be helping but we are not. I think there's accusation.

**MS. HARF:** Well, again, I appreciate the opinion of Ambassador Ford, who's since left the State Department. I would say a few points. The first is as we determine who and how to support people, we go through a very rigorous vetting process for who we end up giving assistance to, which I think anyone – if we're spending U.S. taxpayer dollars to support people overseas – believes is important, particularly when you're dealing in a place like Syria that has a lot of bad actors. You don't want any of our assistance to fall into the hands of terrorists. We've seen that in other places and we know the consequences. So that's something we've continued to do, that vetting process, and some of that takes time.

But secondly, we've said we want to continue increasing our support. What we're doing right now is looking at the modalities and the logistics and how that might happen and what that might look like. So again, the notion that we're just sitting here saying we're going to support them and no one else and that's the end of it just isn't lashed up with where we are in terms of the policy process in reality today.

**QUESTION:** It's been three and a half years now. I mean, obviously there is something wrong. We're not – yes, it is a complicated situation, but then three and a half years and still elections and Bashar Assad will remain a president and elections – and the situation will remain the same. And for how long? I mean, too many people have died so far in Syria.

**MS. HARF:** We would agree. In the three and a half years, like you mention, we have consistently increased our support to the opposition. At every step of this process, we have continued to increase it. But as Arshad mentioned the President's speech last week – look, this is not a problem that the United States can or should solve on its own, particularly not with military assets. That's not how this ends in Syria. And so what we've said is that we are finding a path forward there where we can continue to support the opposition in a variety of ways – and I think you'll see more of that coming in the coming weeks and months – try through the diplomatic track to get the diplomatic process back on track, which we haven't been able to do – and keep working with other people who have influence over the regime, like the Russians, like others, like some of our partners in the region, to try and get a solution here. But there's no silver bullet to ending this conflict, and for anyone on the outside who says, "This is horrible; you should be doing X and it would be over," it just defies logic.

That's not an acceptable answer for everything, but I think it's something that's important to keep in mind.

**QUESTION:** Why do you believe that there is no U.S. military solution to this conflict?

**MS. HARF:** We believe writ large there's no military solution --

**QUESTION:** You also said --

**MS. HARF:** -- including a U.S. military solution --

**QUESTION:** Right.

**MS. HARF:** -- because we've said all options are on the table. Obviously, not boots on the ground, but --

**QUESTION:** But my question goes to the fundamental issue of --

**MS. HARF:** Right.

**QUESTION:** And it's --

**MS. HARF:** Because we -- and I'm going to answer your question, I think. Give me a shot, and if I don't --

**QUESTION:** Okay. No, no, please.

**MS. HARF:** -- come back at me. The reason there's no military -- including a U.S. military -- solution is that what happens the next day? We've always said there need to be some institutions that are maintained; there needs to be some semblance of a state, that you cannot have total anarchy in Syria if there's some military solution here that gets rid of the Assad regime. Because what happens the next day is all of these bad actors we talk about -- ISIL, al-Nusra -- they fill -- they could fill the power vacuum. So what you need is, instead, an organized -- to the extent that it can be -- political transition. So there's no military solution to overthrowing the Assad regime.

**QUESTION:** But the point -- I mean --

**MS. HARF:** Which is why there's no military solution.

**QUESTION:** I thought I understood it differently. I thought it was not that there is no military solution, but rather that the costs of a U.S. military solution are viewed as pyrrhic, as excessive; that the United States doesn't want to get into another Iraq or another Afghanistan, and that it's not that there is no military solution, but it's that this country's government doesn't want to get engaged in that kind of either fighting or nation-building effort, given its experience in Afghanistan and Iraq. Isn't that the correct understanding?

**MS. HARF:** I think that parts of what you just said play into parts of our thinking on this. Again, I think you don't want complete anarchy and chaos. You want a diplomatic solution here so you don't have a complete power vacuum in Damascus that results in Nusra or someone else taking over, which is why you need some institutions maintained.

But I think what you're getting at is -- and I hate to keep going back to the President's speech, but thankfully it gives me a lot of words on foreign policy to use -- that we will engage in military action overseas when we are threatened, when it's in our national security interests to do so. But it's not -- what I think what he said -- it's not the hammer to every nail out there. So parts of what you said are absolutely right.

**QUESTION:** But isn't it fair to say that in this case, the United States – at least thus far – does not believe that it is threatened or its interests are threatened to such a degree by the chaos in Syria to merit a military intervention?

**MS. HARF:** It's not about meriting. It's whether that would achieve the outcome that would best serve our national security interests.

**QUESTION:** Justify.

**MS. HARF:** It just – again, I don't know if we're talking past each other, but that we don't believe that will get to an outcome that best serves our national security interests, and that you're exactly right. We don't think it's in our national security interests to send American troops all over the world, putting boots on the ground everywhere trying to affect outcomes in other countries.

That's why there's this middle ground you try and walk where you say, "We have levers of power. We have tools we can use." It's not going to be boots on the ground, you're right. And we've been very clear that that's not in our national interest to send 18-year-old kids from Ohio to Damascus to try to promote regime change there.

**QUESTION:** Marie --

**QUESTION:** Marie, what do you make of Turkey's announcement today that it considers al-Nusra as a terrorist organization? Do you think this might maybe change --

**MS. HARF:** We've said we do too.

**QUESTION:** -- things on the ground, and because it's a neighboring country --

**MS. HARF:** I mean, we certainly work with the neighbors, including our NATO ally Turkey, quite a bit on this issue. We've obviously been very clear about our thoughts on al-Nusra.

**QUESTION:** Marie, when Ambassador Ford said that, "I was no --

**MS. HARF:** I can find his email for you, if guys just want to call him and ask him what he meant by his comments.

**QUESTION:** "I was no longer in a position where I felt I could defend the American policy." It looks like he was frustrated from the American policy, not from the whole situation in Syria, and that's why he quit.

**MS. HARF:** I'm happy to let him talk about his own – first of all, "quit" is a strong term. He had a very long, distinguished career here, and he retired. Again, he's a private citizen. I'm happy to let him explain his own words. What I'm telling you right now is what we're focused on today for the folks that are still here working on Syria, that are working on it going forward. That's what I'm focused on. I'm happy to let him parse his own words for you.

...

**QUESTION:** Follow-up to Arshad question, because you're – about intervention or involvement.

**MS. HARF:** Uh-huh.

**QUESTION:** Just to use the – I know Iraq is – Syria is not Iraq, but using the – what was attributed to Colin Powell is if you enter pottery and you break it, you buy it.

**MS. HARF:** You own it, uh-huh.

**QUESTION:** You own it or you buy it.

**MS. HARF:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** You don't think that Syria now is in that situation regarding – I mean, you are in the same situation without invasion, that something is already broken?

**MS. HARF:** We didn't break it. The president of their country, who today is pretending to be running an election, is the one who broke his own country. What we're trying to do is help find a path forward here. And I think – going back to the intervention question – there's a notion that the only kind of military assistance or help or intervention or whatever, broadly speaking, is boots on the ground. And I think what you heard the President outline is a very robust case for why our engagement might look different. It's not going to be large-scale land wars. We have, I think, U.S. military people in 94 countries around the world today doing a variety of things, from helping with natural disaster relief to training local armies. You heard today Wendy Sherman say there's 1,500 women now in the Somali National Army that we're helping in Somalia.

So what American military power looks like going forward will look different from Iraq and it should look different from Iraq. It shouldn't look like that in Syria, for all of the reasons we've all talked about now for, I think, a decade plus.

**June 2, 2014**

**Jen Psaki**, Spokesperson

**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Syria**

**Washington, DC**

**QUESTION:** Okay. On Syria, the presidential elections will be held tomorrow. Will you be waiting for the outcomes as you have been doing with Egypt, or you can comment ahead of time?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we have been clear that this election is a farce. Voting opened May 28th, so just a couple of days ago for Syrian ex-pats, and the election will conclude tomorrow in Syria. The democratic elections generally offer an opportunity for people in a free society to be consulted and to play an important role in choosing their leaders. Such a process is inconceivable in Syria today, where the regime has crushed political dissent and nearly half the population is displaced by war, including millions scattered outside of the country in refugee camps and host communities.

Further, the Syrian parliament adopted this year a law restricting candidacy to individuals who've lived in Syria for the past 10 years, thereby preventing exiled opposition figures from running. The London 11 also on May 15th denounced the Assad regime's unilateral plan to hold illegitimate presidential elections. So we've been clear that this election flows from a family legacy of brutal dictatorship, and also clear we won't recognize the outcome.

**QUESTION:** Iran and Russia and other Arab states are sending observers to observe the elections. How do you view this kind of observation?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we view observing an election that we think is a farce is probably a – not a good use of time.

**May 30, 2014**

**Jen Psaki**, Spokesperson  
**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Syria/Russia**  
**Washington, DC**

**QUESTION:** But I first need to ask you really quickly about the alleged American suicide bomber in Syria. Are you in a position now to be able to confirm that this person was an American and did blow himself up?

**MS. PSAKI:** I can confirm that this individual was a U.S. citizen involved in a suicide bombing in Syria. We don't have further information beyond that at this – to share at this time.

**QUESTION:** Okay. But not even how you know? How did you get confirmation? Was it something – did this have to go through the Czechs, who I think are still the protecting power, or --

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not going to go into that level of detail. I can just confirm that this was an American citizen.

**QUESTION:** Can you share a name?

**QUESTION:** What about the name?

**QUESTION:** You can't share a name?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have any other further details to share at this time.

**QUESTION:** And is this – is it correct that this is the first time an American citizen has apparently been involved in a suicide bombing in Syria since the start of the war?

**MS. PSAKI:** I believe that is correct. Obviously, there have been a range of reports. You know how concerned we are about foreign fighters in general, and that's something that we are watching closely.

Said.

**QUESTION:** Well, apparently he blew up himself with three other foreigners and so on. Are you concerned that there may be some sort of training grounds here in the United States for such fighters to go into Syria?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, Said, I wouldn't want to speculate on that. We are concerned about the flow of foreign fighters into and out of Syria. It's difficult to provide that level of analysis or a precise figure, but we're engaged in a focused outreach effort with key partner governments regarding our shared concern over the flow of foreign fighters to the Syrian conflict. Our partners across

the region and Europe are also gravely concerned. That's an effort that's been ongoing for months now, as you know, but it's one that we will continue our – to put effort into.

**QUESTION:** Can you confirm at least the name that he went by, as was published, Abu Hurayra al-Amriki?

**MS. PSAKI:** That is correct, or the translation is “the American.”

**QUESTION:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** Jen?

**QUESTION:** Do you have an age?

**QUESTION:** Do you guys have any sense of --

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have any additional information.

Go ahead.

**QUESTION:** I know you can't talk about specifics in terms of numbers, but do you have any sense that there are more Americans there participating in this kind of training or joining these groups? Do you think he's a completely isolated incident or do you think he's part of something larger?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not going to speculate on that. Obviously, we are closely tracking and closely working with our partners and allies about our concern about the growth of foreign fighters and the growth of extremism. I would point you to the announcement the President made just a few days ago about this new counterterrorism fund. Clearly, we're stepping up our efforts to address threats where we see them coming from, and that's an example of our effort to do that.

**QUESTION:** Sorry, sorry.

**MS. PSAKI:** Go ahead, Said.

**QUESTION:** Jen, just one quick follow-up. Can you tell us whether he is a naturalized American or U.S. born or is he a convert?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have any other details for you on that.

**QUESTION:** So are we done with that?

**QUESTION:** Can I get one more --

**MS. PSAKI:** Go ahead, Arshad.

**QUESTION:** What – the challenge with – I would imagine with Americans who become suicide bombers is that if they choose to come back into the United States, it's probably not easy to stop them because they're American citizens, they don't need visas, et cetera. I realize that there are multiple agencies that would be involved in that, but what are you doing to try to prevent potential American suicide bombers from carrying out attacks in the United States?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, Arshad, first, as it relates to the State Department, as you know, we don't track the activities of U.S. citizens abroad. So that's why – one of the reasons I'm unable to provide numbers for you. Broadly speaking, any individual who poses a threat to the United States or a potential threat even would be watched by law enforcement – our law enforcement partners and colleagues, and they're really the appropriate place to direct that question. It is an issue, broadly speaking; foreign fighters and the growth of that – of them in Syria and the surrounding region is something we are very concerned about. It's an issue that has received quite a bit of discussion with our partners in the region and our European partners. And again, I would point you also to the President's announcement from earlier this week.

...

**QUESTION:** -- on practical issues, are you in contact with his family? Have they made any here -- have they made any representation to you for any help in trying to --

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have any other details than those I shared.

**QUESTION:** And do you have any details about the actual bombing itself, where it took place, when and so on and so forth?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have any other details.

**QUESTION:** So you can't confirm any of the reports that have been out there about --

**MS. PSAKI:** I cannot confirm or share any other details at this point.

**QUESTION:** Do you have any more details?

**MS. PSAKI:** None that I can share.

**QUESTION:** No? Okay.

...

**QUESTION:** At yesterday's briefing you mentioned that the Secretary had spoken with Lavrov about the failure of Syria to meet the deadline for removal of chemical weapons and related materials, but I didn't -- we didn't hear an actual explanation as to why the deadline has been missed. Is that purely a --

**MS. PSAKI:** The deadline hasn't been missed. He expressed a concern about – well, the June 30th deadline. He has not – he expressed a concern about the need to move forward, and that was the message that he conveyed to Foreign Minister Lavrov during that call.

There have been a range of reasons offered on the ground. As you know, the UN has said they will do everything possible. The OPCW has said they will do everything possible. And broadly speaking, the Secretary's view is that we need to continue to press the Syrian regime. We need the help of the Russians to continue to do that, to remove the final 8 percent, which is in one location.

**QUESTION:** Do you think that that's purely like a matter of technical – complicated technical issues, or is this reflecting some recalcitrance from the Syrians or Russians or both?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we have been working with the Russians throughout this process to press the regime to remove the chemical weapons. Ninety-two percent has been removed. There's 8 percent left at one location. There have been concerns expressed about security needs on the ground. Those have been expressed by the UN as well, but again, everybody has made clear – I should say the UN, the OPCW have made clear that they're going to endeavor to do everything possible to take the necessary steps to get this – the remaining 8 percent out.

**QUESTION:** Jen, do you have --

**QUESTION:** Were any other topics discussed in that phone call, other than – in the most recent phone call --

**MS. PSAKI:** The one today?

**QUESTION:** -- the one today – other than the Secretary urging Foreign Minister Lavrov, as he did on Wednesday afternoon, as he said, to – for the Russian Government to deal with Poroshenko?

**MS. PSAKI:** The focus of the conversation was on Ukraine, but I don't have anything further to read out for all of you.

**QUESTION:** On Syria. There's a discussion, either ongoing or just finished, in the Security Council about giving aid – humanitarian aid – to Syria, delivering humanitarian aid to Syria whether the government or the opposition like it or not. I mean, are you aware of that? Do you have any comment on that?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not sure – can you be a little more specific about what you're referring to?

**QUESTION:** Of the Security Council today – well, there is I think a resolution introduced by Australia and two other countries --

**QUESTION:** Jordan.

**QUESTION:** -- and Jordan and one other country to deliver humanitarian aid to areas in Syria, whether it is under the control of the government or the opposition, without consulting with them. Do you have any comment on that?

**MS. PSAKI:** I have not spoken with our USUN team. As you know, across the board we have been supportive of efforts to take steps to ensure that humanitarian assistance reaches the people who need it most, but let me talk to them about the specific proposal or resolution.

**QUESTION:** The President kind of gave mention to the political solution, but it certainly doesn't seem as if there have been a lot of efforts made on the political track in terms of this Geneva process and trying to get a political solution. Is it your kind of assessment that until you work more on some of the things that you're discussing right now in terms of added training or support for the opposition, in terms of changing the battlefield on the ground, that kind of political talks are fruitless because Assad's calculus hasn't really changed in any way?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, there are several tracks of the political discussions, and one of those is coordination and cooperation through the London 11, and there was a meeting just two weeks ago where they discussed where we need to go from here, and it agreed that there would be a stepped up coordination. You heard the President say just two days ago that he's -- we're going to take steps to increase assistance to the moderate opposition. So we're taking steps here. Others are taking steps, and I would say all of those are done with the purpose of strengthening the hand of the moderate opposition on the ground.

**QUESTION:** So I understand. I mean, a London 11 meeting is not actually -- I'm not saying that you're not working hands-on with the opposition, but those are just meetings of people who are not on the ground, not parties on the ground.

**MS. PSAKI:** But we've also been -- Daniel Rubenstein and others have been also continuing to work with the moderate opposition.

**QUESTION:** I understand. My question is: Are kind of efforts to bring the opposition and the regime together in terms of forging some kind of political compromise unproductive at this point until you do what you're talking about, which is strengthen the hand of the opposition?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I think our bigger concern is what the agenda would be and what the purpose of the discussions would be. And it's not -- I wouldn't put it in the terms you put it in. We continue to determine with both our international partners as well as the opposition what the next appropriate steps are -- and the UN -- and we evaluate that day by day, week by week.

**QUESTION:** But you would say that until you strengthen the hand of the opposition and actually change the equation on the battlefield, which would change Assad's calculus, you think that a political solution is really necessary -- possible before then?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, again, Elise, there are a range of factors at hand. Some of them you mentioned. And we are going to continue to work with our international partners, work to strengthen the opposition through assistance, through a political -- through boosting their political

power, and we'll make a determination with the UN, with the opposition, on what the appropriate steps are in terms of a political process.

**QUESTION:** So I'll take that as a no, you don't think a political solution is possible right now until you get the opposition in a position where it's strengthened.

**MS. PSAKI:** I wouldn't put it in those terms. We need to continue to work with the opposition, but I'm not going to say it in as definitive a way as you would like me to.

Go ahead.

**QUESTION:** So voting has started in overseas embassies for the elections, ahead of the elections on Tuesday, and I don't know if you heard, but some of the reports were that there was actually quite a lot of interest in them, a lot of people who turned out to vote. They actually ran out of ballot papers; there were longer lines than people anticipated. Are these people seriously misguided?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, you know our view, which is that this is a slam – a sham – slam? – a sham election. You heard the Secretary speak to this yesterday during the PBS interview that you referenced earlier in the briefing. We don't feel it's valid and we don't feel the results will be valid. I don't want to make a judgment on the individuals voting, but the point here is that we're going to continue to proceed forward. We're not recognizing the outcome of this election and I don't think the international community will either.

**QUESTION:** So the rebels have actually – the opposition has actually called for those people inside of Syria to boycott the election. Is that something that you would concur with?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I think where – our focus, Jo, is on where we go from here. And we don't recognize the outcome, we won't recognize the validity of it, but I don't think I'm going to speculate on it further.

**QUESTION:** I mean, some people are saying the argument is that this is the way he actually wins legitimacy – through a ballot box.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, again, we don't feel it's a legitimate election, so we would argue with that point.

**QUESTION:** So on the lines, the throngs of people that were at the embassies, especially in Lebanon – I mean, they showed like tens of thousands of people and so on. Are you saying that these people are – just to follow up on them – misguided? Whatever – were they forced to sort of vote by perhaps third forces or anything?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not going to speculate on that, Said.

...

**QUESTION:** Wait, wait, just on that. So this election, before it's even held, is not valid. Is that what you're saying?

**MS. PSAKI:** We've been clear it's a sham election. We're not going to recognize the legitimacy of it.

**QUESTION:** Okay. But the jury is still out on Egypt?

**QUESTION:** On Egypt?

**MS. PSAKI:** Every country is different, Matt.

...

**QUESTION:** It was very simple. Has the Administration or has the U.S. Government, to your knowledge – because I think the last one predates this Administration – ever recognized a Syrian election as valid?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'd have to dial back.

**QUESTION:** Okay, because I'm just curious.

**MS. PSAKI:** There is quite a long history there, especially with the Assad family, as you know.

**QUESTION:** Exactly.

**May 29, 2014**

**Jen Psaki**, Spokesperson  
Daily Press Briefing, selections on Syria  
Washington, DC

**QUESTION:** Speaking on Syria, the threats – there have been reports – I think corroborated by some officials around town – that there is an American suicide bomber in Syria. Can you tell us what you know about that?

**MS. PSAKI:** We are, of course, looking into those reports but cannot confirm anything at this time.

...

**QUESTION:** But – so is he – do – you cannot confirm that he’s American, or is he believed to be American?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I think the reports have said “believe to be,” but we don’t have any additional confirmation to offer at this time.

...

**QUESTION:** On the issue of the chemical weapons, did you say at the top that Mr. Kerry expressed concern to Lavrov that 8 percent remain?

**MS. PSAKI:** Yes.

**QUESTION:** Okay. So reports that indicate that they are actually moving and the Syrians are meeting their obligations are not true?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, there have been steps that have been taken to contain the materials. They need to be moved. Obviously, that’s what the next step is, and that’s what they discussed on that front.

**QUESTION:** And I just wanted you to clarify. You said something about the phone call at the very top, that – did I hear you correctly? You said that he expressed his concern that Chechen fighters are going through Ukraine or through Syria?

...

**QUESTION:** Yeah. Well, no, I just wanted to go back to the – Elise’s question. You said – sorry – just about this alleged American guy – you don’t – one, you can’t confirm that he’s American, and two, you can’t confirm that the person who is pictured in this was involved in any kind of attack or suicide bombing? Is that correct?

**MS. PSAKI:** Correct. I don't have any other details to confirm.

**May 27, 2014**

**Jen Psaki**, Spokesperson  
**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Syria**  
**Washington, DC**

**MS. PSAKI:** Also, a convoy, as you may have seen in reports, of OPCW inspectors and United Nations staff that was traveling to a site of an alleged chlorine gas attack in Syria came under attack today. The OPCW reported that all team members are safe and well and are traveling back to the operating base. We strongly condemn this attack and call on all parties to grant safe, secure, and unfettered access to OPCW and UN staff working in Syria. We commend the brave OPCW and UN staff working in Syria during an ongoing war, and we thank them for their continued resolve to ensuring the accomplishment of their vital work.

...

**QUESTION:** Syria, back to the OPCW – not just that, but Syria in general.

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** The inspectors appear to be safe, but how goes the – their mission?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, this specific mission was related to an alleged chlorine gas attack.

**QUESTION:** Yeah.

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm just – I know you know this, but I think it's an important note. The OPCW will make a determination about how to proceed moving forward. Because this just happened today, I don't believe they have made that assessment quite yet.

**QUESTION:** Okay. But – and you will go by what they decide – I mean, what they determine?

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** Whatever they determine as the way forward is – will be okay with you?

**MS. PSAKI:** I – we've been broadly supportive of them across the board, so --

**QUESTION:** Right. Okay. Now there are reports also that the President – the Administration is going to soon sign off on training for vetted – what – is there any truth to that?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we've long had a range of options. We have been clear that we see Syria as a counterterrorism challenge, and therefore certainly we factor that in in options we consider. The current policy approach continues to be strengthening the moderate opposition, which offers

an alternative to the brutal Assad regime and the more extremist elements within the opposition. But I don't have anything to convey or announce for all of you today.

**QUESTION:** When you say you see – or it presents a counterterrorism concern, that is because that limits your ability to support the opposition because some of them are a terrorist concern, or you mean --

**MS. PSAKI:** No, I was conveying that that is one of the factors that we look at when we're determining what options we should discuss and consider.

**QUESTION:** But – yeah, I guess I'm – is it both the fact that some of the opposition are extremists --

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** -- and that – or is it also that – your belief that Assad is a terror magnet?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, the first has long been a factor for us as we consider options, and that hasn't changed.

**QUESTION:** You don't want to do anything to – that might inadvertently help the extremists? That – is that correct?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, that would put anything in the hands of those who should not have access. So that remains a concern of ours, has long been. So – but the point I was making here was more specific to addressing what we feel are the greatest challenges within Syria and how to take those on, and that's a factor in our decision-making. But I don't have anything to announce in that regard.

**QUESTION:** Right, okay. But I just want to make sure it's a bit – so in addition to you not wanting to get – you not wanting the extremists to get their hands on any assistance, you also think that the moderates should play a role in combating the extremists? Is that correct?

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure, yes, yes, absolutely.

**QUESTION:** Okay. That's what I was --

**QUESTION:** So what do you consider a bigger threat at this point: the Assad regime to regional stability, or the extremists?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I think our belief is that Assad and the Assad regime is a magnet for terrorism, and as long as he's there, it is challenging to address those threats. So that remains a concern, and of course, all of the threats around it.

**QUESTION:** What does that mean, “a magnet for -- ”

**QUESTION:** But a bigger threat to the United – but a bigger threat to the United States national security?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I think any growth of terrorism is a threat that we would be concerned about, as many countries would be concerned about, to the United States or any of our allies around the world.

**QUESTION:** Jen, what do you mean by “magnet for terrorists?” I mean, because he’s there, these terrorists go out to fight him? I mean, that is the logic behind what you’re saying?

**MS. PSAKI:** That we’ve seen a growth as he’s committed more and more brutality against his own people.

**QUESTION:** Right. It does not mean that he is on the side of terrorists, does it?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, again, I think we --

**QUESTION:** It means that he – they actually go there to fight him.

**MS. PSAKI:** -- we’ve referred to this frequently, Said, in the sense that since he has been --

**QUESTION:** Right. I’m trying to understand, what does that mean?

**MS. PSAKI:** -- let me finish that answer – brutalizing his own people, that we’ve seen a growth of extremism, a growth of terrorism, and obviously we want to combat that. But that’s what I was conveying.

**QUESTION:** But you don’t see this as potentially very dangerous for the region, every time you have a secular or semi-secular leader, would be a magnet for terrorists to start some sort of a fight in there or a civil war?

**MS. PSAKI:** Again, I’m not – I was speaking to this particular case.

**QUESTION:** Okay. Let me ask you about the attack on the OPCW team.

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** Are you assigning blame to anyone in particular? Not the government.

**MS. PSAKI:** We are not at this point, no.

**QUESTION:** Okay.

...

**QUESTION:** Just to come back, so is training part of that strengthening of the moderate opposition?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not going to speculate on the reports out there. There are a range of options that we've long been considering, but I have nothing to convey to you further on this point.

**QUESTION:** Yes --

**QUESTION:** (Inaudible) the options?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not going to speak to it any further than to convey there's a range of options.

Go ahead.

**QUESTION:** Just to clarify the -- related to the international mission -- chemical weapon mission in Syria that has some problem now, what was the purpose of the mission? It was chlorine? Chlorine?

**MS. PSAKI:** An alleged -- chlorine, yes, mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** It's not related to 7 percent what was left there?

**MS. PSAKI:** It was related to an alleged chlorine attack, yes.

**May 23, 2014**

**Marie Harf, Deputy Spokesperson  
Daily Press Briefing, selections on Syria  
Washington, DC**

**QUESTION:** On Syria. Have you seen the opposition – well, opposition activists have posted a video of what they say is chlorine gas floating through the streets of a Syrian village.

**MS. HARF:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** Have you managed to see this, and is it – what's the indications?

**MS. HARF:** I know some folks have seen it. I think, obviously, like other reports of possible chlorine use or other use of things like this, we take them seriously and look into them.

**QUESTION:** But --

**MS. HARF:** No, I don't have any assessment of it yet.

**QUESTION:** No assessment of it yet.

**MS. HARF:** Uh-huh.

**QUESTION:** And also, is there anything further as far as this so-called raw data that Secretary Kerry said he saw and --

**MS. HARF:** Well, no, nothing further than what we've said. Obviously, there are reasons we believe this could be credible and why the OPCW is looking at it right now.

**May 22, 2014**

**Jen Psaki**, Spokesperson  
**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Syria**  
**Washington, DC**

**QUESTION:** Jen, at the OPCW today, the U.S. raised some concerns about lack of follow-through with treaty obligations on the part of Syria. Tail end of the statement, the ambassador pointed out that – the phrase was: “Information continues to accumulate on toxic chemicals being used in chemical weapons attacks.”

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** That suggests that in this accumulation there is new information. Is the U.S. any closer to making a determination about what happened in these recent attacks?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, as you know, Margaret, and we’ve spoken about a bit in here, there are recent reports the Secretary has spoken to that are concerning about the use of chlorine. The OPCW, which is the appropriate international entity to look into those reports, is looking into them. That is certainly a process we support, but I don’t have any new announcements or information to provide today.

**QUESTION:** Because the Secretary did say publicly – I think it was a week ago – that he had looked at some of the raw data. Is that a process that he’s regularly checking in with as this information continues to accumulate?

**MS. PSAKI:** Again, we and the OPCW and other international entities look at a range of information available, as was the case last summer as well. But I don’t have anything new to report today on these cases.

**QUESTION:** And just to clarify – I don’t remember if the Secretary spoke to this or not, but I know he had months previous – but with this enforcement of the last 8 percent that the U.S. raised concerns about in addition to the production facilities and underground components, is there any military force still being used as an option to get follow-through here for this foot-dragging that the U.S. accuses the Syrians of carrying out?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, our focus at this point – and we, as you know, haven’t – the President has never taken options off the table – but obviously, in this case, the remaining 8 percent is an issue that we are concerned about, hence we speak about it frequently, we’re working with the international community, with the OPCW, with the UN. You’ve seen the UN and the OPCW say they would do everything possible to get to that site, so we continue to support those efforts. But that certainly is not the point we’re at at this point.

**QUESTION:** But if that June 30th deadline comes and goes as the statement from the U.S. ambassador today raises concerns about – it being almost inevitable at this point – that option remains on the table for a lack of compliance?

**MS. PSAKI:** Again, we're not at that point. I'm not going to predict where we'll be at that point. We do feel there is more that can be done between now and June 30th by the Syrian regime.

...

**QUESTION:** Yeah. Anadolu Agency has obtained a new set of photographs demonstrating systematic torture committed by Syrian regime against the opposition. It shows like corpses with gouged eyes and body parts set next to them. I don't know if you saw those pictures or not.

**MS. PSAKI:** The Caesar photos?

**QUESTION:** Sorry?

**MS. PSAKI:** The – what are the photos called?

**QUESTION:** It's – I think I sent you a link, like, to those photos. It's about Syrians oppositions, like dead bodies, corpses like with their eyes gouged and they have like body parts set next to them. It seems that pictures from – for Syrian opposition, like members, being --

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, let me say there's been a range of horrific photos out there. And as the world looks at these photos and the range that have been out there, these atrocities are exactly why we have supported efforts like the one that occurred in the UN Security Council today, which was a vote on a resolution to refer the Syrian regime to the ICC.

**QUESTION:** Yeah. But – and it seems like Russia and China has blocked the referral. So as the United States like supporting the efforts of the Syrian opposition, what – are you planning to do anything about that? How --

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we're extremely disturbed by Russia's and China's vetoes and lack of support for holding perpetrators accountable for the atrocities committed in Syria. Despite this veto, we will continue supporting practical steps that we can take to lay the groundwork for accountability and transitional justice processes, including supporting efforts by Syrian civil society and the international community to gather evidence that could help to hold accountable at a future date those responsible for atrocities in Syria.

And so we felt that it was – strongly – that it was important to make clear that those who are responsible should be held accountable, which is why we supported this effort. And we will continue to look for other efforts to support.

**QUESTION:** One more thing. Do you think, like, the world is, like, turning their backs, like, to Syria? I'm just worried, like, after, like, with all those events, like, flowing around the world, like – at some point Syria will become another Iraq – Saddam's attack the Kurds in the 1988, like, with chemical weapons, and nobody, like --

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, there was broad support for this resolution today, despite – aside from the veto by Russia and by China. And there is broad support in the international community for bringing an end to the horrific acts of the Assad regime.

**May 21, 2014**

**Jen Psaki**, Spokesperson  
**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Syria**  
**Washington, DC**

**QUESTION:** The Daily Beast published a story yesterday reporting that there are more than 100 American citizens who have joined jihad in Syria. Does that sound about right?

**MS. PSAKI:** We are certainly concerned, James, as you know, about the flow of foreign fighters into and out of Syria. It's difficult to provide a precise figure of the total number of foreign fighters in Syria, though our best estimate indicates that approximately 9,000 fighters may have traveled to Syria since the beginning of the conflict. I don't have any specific numbers, but it certainly is something we watch from here and we engage with our international partners in watching around the world.

**QUESTION:** And you have reason to believe that of those 9,000 – which, by the way, is a significant increase from what other Administration officials have testified to just in recent weeks – do you have some reason to believe that Americans are among those 9,000? And if so, roughly how many?

**MS. PSAKI:** Again, I don't have any numbers on that front. It's difficult to account for. We are engaged in a focused outreach effort with key partner governments regarding our shared concern over the flow of fighters to the Syrian conflict. Our partners across the region and Europe are gravely concerned as well with the threat posed by citizens traveling to Europe – to Syria, I'm sorry, to fight, and the implications that this has. But again, this is an issue we're watching closely, we are concerned about, and we'll continue to work with our international counterparts on.

**QUESTION:** Without specific figures having to be divulged, can you say that the 9,000 foreign fighters who've traveled to Syria since the beginning of the conflict include any American citizens at all?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have any other level of detail, but I'll check with our team and see if there's more we can share.

**QUESTION:** Can we have that as a Taken Question?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm happy to look into it and see if there's more to share.

**QUESTION:** Thank you.

**QUESTION:** You don't have figures at all as to whether you think the majority of those 9,000 are coming from Middle East and neighboring countries?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not aware of a public breakdown we have. But I'll, again, with James's question, I'm happy to check with our team and see if there's more to share.

**May 15, 2014**

**Marie Harf**, Deputy Spokesperson  
**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Syria, via telephone**  
**Washington, DC**

**QUESTION:** Okay. And then on the situation involving the Syrian opposition, I note from the communique that was released, “Number two, we have agreed unanimously,” ellipses, “We have directed our officials to implement a core group action plan.”

**MS. HARF:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** What are the details of the plan as you understand them?

**MS. HARF:** Well, you’re referring to the communique that came out of the London 11 --

**QUESTION:** Correct.

**MS. HARF:** -- where the -- yes, correct, where the Secretary is. And it talks about a number of things, including increasing support for the moderate opposition, for associated moderate armed groups in the SMC, holding the regime accountable. All of these are steps that go into these kind of plans, and all of these are things we’ve been doing. We’re just talking about doing more of them.

I’m happy to check and see if there are more details in terms of what that core group action plan looks like, but again, I think the things laid out right before that in the communique really speak to what would go into that kind of plan.

**QUESTION:** Because earlier in the week, while members of the SOC were in Washington, they were stressing that there had been some sort of promise made by the core group last year that if Geneva II were not realized positively, that there would be some provision of weapons, and I wonder if that is exactly what this line in the communique is referring to.

**MS. HARF:** Well, Roz, as you know, we don’t detail all of the kinds of assistance we give to the opposition, but as the communique made clear, again, increasing our support for the Supreme Military Council and associated moderate armed groups, I think, speaks to how we’ve, in general -- of course, without getting into specifics -- have supported those folks. So again, I can check and see if there are more details, but that’s my understanding.

**QUESTION:** Is there a growing level of confidence on the part of the U.S. that the armed opposition is capable of handling equipment such as TOW missiles, which both President Jarba and his top military official said that they do have possession of and are using? Is there confidence here in Washington that the armed opposition can be trusted with increased weapon deliveries and that the weapons aren’t going to end up with any AQ affiliates or anything like that?

**MS. HARF:** Mm-hmm. Well, as you know, we do extensive vetting to mitigate the risks that any assistance provided may be diverted to folks like you mentioned – to unintended recipients. So I think that that’s something we’re certainly focused on, and that’s what we’ve been doing on a continual basis since this conflict started. And as appropriate, if we can provide assistance once folks have been vetted, without getting into specifics about what that looks like, we will do that.

We’ve talked about other specific things that we are not considering giving that we’re concerned about specifically in the past as well. So that process is ongoing, but there’s a reason we have this vetting in place: Because we do have that concern, and that’s why we don’t provide assistance to groups linked to al-Qaida, that’s why we take a number of steps to vet these folks before we give them any kind of assistance.

**QUESTION:** Well, even as recently as Tuesday the Secretary was pretty adamant that the U.S. doesn’t believe that adding weapons will help change the political calculus between the Assad regime and the opposition. Is that still the U.S. Government’s position, or has there been a change, especially in light of the Brahimi resignation?

**MS. HARF:** No, there hasn’t been a change, Roz. And it goes back to this concept we’ve said for a long time, that we’ve said since the beginning, that there’s no military solution here, right. So any assistance we give is designed to help support and bolster and strengthen the opposition in their fight against the regime, strengthen their fight – ability to fight al-Qaida-affiliated groups in ISIL and Nusra, but also designed to eventually change the calculation enough so we can get folks back to the table and we can get the regime back to the table, willing to negotiate on a transitional governing body.

So that’s the goal, right, and that’s why we’ve always said there’s no military solution here. So everything we consider giving – every bit of assistance – has to fit into that overall goal and not just prolong the conflict, like I think some folks have mentioned in the past.

**QUESTION:** But isn’t it a bit of a red herring to suggest that if the U.S. were to provide weapons to the armed opposition that somehow this now becomes a military form – relationship, rather than the strategic use, the targeted use of weapons in certain situations in order to induce the Assad regime, which the Secretary has noted several times in the last several days has not met its obligations to comply with the terms of Geneva II?

**MS. HARF:** Yeah, no. I think – well, a few points. First, I don’t think it’s a red herring. I think that regardless of what kinds of assistance we’re providing to the opposition, much of – all of which we don’t outline in detail – there is no military solution, right. So – but, that being said, as we make decisions and vet people and think it’s appropriate to provide assistance to the opposition, including the armed opposition, we’re going to do so to work towards that goal. So they’re not mutually exclusive, right. We don’t believe there is a military solution; we don’t think what this conflict needs is more militarization of the conflict. We’ve already seen enough bloodshed. But if there are ways we can support the moderate opposition in their fight to change the calculus, to get the regime back to the table, that’s something we’re constantly looking at.

...

**QUESTION:** Great. Thanks a lot. I have quick questions on Syria and Ukraine: On Syria, this Syrian Opposition Coalition, Najib Ghadbian was here in New York. And is he – he said that – asked about the – being a foreign mission, what the benefits of it are to the coalition. He said that there’s still some discussions to be had with the State Department legal department, and he specifically said that they’d like to be able to do consular services for Syrians in the United States. I wonder, is that – is the State Department considering giving him that right?

**MS. HARF:** It’s a good question. As we said when they – when we announced that they were going to, under the Foreign Missions Act, be a foreign mission, that it does not include the provision of consular services; that while they are the legitimate representatives of the Syrian people, they’re not – they don’t take on this official status as the government which would provide consular services.

So to my knowledge, that – I mean, our – that hasn’t changed. That’s what falls under the Foreign Missions Act. It does give them increased ability, for example, for us to assist with security and banking and other issues. I can check if there’s more we can share on that, but to my knowledge, that is where we are, and they will not be able to provide consular services.

...

**QUESTION:** Yes, hi there. I was wondering if you could tell us a little bit – just back on Syria for a second – if – the assistance is still going – military assistance is still going to the SMC right? I was just wondering if you could describe what the SMC is now – how big is it, what is its role, and its sort of status within the constellation of the rebel brigades now. Do you have any idea of its size or what’s the command?

**MS. HARF:** Yeah, no, that’s actually a really good question that I don’t have lot of details on now. I’m happy to check with our folks and see in terms of size and command structure. I just, quite frankly, don’t have all the details on that. As you saw in the London – you may have seen a London 11 communique today – it talked about increasing our support for the Supreme Military Council and associated moderate armed groups.

I think part of what your question refers to is that as we all know there are a number of other moderate armed groups that are working under the SMC umbrella, so let me see if there’s a little more to share on sort of current structure. It’s a good question and I just don’t have all the facts in front of me.

...

**QUESTION:** Yes, Marie. Thank you very much. I’m – I just – I was just wondering, when you say, like, nonlethal assistance to the Syrian opposition, would that not include the TOW missiles and would not that contradict with the political solution that you believe in?

**MS. HARF:** Well, what I’ve said is we’re not going to outline every type of assistance that we provide to the opposition. I know there are lots of questions out there about certain things, but

we're just not going to talk about all the assistance we provide. But what I said earlier to Roz's question, I think, still holds in that they're not mutually exclusive, right? In other words, we do not believe there is a military solution here, period. There needs to be a political solution, a transitional governing body, that's negotiated. But at the same time, we will continue to support the opposition, including the armed opposition. We've talked a lot about the nonlethal assistance we give to the armed opposition because we believe it's important to do so. They're the ones who are representing the Syrian people, they're the ones who are fighting for a future for the Syrian people that is better than, obviously, the one they have now. And so we'll continue that support. But those things aren't mutually exclusive. It's all towards the same goal, which is a political transition here.

**May 13, 2014**

**Jen Psaki**, Spokesperson  
**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Syria**  
**Washington, DC**

**QUESTION:** So there's a couple of bits of news around Syria this morning. Foreign Minister Fabius, in a press conference that he gave separately from his talks with the Secretary, talked about 14 incidents of chemical weapons use since October by the Syrian regime. They believe small amounts of agents, such as the use of chlorine gas. Does this fit in with what you are being told from your intelligence on the ground? And if so, what are you going to do about it?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, obviously I'm not going to get into intelligence from here at all. We saw, of course, his press conference. They did discuss during their meeting the importance of removing the remaining declared chemical weapons, but they did not discuss the specifics of what the foreign minister announced from his press conference. We obviously have a range of ways that we are in touch with the French and our international partners, and as in any case or any allegation, we take it seriously. We certainly, along with many of our partners in the international community, would support any effort to look into allegations. As you know, there's an ongoing process that the OPCW is leading at this time, and we continue to support that.

**QUESTION:** So this is new information to you? This was not shared with the Secretary during their talks that you just said --

**MS. PSAKI:** I just conveyed it wasn't -- that the specifics weren't discussed during their meeting. However, I'm not going to get into intel discussions or sharing, and obviously we do that with a range of partners.

**QUESTION:** And Foreign Minister Fabius also said in his press conference that France regretted that the President and this Administration did not go ahead with the military strikes as had been threatened in the latter half of last year, saying he believed it could have changed things on the ground. What is your response to that?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, our view continues to be that what we were discussing at the time was a response to the horrific acts against the Syrian people that occurred last August. There was broad agreement in the international community, including the French, about the step that was taken through the UN Security Council, through the OPCW. At this point, 92 percent of declared chemical weapons have been removed, and we think that's an important step. It doesn't mean that's the totality of our approach to Syria. Not at all. As you know, the Secretary is leaving tomorrow for London.

But we continue to believe that our goal was to resolve -- do everything we could to resolve through peaceful means even more than the military strikes promised, which was to remove these lethal, terrible weapons from the hands of the Assad regime, and we've taken some significant steps towards doing that.

**QUESTION:** But by not taking the more – the sharper step of actually going ahead with a military strike against certain Syrian facilities, did you not signal to the Syrian regime at that time that they could basically act with impunity, and that these attacks would not be in any way punished by the international community?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I would strongly disagree with that, Jo. Obviously, there are a range of requirements in the UN Security Council resolution that we all supported last year, that was broadly supported by the international community. We're continuing to implement that. There are not options – and we've said this consistently since then – that have been taken off the table.

But clearly the removal of 92 percent of declared chemical weapons in Syria is a step that we think is an important step forward, and one that we continue to stand by as the right step and the right process we took last September.

**QUESTION:** Do you continue to believe you have the full extent of the chemical weapons stockpile that the Assad regime has?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I've spoken to this a little bit before, but we will continue to support the OPCW's verification and inspection efforts to ensure the accuracy and completeness of Syria's declarations. And ensuring that the declared does represent what they have is an important part of Syria abiding by their agreement as part of the agreement last September.

**QUESTION:** Does the resignation of Mr. Brahimi sort of end the diplomatic effort for now?

**MS. PSAKI:** Not at all, Said. As you know, he played an incredibly important role during a challenging time in the ongoing situation on the ground in Syria. We certainly support and will work with whomever the UN decides to put in place in his place.

**QUESTION:** So you feel that the role of a mediator is an important role, that there has to be some sort of a mediator that can go in between the regime and the opposition, even in view of, let's say, the upcoming election in Syria?

**MS. PSAKI:** We continue to support – we believe that the Geneva process was an important moment for the international community to show support for the opposition. And, again, we'd, of course, support any step by the UN to appoint a successor.

**QUESTION:** Were you aware of his resignation before today?

**MS. PSAKI:** I think there have been many reports out there. I'm not going to get into that level of a detail.

Go ahead, Roz.

**QUESTION:** Does the U.S. support someone such as Kevin Rudd, the former Prime Minister of Australia, to be the envoy? And I guess the larger question is, is it appropriate for someone who

does not come out of the UN auspices to act as a mediator – someone who might come in without some of the baggage that both sides might have been able to play upon?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not going to speculate on choices the UN may or may not make. Obviously, I'd point you to them for anything they want to say about his successor.

**QUESTION:** But obviously, the U.S. will want to know --

**QUESTION:** What makes you think a third UN Arab League Special Envoy would have any greater success than his two, or her two, previous successors, who were also in their own right seasoned diplomats?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, Jo, again, I'm not going to speculate, and I don't have any insight into who the UN might pick for his successor. Obviously, the situation on the ground and the horrific suffering of the Syrian people is continuing. And so we still continue to believe that this is a role that can be played and one that can be productive in bringing an end to the crisis.

**QUESTION:** Just to follow up on Jo's question, do you prefer someone who could represent the Arab League and the UN at the same time --

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not going to -- I am not --

**QUESTION:** -- such as --

**MS. PSAKI:** Said, I'm not --

**QUESTION:** I can give you some names, like (inaudible) --

**MS. PSAKI:** I am not going to speculate on names and I am not going to speculate --

**QUESTION:** Or would you like to see like a UN veteran --

**MS. PSAKI:** -- on specifics. Let's --

**QUESTION:** -- like Mr. (inaudible)?

**MS. PSAKI:** I am not going to speculate, Said.

...

**QUESTION:** What is the point, then, of having an envoy, if both sides are simply going to do whatever it is they feel like doing, particularly the Assad regime? I mean, what's the point?

**MS. PSAKI:** Roz, we continue to believe that the only way to resolve this crisis is through a political process. And obviously, there's a role that can be played by somebody who's representing the UN. We'll see what happens over the coming weeks.

**QUESTION:** But is a process where one side in particular comes in and does not act in good faith a process worth having?

**MS. PSAKI:** Again, Roz, I think we continue to believe that both sides, of course, need to be part of any political solution. We continue to work with the international community to push that process in that direction, but we'll see what happens. This is a new announcement, so I don't have any more speculation for all of you.

Syria.

**QUESTION:** Yeah. Just – you said you don't want to talk about names, but let's talk about one name: Lakhdar Brahimi. And has been noted, I mean, he's not the first person to try and fail at this. But I'm just wondering how – why it is that you say he played an incredibly important role – those are your words – at a challenging time. What exactly did he do other than organize very expensive conferences in European cities at very nice hotels? What exactly did he do?

**MS. PSAKI:** Matt, we continue to believe that the discussions that the regime and the opposition – and more so really the bigger meeting, also, with so many members of the international community that showed strong support for the opposition – was an important moment. Obviously, things are on a hiatus now, and we continue to press in many directions to see how we can resolve the crisis on the ground.

**QUESTION:** Well, I understand. But what – if you go back and look at his tenure in office – not that anyone else's tenure in office has been much different, but you say he played an incredibly important role. I mean, can you name – is there any tangible positive result of him having had this job?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, clearly, no one is satisfied with where things stand in Syria. That's why we're continuing to work on it. But he did convene a range of meetings. He was an important mediator between those and a facilitator with many other members of the international community, and we're grateful for his leadership.

**QUESTION:** Well, okay, but even the Secretary General, when he announced the resignation, said this is a failure for all of us.

**MS. PSAKI:** I think --

**QUESTION:** And so I'm just wondering if you can point to anything that wasn't a failure during his watch --

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, Matt --

**QUESTION:** -- or, actually, the watches of the previous people.

**MS. PSAKI:** Clearly, the Secretary is going to London tomorrow and he just met with the opposition and our – a range of White House officials are meeting with the opposition because we believe there's much more work that needs to be done. But that doesn't mean that the work that we've done in the past or other officials have done in the past isn't an important part of it.

**QUESTION:** Right, but I mean – okay, so he's – there's going to be this meeting tomorrow; it's going to be in London. So it's just --

**MS. PSAKI:** On Thursday.

**QUESTION:** -- or whatever. He's leaving tomorrow; on Thursday the meeting is – but why is this not just another conference? And it's not even a conference that brings the – it's not even an attempt to negotiate or to find a political solution. Am I correct?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we continue to believe that intensifying and improving our cooperation with the international community, with partners and backers of the moderate opposition, is a valuable step. And we want to – that's a part of what the effort will be when we're in London. So that's why the Secretary is traveling there.

**QUESTION:** In light of the allegations that Foreign Minister Fabius as well as Human Rights Now, I believe, have made about Syria's use of chemicals since the agreement was signed, is it vital in the U.S.'s view that there be an envoy in order to maintain some sort of opening into the Syrian Government? And if so, why? If not, why not?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, as you know, Roz, the process of looking into the use of chemical weapons is led by the OPCW. And that continues, and obviously they have contacts on the ground, in order to effectively carry out their mission. We still continue to believe, as I've noted a couple of times, that there is a role to play for a special envoy, and we would, of course, look forward to working with a successor.

**QUESTION:** But does having the envoy there add an extra level of leverage, as it were, or will the OPCW possibly be hindered because there is not this outside person who can bring to bear the need for the Syrian Government to be open?

**MS. PSAKI:** We don't view it as the OPCW being hindered. They have their own means of implementing. Obviously, there's a broad network of the international community that's supporting their efforts.

Go ahead.

**QUESTION:** Jen, SOC President Ahmad Jarba has said yesterday evening in Georgetown University that Friends of Syria core group has promised the opposition before Geneva conference to increase its military capacities to change the calculations on the ground in case the negotiations in Geneva fail. Have you ever made this promise to the opposition?

**MS. PSAKI:** As you know, we continue to work with our international partners to take steps to support the moderate opposition, including vetted members of the armed opposition. I'm not going to get into any other conversations that anyone from the London 11 may or may not have had.

**QUESTION:** Do you think the meeting in London will discuss this issue and will fulfil the promise?

**MS. PSAKI:** The meeting in London will discuss a range of issues, including how to best support the moderate opposition and their needs at this time.

Ali?

**QUESTION:** Given Minister Fabius's comments about what the United States maybe should've done a year ago, is there any – what's your reaction to the perception that his comments in public on – during his visit to the United States suggests that there's a shift in cohesion and agreement on what the U.S. has done on Syria since the UN Security Council resolution was passed?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't think that was what he was conveying at all. I would ask – I would suggest you ask the French if that's what they were conveying through his comments.

...

**QUESTION:** First of all, do you have any reaction to the Kuwaiti minister's resignation, the one who was allegedly funding the Syrian opposition?

**MS. PSAKI:** I've seen those reports. As you know, we've expressed concerns in the past about any assistance that's not funded through the moderate opposition. But I don't have any specific reaction to that report.

**QUESTION:** Do you have any other – I mean, like, other names or other officials in the region that they are funding?

**MS. PSAKI:** Again, this is an issue we've expressed concern about in the past. But I don't have any other details to share. Let's move on.

**QUESTION:** All right. There is something related to the Syrian opposition. During the last few months, always it was mentioned that arming is a concern because it may reach wrong hands. And secondly, it was always mentioned that the Syria opposition is divided, not united, and all these concerns. Do you think when you meet them now these concerns are not there anymore or still there?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we have had the same concerns about particular systems and weapons systems, and those haven't changed, because we have a concern about the proliferation risk. That's consistently been our position. The opposition, in our view, has taken great strides in the last couple of months to continue to strengthen their leadership and have a cohesive message.

And obviously the meetings the opposition had here this past week have been an important part of that and part of what we'll discuss in London on Thursday.

...

**QUESTION:** When you say the wrong hands, it's not just was the wrong hands. So all the – issue was the issue of the rise of the fundamentalists and Islamists in particular.

**MS. PSAKI:** The wrong hands, but also the proliferation risk are both concerns. Okay. Let's move on to a new topic.

**May 12, 2014**

**Jen Psaki**, Spokesperson  
**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Syria**  
**Washington, DC**

**MS. PSAKI:** One other item for all of you. Secretary Kerry will travel, as I've mentioned a bit in here – but here's our official announcement – will travel to London on May 15th where he will participate in the U.K.-hosted meetings of the core group of the Friends of the Syrian People, also known as the London 11. Secretary Kerry and his counterparts will discuss the international community's efforts to ease humanitarian suffering inside Syria; support the moderate opposition on the heels, of course, of the visit of the opposition to the United States; and efforts to advance a political transition, as well as other global issues.

...

**QUESTION:** Okay. In the aftermath of the visit of Jarba, can you tell us where things stand now? I know you are preparing for the London 11 meeting. First of all, is this going to be focused on humanitarian aid, or is it going to go beyond that into, let's say, military aid or a type of military aid?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, Said, obviously – and let me just go back to when we gave an extensive readout of the meeting the Secretary had with Jarba --

**QUESTION:** Right, right.

**MS. PSAKI:** -- just last week. And as you know, he's still in town and has a variety of meetings still left on his schedule.

**QUESTION:** Right.

**MS. PSAKI:** The meeting with the London 11 will certainly cover humanitarian – the importance of access to humanitarian assistance. But as you know, we're also committed to building the capacity of the moderate opposition, including through the provision of assistance to vetted members of the moderate armed opposition. I'm certain that will also be a part of that conversation as well. And this is an opportunity on the heels of the Secretary's meeting with the opposition here in Washington and a variety of other meetings that other attendees have had to coordinate and determine what the path forward is.

**QUESTION:** Okay. And do you see eye to eye with your other allies, like Saudi Arabia in particular, in providing aid – military aid in this case – to the rebels and which group of rebels that are receiving that aid? Are you in tandem with them?

**MS. PSAKI:** That's obviously an issue that's discussed at virtually every one of these meetings, and we continue to believe that, obviously, assistance should go through the vetted members of the moderate opposition.

**QUESTION:** And you believe the aid that goes to these moderate rebels will also work in a negative way in the flow of arms to the bad guys?

**MS. PSAKI:** You're familiar, Said, with our view about -- concerns about any assistance getting into the wrong hands.

...

**QUESTION:** Last week, senior Israeli IDF officer stated that from the day Assad signed the chemical weapon deal in August he has used chemical weapons over 30 times, and every single time Assad regime used chemical weapons he has killed the citizens. Do you have any comment on that?

**MS. PSAKI:** As you know, we take any allegations seriously. Obviously, the OPCW is looking into recent reports. We support them in that effort, and we're still at the same -- in the same place in terms of the removal of 92 percent of the weapons. And we continue to raise this issue and the need to remove the remaining as quickly as possible.

**QUESTION:** Do you have any update on that remaining part?

**MS. PSAKI:** I do not have any update other than the fact that we continue to press this issue and we will in the coming days. We believe they have the tools necessary.

**QUESTION:** One more question. During the meeting with Mr. Jarba here, have they presented any new proofs or documents with regard to chemical --

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have any other details to read out than what I read out last week. I have a limited amount of time here, so I just want to make sure we get to every topic that's on your minds. Go ahead.

...

**QUESTION:** I'm sorry, but I have to take issue with your -- well, not issue. I want to ask you: We don't take positions on domestic politics in India or anywhere else? The whole top of this briefing was about a referendum in Ukraine, which is domestic politics, which you took a huge position on.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I think it's a different category, Matt.

**QUESTION:** Well --

**MS. PSAKI:** Obviously --

**QUESTION:** -- but you take positions on domestic --

**MS. PSAKI:** -- the legitimate --

**QUESTION:** In Egypt, you took positions on --

**QUESTION:** Syria.

**QUESTION:** Syria, exactly. You say that Assad is no longer fit to lead.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, Assad killed tens of thousands of his own people.

**QUESTION:** But that's involving --

**MS. PSAKI:** So that's a slightly different circumstance.

**QUESTION:** So it's not -- so it's -- you think that their -- and you say that their election coming up is a farce as well, so --

**MS. PSAKI:** Certainly. When it --

**QUESTION:** But that is a position on domestic politics. All right.

**MS. PSAKI:** When there are brutal dictators involved who killed tens of thousands of their people --

**QUESTION:** Which --

**MS. PSAKI:** -- then we do take position, sure.

**QUESTION:** Okay. All right.

**MS. PSAKI:** Go ahead.

**QUESTION:** Well, good. So -- of course, that goes to Lucas's question as well on Modi, because he's accused of being -- having some responsibility for massacres.

But anyway, on the Syrian election: There are some -- there are complaints from the Syrian Government about countries in Europe not helping or not allowing expatriate Syrians in those countries to vote in the June 3rd election. Given the fact that you think that this thing is a farce and whatever, and the fact that you suspended the operations of the Syrian Embassy here, does the U.S. have a position on whether Syrian expats -- Syrians in the United States should vote? Can they -- would you facilitate it at the UN mission, for example?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'll have to check with our team on that specifically.

May 9, 2014

**Jen Psaki**, Spokesperson

**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Syria**

**Washington, DC**

**QUESTION:** News reports have said that U.S., Britain, and France have raised suspicions at the UN yesterday of possible undeclared Syrian chemical agents. And diplomats have said that the three countries believe that Syrian President Bashar al-Assad never came clean about the full extent of his chemical arsenal. To what extent do – you are concerned about this issue?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, Michel, we have never taken the Assad regime at its word, and neither have those partners that you mentioned, and we continue to approach this process with our eyes wide open. It's important to remember that the removal process is not the end of the OPCW's work. The OPCW's inspection and verification efforts will continue to ensure the accuracy and completeness of Syria's declarations, that its CW production facilities are dismantled, and that the entire CW program has been completely eliminated. And obviously, the OPCW will have our full support in that ongoing effort.

**QUESTION:** And the OPCW head of mission in Syria has said that 92 percent of Syria's chemical weapons have been removed or destroyed in the country so far. The remaining 8 percent is currently inaccessible due to the security conditions, mentioning that they are in an area controlled by the opposition. Are you in contacts with the opposition about the --

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, to be clear, and I think there was some confusion about the remarks made, there's only one area remaining where the additional 8 percent is being held. It's not opposition controlled; it's regime controlled. There have been areas where chemicals have been removed from that have been opposition controlled. Our view, and I think the UN representative said this in her comments, is that we need to continue to look for ways to get there regardless, that the regime has the responsibility to remove these weapons, and we are – while we regret that they did not empty the final site when the environment was more secure than it is today, we still continue to believe we can and we're going to do everything possible – the OPCW, I should say – to ensure the additional chemicals are removed.

**QUESTION:** And why they are not delivered yet, since they are under the regime control?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, again, obviously they were citing some concerns about security on the paths, but we're going to look into that – not us, specifically – the OPCW, which we fully support. And again, they said they're going to do everything possible to get there regardless.

**QUESTION:** Assistant Secretary Gottemoeller made the same point this morning about what's known as Site 2, or (inaudible). What can be done if these facilities and these tunnels have to be destroyed in order for Syria to be in compliance with this agreement? What can the U.S. do to actually push this process along? Or is this --

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, it's not --

**QUESTION:** Or is it clear – or is this solely under OPCW control at this point?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, the U.S. supports this effort. But as you know, it's not the U.S. that is running this process or the U.S. that has been specifically implementing it throughout the process. So it is the OPCW with the support of the U.S. and the support of many other countries. We still continue to believe that the Assad regime can and must begin to take the necessary steps, including the packaging and destruction of certain materials on the site to demonstrate it is determined to fulfill its obligation. And again, I would point you to the comments of – that were made that made clear that they're going to continue to look into every way possible to get access to this site.

**QUESTION:** And how long is the U.S. – as well as others, how long is the U.S. willing to wait for this destruction to actually take place, given that you believe that there are undeclared weapons stores across Syria?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we want it to happen as quickly as possible, but you're familiar with the deadlines, which is – I believe the next one is June 30th. And again, let's not forget that we've now removed 92 percent of the 100 percent of the declared. That is a significant step forward. Does more work need to be done? Yes. But these are chemical weapons that the Assad regime will never again be able to use against their own people.

**QUESTION:** Would the U.S. be willing to just let the 92 percent removed stand?

**MS. PSAKI:** Again, I think by saying we clearly need to continue our efforts to remove the remaining weapons answers that question.

**QUESTION:** Yeah. By the delivery of the 8 percent, will you be confident that the whole arsenal, chemical arsenal, will be removed?

**MS. PSAKI:** I think I answered question when I said we don't take the Assad regime at its word, and obviously the OPCW's efforts will be ongoing to ensure that they are – that the removal process has been verified in terms of the accuracy and completeness of the declared stockpile.

**QUESTION:** That means you will ask for renewing the OPCW --

**MS. PSAKI:** It's not a renewing because – as a part of what was agreed to last September, that's included as a part of that agreement.

**QUESTION:** Well, given that this site apparently contains precursors for both sarin and for VX, is there any particular urgency in getting this final facility cleared and then destroyed?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I think, Roz, I said we want this to happen as quickly as possible, and the Assad regime needs to begin now to take steps to assure the international community that they are – remain committed to fulfilling their obligations.

**QUESTION:** Are you suggesting that there might be other chemicals and other agents across the country that could be combined with what is at Site 2? Does that --

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't think I suggested that. I'm not going into any -- what I conveyed, I think, Roz, a couple of times now, is that the OPCW's work will continue. We don't take the Assad regime at its word, and they will continue to take steps to ensure that the removal process and the inspection efforts are verified and they're verified to be accurate and complete, but their efforts will continue.

**QUESTION:** Can we change the subject, please?

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure. Do you have one more on Syria? Go ahead.

**QUESTION:** Different subject.

**MS. PSAKI:** Different subject, okay.

**QUESTION:** Just -- Syria.

**MS. PSAKI:** Uh-huh.

**QUESTION:** When you talk about updating the stockpile list, should OPCW should seek the -- for example, other chemical agents like chlorine to include to the stockpile? I mean, what is the U.S. Administration position on that? You remember the debate on this (inaudible).

**MS. PSAKI:** I think I've answered this a number of times in the briefing room about chlorine, so I'd point you to past comments.

Go ahead. It's a new topic?

**QUESTION:** Yes. Sorry --

**MS. PSAKI:** Oh, sorry. Go ahead.

**QUESTION:** Do you know if the Secretary briefed Mr. Lavrov about his talks with Mr. al-Jarba, the head of the Syrian Coalition?

**MS. PSAKI:** Everything that I read out to you is the extent of the readout, so I don't have anything further to add.

**May 8, 2014**

**Jen Psaki**, Spokesperson

**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Syria/Ukraine/Russia  
Washington, DC**

**MS. PSAKI:** Secretary Kerry met today with Syrian Opposition Coalition President Jarba at the Department of State. He and President Jarba had a productive discussion on the full range of our shared concerns on Syria, including empowering the moderate political and armed opposition, curbing the rise of extremism, completing the work of removing chemical weapons, and easing humanitarian suffering.

As part of our continued efforts to bolster the moderate Syrian opposition and help the coalition serve the interests of all Syrians, the Secretary also discussed with President Jarba some additional measures we are taking to support the coalition, local communities inside Syria, and members of the moderate armed opposition. These steps include our announcement that the coalition's representative offices in the United States are now foreign missions; working with Congress to provide more than \$27 million in new nonlethal assistance to the Syrian opposition; stepping up deliveries of nonlethal assistance to commanders in the Free Syrian Army to enhance their logistical capabilities; and imposing new sanctions and restrictions announced earlier today by the Department of the Treasury against members of the regime and its supporters who have suppressed the Syrian people.

Additionally, the Secretary reaffirmed to President Jarba that the United States remains committed to working towards a negotiated political solution that puts an end to the violence and ultimately leads to a representative government that is responsive to the needs of the Syrian people. The United States has led the international community's efforts to advance a political transition and the Secretary commended the coalition's commitment to that goal.

With that, Lara.

**QUESTION:** Could you bring us up to speed on where the Administration feels about arming the rebels or sending lethal aid to the moderate rebel groups? And is there more impetus to do this now that he is here and, I believe, directly asking for it?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we've certainly seen his public comments and certainly he made the same case he's made publicly in private. You – we provide a range of assistance to the Syrian opposition, including nonlethal assistance – we just announced an increase in that; including humanitarian assistance – we continue to be the largest donor in the world. As you know, part of our effort has been to continue to boost the moderate opposition and provide additional assistance including to the moderate armed opposition. I'm not going to outline that or detail that from here, but we continue to consider a range of options. I have nothing to convey or announce for all of you today.

**QUESTION:** Okay. So there's still – it's fair to say that the Administration is still debating whether or not to give lethal aid to the moderate opposition?

**MS. PSAKI:** As you know, in the past we have announced our plans – last year, I should say – to expand the scale and scope of our aid. I have nothing new on that front to announce. Obviously, discussions are ongoing.

**QUESTION:** Thank you.

**QUESTION:** Do you have sympathy with the argument that was put forward yesterday by Mr. Jarba that the Syrian rebels, opposition, needs what he called more efficient, more effective weaponry to – particularly, to combat barrel bombs, which he said they're being rained down on his people daily now. Do you have any sympathy for the argument?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, certainly we have sympathy – not just sympathy, but we watch alongside them in horror as we see what's happening on the ground, whether that's recent attacks in Aleppo, the efforts by the regime to block humanitarian assistance, to starve people to death within the country. So it's more than just sympathy. It's what is in fact driving us to continue to have ongoing discussions, both with the opposition today, but even next week when the Secretary goes to meet with members of the London 11.

**QUESTION:** I think his contention is, though, without heavy weaponry of some kind, the opposition is in a position where it's very difficult for them to change the balance of power on the ground. And unless there's a shift in the balance of power on the ground, you're not going to open the door towards any kind of political solution.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, Jo, you're familiar with our view, and something, actually, members of Jarba's own coalition repeated today is that there is not a military solution here to what's happening on the ground. We continue to believe that, as you know. We understand what their requests are, as I noted. We're continuing to build the capacity of the moderate opposition, including through the provision of assistance to vetted members of the moderate armed opposition. I'm not going to outline that further, but obviously discussions are ongoing about how to take steps to change the situation on the ground. And that was part of the discussion today and will be next week when the Secretary's in London.

**QUESTION:** Just more – one more. I mean, yes, they do agree that there's no military solution, that they are seeking a political solution. But I think their contention is wider – is broader than that. That if you don't give them a big stick, if you like, to help them convince the Assad regime that they will not win this war, even if they don't – they need this, even if they're not going to use it.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, there's a – obviously, that's part of the discussion that they have presented and they've made the same arguments they've made publicly in private. And I'm sure that will continue as they meet with other members of the Administration and members on Capitol Hill. But again, I don't have anything new to announce for all of you today.

**QUESTION:** It's not enough to sway your reluctance to provide them with heavy weaponry?

**MS. PSAKI:** I have nothing to announce in terms of any change in our position.

Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** A clarification on the aid that you announced. The 27 million, is that strictly for humanitarian aid, or does that include the aid that is also going to the FSA commanders?

**MS. PSAKI:** It's 27 million. I believe we outlined it pretty specifically when we announced it to the Syrian opposition. I don't – it includes nonlethal assistance to commanders in the Free Syrian Army to enhance their logistical capabilities, so it does include that, Roz.

**QUESTION:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** What can we expect from London 11 meeting next week?

**MS. PSAKI:** What can you expect from the London 11 meeting? Well, as I've noted and has been announced, I believe, on the ground, the Secretary will be traveling. We'll have an official notice, I'm sure, in the next 24 hours or so. But he'll be traveling to London next week, where he will participate in the UK-hosted ministerial meeting of the core group of the Friends of the Syrian People, also known as the London 11. They will discuss the international community's efforts to ease humanitarian suffering inside Syria, support for the moderate opposition, and efforts to coordinate on advancing a political transition.

Obviously, the Secretary will communicate on his own meetings here and meetings the Administration is having during the official delegation visit of the SOC. And other members of the London 11 will certainly communicate on their meetings and their views and assistance that we're all working on.

**QUESTION:** And President Jarba has announced before he came to Washington that the opposition has started to receive sophisticated weapons from the West. Are you aware of this kind of weapons that the opposition --

**MS. PSAKI:** I've seen those reports. I don't have anything to outline further for you in terms of our assistance.

**QUESTION:** Syria and Russia coming together here. The Russian ministry is saying that Kerry and Lavrov spoke today. I was wondering how much of the conversation was about Syria and about this meeting with Jarba.

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm. Well, they spoke prior to the meeting, so it was mainly focused on Ukraine. He talked about – the Secretary talked about, again, the importance of de-escalation, disarming separatists, steps to evacuate buildings. They – he talked about the importance of taking specific steps to move forward in agreeing on those, support for dialogues that are

happening around Ukraine and efforts by the international community to support those, and reiterated the importance of the election.

But the conversation was focused on Ukraine.

While I am on this topic, he also spoke with Prime Minister Yatsenyuk as well this morning, encouraged him to continue the broad, inclusive dialogue that is – the legitimate government is supporting across Ukraine; discussed ongoing preparatory efforts for the elections, including how to ensure that people across Ukraine have the ability to vote. So he spoke with both of them this morning.

**QUESTION:** But – sorry, Syria wasn't part of that – I know it was prior to Jarba. But --

**MS. PSAKI:** It – the phone call was focused on Ukraine. It was not – it was all Ukraine.

**QUESTION:** And not the Treasury designation. That did not come up either? (Inaudible.)

**MS. PSAKI:** That was not – no, that would not – not probably be the proper channel for that to happen through.

Go ahead, Michael.

**QUESTION:** Jen, in what specific ways does the 27 million enhance the logistical capability of the opposition military commanders?

**MS. PSAKI:** In terms of how, specifically?

**QUESTION:** Yeah.

**MS. PSAKI:** It's a very good question. I know when we announced it we had more details. Let me see if I have anything more in front here, and if not, Michael, we can get you something shortly after the briefing in terms of how it's broken down.

Obviously, as you know, we've provided a range of different tools in the past, equipment, et cetera --

**QUESTION:** If you could just take it – I mean, is it trucks, is it radios --

**MS. PSAKI:** Yep.

**QUESTION:** -- is it --

**MS. PSAKI:** Let me take it and we'll get an answer around to all of you after the briefing.

**QUESTION:** Can I add to that? Just in your handout, but when you talked about the 27 million it was for what you specified was the activities of the opposition interim government type things

like civil activities, rescue, that sort of thing. You didn't – so is that all coming out of that same pot?

**MS. PSAKI:** Of the 27 million?

**QUESTION:** Yeah.

**MS. PSAKI:** Yes. Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** So it's that plus nonlethal – sorry – assistance to the --

**MS. PSAKI:** It's nonlethal assistance, yes. It – but it goes to a range of resources on the ground. But let me see if we can get a more complete breakdown.

**QUESTION:** It would be good to know what portion of the 27 million goes to the military commanders --

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** -- and what specifically they're getting.

**MS. PSAKI:** Understandable. Do we have any more on Syria, or should we move on to a new topic?

**QUESTION:** Yeah --

**QUESTION:** Yeah, can we talk about – go ahead.

**QUESTION:** Sorry. Arab foreign ministers will be meeting next Monday on Syria to discuss the deteriorating situation there. Are you aware of this meeting, and is there any coordination with the Arab states?

**MS. PSAKI:** There's certainly coordination with the Arab states. As you know, many of them are members of the London 11, so certainly part of their meetings next week will be part of the discussion when the London 11 meets next week.

**QUESTION:** And next – last one for me: Do you have any comment or reaction to the explosion in Aleppo today that targeted a historical hotel?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we have of course seen that report. I believe there's still information that is being gathered on that. We have nothing to confirm in terms of the source. We know that in reports the Islamic Front has claimed responsibility, but again, nothing to confirm beyond that. Obviously, any attack or any violence along these lines is something we would condemn in the strongest terms.

Roz.

**QUESTION:** Going back to the point about the sanctions, several cabinet-level officers were cited, a presidential advisor, at least one Russian official who may have economic ties or banking ties, an energy facility in Homs --

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** -- can you give us more insight into why these particular people in this business -- why now? What is it the U.S. is trying to achieve by these particular sanctions?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, Roz, at this point, more than 200 individuals and entities have been sanctioned since the onset of unrest in Syria, so this is just the latest iteration of that. And these individuals, of course, specifically have been providing support to the regime, which is what the -- what we are allowed to sanction under these -- under this specific executive order. So I think Treasury put out a specific press release that goes individual by individual and what their ties are, and I would point you to that and the details there.

**QUESTION:** But are you able to say anything more about, for example, the presidential advisor? I believe his name is Bassam Hassan. Do you have anything more that you can say from here?

**MS. PSAKI:** Again, the Treasury press release has specifics on the details as to why for each of these individuals. Broadly speaking, it's because of their support for the Syrian regime and their -- the atrocities that are happening on the ground. But I would point you to the specifics they've put out.

**QUESTION:** Are you able to say whether, at this point, every person in charge of a department or an agency or is part of the unofficial cabinet, the advisory staff to President Assad, has been sanctioned at this point? And if not, why not?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, it's nearly 200 individuals and entities, so I don't have the list of who is not on that list, but obviously, that is a very extensive and expansive list for obvious reasons.

**QUESTION:** And then why not sanction Bashar al-Assad? Why not sanction his wife? Why not sanction their close relatives, especially given that most of her family is in the UK? Is there a reason why you would not go after the head of a government that this Administration has said should be out of power?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, Roz, I certainly appreciate the question. As you know, we are -- speak regularly about our views on how horrific the actions of Assad and his family have been, but I'm not going to preview or give you any insight into any thinking about future sanctions for obvious reasons internally in the government.

Go ahead, Michael.

**QUESTION:** Jen, have Russian individuals and Russian-based institutions previously been sanctioned with regard to Syria?

**MS. PSAKI:** That is a very good question. Let me take that for you as well. Two for you today, Michael, that I am sure others are interested in.

**QUESTION:** Be interesting to know if this is the first time --

**MS. PSAKI:** Yep.

**QUESTION:** -- and if it is, why now? Does it reflect general downturn in American-Russian relations?

**MS. PSAKI:** It does not. It is unrelated to -- this is -- it's an entirely different executive order that deals with the situation in Ukraine, is not related to that. It is related to, specifically, their support for what's happening in Syria, but I can check historically if this is the first time.

**QUESTION:** Okay, as a historical question.

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm. Sure.

More on Syria or new topic? Syria, go ahead.

**QUESTION:** Yeah. I mean, the question was raised a few days ago but do -- are they -- this group going to -- or this status that they have now allow them to have, beside talks with the Americans, any international talks, I mean, with other people like at the UN -- for example, are getting to do work with the UN as representative of the opposition?

**MS. PSAKI:** My understanding is no, but we can check if you have other questions about what we announced a couple of days ago. Yeah.

...

**QUESTION:** Are you considering supporting a -- UN Security Council authorizing a investigation by the ICC into war crimes in Syria?

**MS. PSAKI:** Ali, for you, let me check and see with her office if there's more to convey on that. I do have something for you, Elise. One moment.

We do -- the United States supports the referral to the ICC set forth in the draft resolution under discussion. We've long said that those responsible for atrocities in Syria must be held accountable, and we've been working with our Security Council colleagues on a draft resolution toward this end. We will also continue to support efforts to gather evidence to hold accountable those responsible for atrocities in Syria.

Go ahead.

**QUESTION:** Can you --

**QUESTION:** What changed your mind? I mean, originally, you had some concerns about whether this was the right venue to pursue accountability for Syrians.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, obviously, we've remained concerned, continue to be concerned about the atrocities that we've been seeing on the ground. I don't have any specific incident to point you to, just the ongoing gathering of what we're seeing on the ground.

**May 7, 2014**

**Jen Psaki**, Spokesperson  
**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Syria**  
**Washington, DC**

**QUESTION:** Okay. Is there anything more that you can tell us about what the Administration's message is going to be to the opposition leader during his many-day visit here? Assad's forces sort of scored a pretty big victory today in Homs, and just across the street this morning the Syrian opposition leader renewed his call for weapons to, quote unquote, neutralize Assad's air force. Is that still a non-starter?

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** What more can you tell us about --

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, good to see you. Let me first say that I don't believe we've announced, but the Secretary's meeting with SOC President Jarba tomorrow afternoon, so he'll be here meeting with the Secretary. I have, of course, seen reports of President Jarba's comments. I believe they'll certainly be talking about a range of issues, including our shared concerns about humanitarian access and the importance of implementing the UN Security Council resolution; the fact that people across Syria are literally starving; efforts to work with the international community, including an upcoming meeting next week of the London 11 to continue to support and coordinate efforts to provide necessary resources to the moderate opposition; and efforts the moderate opposition itself is taking to continue to expand and strengthen their own leadership. So I expect they'll have a range of topics on the agenda tomorrow.

**QUESTION:** The Syrian leader did thank the United States for all the humanitarian support and all the political support that he's received at the UN, but he said that until there's a change of power -- of balance on the ground, he said there's just no way for a political solution to have an opportunity to succeed. So, I mean, that's his main thrust.

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm. Well --

**QUESTION:** Because they need weapons, they need --

**MS. PSAKI:** I've certainly seen his comments. Obviously, we're committed -- we remain committed to continuing to build the capacity of the moderate opposition, including through the provision of assistance to vetted members of the moderate armed opposition. As we've consistently said, we're not going to detail every element of that assistance. We're certainly aware of their comments. We're working closely with the international community, as is evidenced by the fact that the Secretary will be traveling next week for a meeting to discuss these very issues.

**QUESTION:** But can I (inaudible)? But even earlier this week, we had -- we spoke with a senior Administration official who was talking about the visit, and the Secretary himself has said that without a qualitative change of the military balance on the ground, that's not going to create the

conditions to change President Assad's calculus to forge a political transition. So, I mean, can't you acknowledge that without more sophisticated weapons, training, all this kind of stuff, you're never going to get that – those conditions for a negotiated solution that you seek?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, you're familiar with what our view is, and that, as you know, there is no military solution to the situation --

**QUESTION:** There's no ultimate military solution.

**MS. PSAKI:** -- on the ground. Let me finish. But we still believe that a political process and the pursuit of a political outcome is the best way to proceed here. And certainly, we understand what's happening on the ground. We understand that there have been ups and downs in what's happening on the battlefield. But we still believe that the way to bring an end to this is a political process, and obviously that needs to begin in order to see an end to that process.

**QUESTION:** I understand. But you're saying you're just – like, a political process doesn't happen in a vacuum, and the Secretary himself and yourself and this Administration official this week said that that – there's – you're not going to have the conditions for such a political process unless President Assad changes his calculus that, oh, you know what, I can't win this, there really is no military solution, or whatever reason that's going to cause him to engage seriously in a political process in a way that he hasn't yet –

**MS. PSAKI:** Well –

**QUESTION:** -- because he doesn't – his calculus hasn't changed.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, Elise, obviously there is – one of the reasons that there's going to be a meeting next week is to discuss how the international community can continue to support the moderate opposition, including the vetted members of the armed opposition. So we'll continue these discussions, but also, we still believe that political pressure and having unity among the international community to convey the atrocities of the Assad regime is part of our calculus in our efforts here as well. It's not just what's happening on the --

**QUESTION:** What kind of political pressure are you – do you think that you could possibly put on President Assad that hasn't worked until now?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, Elise, there's a range of tools at our disposal. We'll continue to work with the international community to determine what the next best steps are.

**QUESTION:** Can I ask you – you said that you realize that there have been ups and downs on the battlefield, but in the year since the Secretary – and it is I think just about a year since the Secretary announced the plans for Geneva II in Moscow – the military trend I think has been pretty steadily downward for the opposition, culminating with, as Elise referenced, the – their apparent evacuation from Homs, which, as you know, was one of the original sites of the uprising against – first of the demonstrations, and then of the uprising against Assad. So what are

the ups in the last year, or where are there places where you feel like things have actually gone the way of the opposition on the battlefield?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm just not going to give a battlefield analysis of this day or the last six months from the podium. Obviously, as you know, there have been a range of factors that have been contributed to supporting the regime, and whether that is support from the Iranians or support with arms from the Russians and others. That has certainly not helped the opposition, but we still continue to believe that there is a path here to resolve this politically.

**QUESTION:** And can you explain why – and I know this is your position and has been it for a long time – but why it is the position of the U.S. Government that providing lethal assistance to, in an open manner, to the opposition is not a good idea?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, as you know, we're not going to detail now or we have never in the past what types of assistance we have been or are open to providing. Regardless of that, the larger position of the Administration is that there's no military solution to this conflict, because that only furthers the bloodshed and suffering of the Syrian people. And that is part of the calculus through which decisions are made.

**QUESTION:** Reason I asked it and the reason I phrased it the way I did when I talked about open lethal assistance is – I'm not asking about classified programs. But it has been the declaratory position of the U.S. Government going back several years now that it did not believe it should be openly arming the opposition. And even Secretary Kerry himself in a round table with reporters about six weeks ago, I think, acknowledged that one of the reasons that Geneva II hadn't worked was that quite soon after it was announced a year ago, the Syrian authorities, with the assistance of Hezbollah and arms from elsewhere that you just referenced, had gone on the offensive.

And so the question that I have is fairly simple: Why is it still – even if you don't believe that there's a purely military solution – Secretary Kerry in those comments made clear that there's both a political and a military side to this --

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** -- and that what tipped the scales a year ago, or 11 months ago in June, was that the government raised the upper hand. Sorry for going on so long, but why is it that it is the judgment of the U.S. Government that you should not openly provide weaponry or any other kinds of lethal assistance to the Syrian opposition?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, Arshad, I think the best way I can answer this is by outlining what our objectives are as it relates to the conflict in Syria. One is to counter violent extremism and prevent the establishment of a terrorist safe haven. Two is avoiding the collapse of the Syrian state and its institutions. Three is preventing the transfer or use of chemical weapons. Four is to bolster the security and stability of Syria's neighbors. Five is to alleviate humanitarian suffering, and six is to work towards a negotiated transition.

I'm not going to outline further what kinds of assistance and how we provide assistance than I already have from the podium.

**QUESTION:** If the position --

**MS. PSAKI:** Go ahead.

**QUESTION:** -- of the Administration is that there should be a political solution, but that also -- given the asymmetry on the ground, which is how everyone refers to it -- a political solution isn't likely under the circumstances, how do you propose to change that asymmetry without weapons? I mean, it seems --

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we don't believe a political solution is unlikely. We believe that's the only path to ending the conflict on the ground.

**QUESTION:** But given the situation on the ground -- and officials have said this, that that needs to be changed in order for Bashar al-Assad to change his calculus -- otherwise the conditions aren't there for a political solution. So they've said the conditions aren't there for a political solution unless that changes, and yet there's no obvious way that the policies towards changing those conditions --

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, there've been a range of proposals put out there. As I mentioned, there'll be a meeting coming up next week with a range of important players in the international community on this. And we'll continue to discuss what the best steps forward are.

**QUESTION:** What about the effectiveness of the sanctions in the past three years? Have they really made a difference, especially when you consider that to observers looking at what happened today in Homs, that Assad's patience in dragging out this civil war may finally be coming to his regime's advantage? He's been able to maintain supplying his troops with a lot of firepower and we've all seen the carnage that's resulted from it. Can this Administration argue that the sanctions actually helped weaken the Assad regime?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we would certainly argue that, Roz. But obviously, as you know, they don't happen in a vacuum. We still strongly believe that sanctions are incredibly effective and have been. And obviously, we could talk through a range of examples, including Syria. But we're also talking about a situation where arms from Hezbollah, from Iran, from the Russians, from others have helped boost the Assad regime. And there are a range of factors that go beyond addressing the question of the -- of whether sanctions alone can end the conflict that's happening on the ground.

**QUESTION:** Can you walk us through more of the Administration's thinking on why not helping the Free Syrian Army -- I understand the concern about weapons getting into the hands of people who may eventually, if not already enemies of the United States. But why the U.S. has not done more to help stand up the Free Syria Army. Absent the --

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I would agree with the premise of your --

**QUESTION:** Yeah, but absent the Administration's concerns about --

**MS. PSAKI:** I would agree – I would disagree, Roz, with the premise of your question. I think one of the points that President Jarba made and virtually anyone in the international community would make is that the United States has been one of the biggest supporters – whether it's politically, whether it's financially, in a range of manners – of the moderate opposition, including the Free Syrian Army, including a range of officials over the course of the last few years.

So we understand what they have requested and there may be disagreement about what we should or shouldn't be providing, but the notion that we haven't been a strong supporter is simply incorrect, and that's not a point that they've made either.

**QUESTION:** But if I'm a mother who is in a part of Damascus that is repeatedly shelled and I am unable, for whatever factors, to get my family to the border into a refugee camp in Turkey or Iraq, I'm not seeing where the U.S. support is actually making a difference in my family's life. What do you say to those people who are still dealing with the civil war who are being shelled because the government thinks that they are harboring people who are trying to overthrow the government?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I would say, Roz, that there's – it would be challenging to find a country that's been more supportive of the effort of the moderate opposition than the United States, whether it's humanitarian assistance, nonlethal assistance, a range of assistance I'm not going to detail from the podium. We continue to stand with the moderate opposition. That's why President Jarba is here on an extensive visit. He'll be meeting with Secretary Kerry tomorrow. As the White House has confirmed, he'll be meeting with President Obama at some point during his trip, and we'll continue to work with our partners in the international community to determine what the best steps forward are.

**QUESTION:** But even to the point about humanitarian aid, several hours ago the Syrian military was preventing humanitarian convoys from actually accessing a part of the area which it had agreed it would allow access. Again, I mean, not to --

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, Roz, no one is saying that they're satisfied with the situation on the ground. The Secretary isn't satisfied, the President isn't satisfied. I don't think that that is the point we're conveying. But we are working every day to use every tool in our toolbox to address the suffering and the bloodshed that's happening in Syria, whether that is pressuring through the UN Security Council or through our international partners for access to humanitarian assistance, whether that's through resolutions through the UN Security Council, whether it's working with our partners to coordinate on aid and a range of types of assistance. This is something that we're working on every single day. It's a very difficult, horrific situation happening on the ground, with humanitarian – the humanitarian situation and the number of lives that have been lost. But that doesn't mean that we're not continuing to work on it every single day.

...

**QUESTION:** And then – President Jarba also in his remarks said that they can commit to maintaining anti-aircraft weaponry in their hands and commit to having it only be used by those who are authorized and trained to have them. But does – is the Administration’s reluctance to provide this kind of weaponry a sign that you don’t have much confidence in their ability to do so?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I think, as I said a few minutes ago, I would just reiterate the fact that we are committed to building the capacity of the members of the opposition – of the moderate opposition, including through the provision of assistance to vetted members of the moderate armed opposition. I’m just not going to outline further what factors we consider and what kind of assistance we’re providing.

...

**QUESTION:** The Russians are supporting the elections in Syria, which is part of Assad’s strategy to sabotage the political solution.

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** Are you still on good terms with the Russians on the Geneva process, or you closed the door with them?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, as you know, the Geneva process has been on a hiatus and we have expressed concerns when warranted about the actions of Russia, and obviously there are ongoing arms supplies from Russia to the Assad regime as it continued – as the Assad regime continues to brutalize its population. And that only serves to reinforce and support this type of intransigence.

But as Secretary Kerry said yesterday, obviously it’s a complete conflict, or contradiction, I should say, that president – that the Russians are supporting and encouraging elections in Syria while the violence on the ground, as many of you have referenced today, is horrific, and the bloodshed and suffering of the Syrian people continues, while at the same time they are trying to delay and hinder elections in Ukraine. So with that, we have a fundamental issue.

...

**QUESTION:** More on Syria. Is the United States afraid of fighting a proxy war with Russia in Syria?

**MS. PSAKI:** Afraid? I think the issue here, Lucas, is: What do we think the most effective strategy is on the ground? I outlined what our objectives are and that’s what we’re making decisions through.

**May 6, 2014**

**Jen Psaki**, Spokesperson  
**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Syria**  
**Washington, DC**

**QUESTION:** The Syrian opposition defense minister has presented today as what he said is proof of the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime. Do you have anything to confirm this or any reaction to that?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, as you know, the OPCW is overseeing a process of looking into these details. We'll let them – let that process see itself out. Obviously, there are a range of information and details that is being provided from across the board, but I don't have anything new to update you on today.

**QUESTION:** And on Lebanon, if possible, too.

**MS. PSAKI:** Lebanon? Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** Yeah. The U.S. ambassador to Lebanon has visited Saudi Arabia lately to discuss the presidential elections there. Do you have any readout for his visit, and how do you view the presidential elections?

**MS. PSAKI:** In --

**QUESTION:** Lebanon.

**MS. PSAKI:** In Lebanon? I don't have anything new for you. I can see with our team if we have anything new to --

**QUESTION:** (Inaudible) presidential elections in Saudi Arabia?

**MS. PSAKI:** I didn't know what he was referring to. (Laughter.) That would be a short conversation.

I don't have anything new on Lebanon or a readout of that visit. You said it's – can you repeat to me? It's the – our U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon --

**QUESTION:** Has visited Saudi Arabia to discuss the Lebanese --

**MS. PSAKI:** The Lebanese elections.

**QUESTION:** It's a little bit, yeah, strange, but --

**MS. PSAKI:** Okay. So – and what – I'm sorry. What were you specifically asking for?

**QUESTION:** To see if you have any readout for his visit and why he visited Saudi Arabia to discuss the Lebanese presidential elections, and if you have any readout.

**MS. PSAKI:** Okay. Let me check with our team and see if there's anything to communicate on that front.

**QUESTION:** Do you have anything about reports of FSA members apparently now possessing TOW missiles?

**MS. PSAKI:** I think I spoke to this a couple of weeks ago and just --

**QUESTION:** There's new video that we've been provided with that shows them using them rather expertly over the weekend.

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have anything new to convey from what I offered a couple of weeks ago.

**May 5, 2014**

**Marie Harf**, Deputy Spokesperson  
**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Syria**  
**Washington, DC**

**QUESTION:** No. Hold on. I have just one more on this. On the select committee, you make the case that you have been cooperating with Congress ever since --

**MS. HARF:** Absolutely.

**QUESTION:** -- since they got involved, exercising their oversight authority, and that you don't think the select committee is needed. But will the Department -- and if you can speak more broadly to the Administration as a whole, but will this Department specifically -- will you be cooperating with it? Or do you think that since you don't believe that it's necessary, do you think that it's not necessary that you've already given them all that --

**MS. HARF:** Well --

**QUESTION:** -- or will have given them all that you -- what's --

**MS. HARF:** We obviously endeavor to cooperate as much as possible given that this hasn't even, I think, been voted on or stood up yet. We'll look and see what it look like and figure out how we're going to cooperate. But we have endeavored and will continue to be cooperative.

**QUESTION:** But --

**MS. HARF:** I just don't know what that will look like.

**QUESTION:** But you don't intend to be uncooperative, because you think that it's not --

**MS. HARF:** It's never our intention to be uncooperative.

**QUESTION:** All right.

**QUESTION:** Marie, on the announcement of the foreign mission status for the Syrian Opposition Coalition offices, what protection would it give them now that they didn't have before? What does this enhanced status actually mean in practicality for them?

**MS. HARF:** Yeah, it does a couple of things. So this is not, obviously, tantamount to recognition of the SOC as the Government of Syria. It's a reflection of our partnership with the coalition as the legitimate representative of the Syrian people and will do a few things. It will allow us to formally facilitate banking and security services for the coalition offices in the United States. That's one. It will also facilitate their outreach to the Syrian diaspora in an increased way in the United States as well. So those are three things off the bat that I think they'll get from it.

**QUESTION:** But it will not give the personnel working in it diplomatic immunity, I believe?

**MS. HARF:** Let me check on immunity. I don't believe that's the case, but let me double-check on the immunity question.

**QUESTION:** And as far as access to the Syrian regime building that was shuttered back in March --

**MS. HARF:** They will not be -- they will not have that building.

**QUESTION:** They will not have the building. Thank you.

**QUESTION:** Is that -- do you know, speaking of that, did they ever make a request for a protecting power to look over that, do you know? Or if you don't know --

**MS. HARF:** I don't know.

**QUESTION:** -- can you look into that to see if it's whether --

**MS. HARF:** Who would they ask?

**QUESTION:** The Syrian -- I don't know, maybe the Russians.

**MS. HARF:** Maybe the Russians. I don't know. I'll check. I don't know. I don't think they have, but let me check.

**QUESTION:** Thank you.

**QUESTION:** Sorry. They have offices in Washington and in New York.

**MS. HARF:** Uh-huh.

**QUESTION:** So it applies to both of those offices?

**MS. HARF:** Mm-hmm, that is correct.

**QUESTION:** Okay. Thank you.

**MS. HARF:** And if they were to open them anywhere else as well.

**QUESTION:** Right.

**QUESTION:** So -- and can I ask about this Foreign Missions Act?

**MS. HARF:** Always, yes.

**QUESTION:** Okay. Just try to figure out what, in addition to what they have, they will have more now in United States?

**MS. HARF:** Uh-huh.

**QUESTION:** I mean, legalization of their status or --

**MS. HARF:** I think I just mentioned a few things. We've already recognized them as the legitimate opposition. This doesn't -- no, this doesn't recognize them as the Government of Syria. There's a diplomatic process in place for that. But it allows us to formally facilitate banking and security services --

**QUESTION:** Okay.

**MS. HARF:** -- for their coalition offices, which is actually a key part of operating as a diplomatic entity in the United States.

**QUESTION:** Do they have more presence than Washington, D.C. or other places?

**MS. HARF:** They have one in New York as well.

**QUESTION:** So the other thing -- I mean, you said clearly, I assume, that there is no related to their status now with the embassy status, which was --

**MS. HARF:** Uh-huh.

**QUESTION:** -- closed a few days -- a few weeks ago through --

**MS. HARF:** In April, uh-huh.

**QUESTION:** Yeah. There is no relation?

**MS. HARF:** No.

**QUESTION:** So what is the significance of -- political significance --

**MS. HARF:** In March -- excuse me, in March. I was wrong.

**QUESTION:** Okay.

**MS. HARF:** Yeah.

**QUESTION:** What is the political or, let's say, a diplomatic significance that you will achieve by giving them this status?

**MS. HARF:** Well, I think it just shows how committed we are to working with the SOC, and it takes another step to formalize their relationship with us and to say that we believe they are the legitimate representative of the Syrian people. Obviously, it doesn't confer on them status as the Government of Syria, but it takes just another step to say these are the people who are showing they're committed to a diplomatic solution, they are the moderate opposition, they've been at the table negotiating with the regime. It just is another step to formalize that.

**QUESTION:** So I mean, can we expect that other things will come out at the end of the week after their meetings or their trips?

**MS. HARF:** I think there might be some more steps that we announce throughout the week after our meetings. I just don't have anything to preview for you.

**QUESTION:** Thank you.

...

**QUESTION:** Do you have any update regarding the previous chemical --

**MS. HARF:** No.

**QUESTION:** -- weapon attacks?

**MS. HARF:** I don't have any update on it.

**QUESTION:** What is the process? What are you trying to do right now on those allegations?

**MS. HARF:** Well, the OPCW announced -- let me just pull this up. The OPCW announced that they were going to be undertaking a fact-finding mission to establish the facts around this alleged use of chlorine in Syria, obviously think this is a good step. We will consult with them. I don't think we have a schedule laid out for how this fact-finding mission will go about, but we want to get all the facts, and we'll make determinations and then go from there.

**QUESTION:** Did you also try to reach out to one of the British newspapers? Telegraph, according to their findings, they already established through some samples they received. Did you --

**MS. HARF:** Has the OPCW team?

**QUESTION:** No, the -- one of Turkish -- British newspapers.

**MS. HARF:** Right. Well, the OPCW is the one doing the fact-finding mission, given that they're the ones running the CW destruction effort. So I don't know if they have. I don't know if our folks have. I'm happy to check.

**QUESTION:** Another question regarding Syria.

**MS. HARF:** Uh-huh.

**QUESTION:** I mean, the Special Representative Brahimi announced his intention, or at least say that he is not trying to be – again, to doing the same thing.

**MS. HARF:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** And there were some names which were mentioned. Do you have any position regarding the next step, or just like, leave it to --

**MS. HARF:** Well, obviously, we work very closely with Mr. Brahimi on the Syria issue. I don't have any predictions for you about where the process will go from here. In order to convene a third diplomatic round, we need the Syrian regime to agree to several steps, which they have not agreed to. So we'll keep working with Mr. Brahimi or whoever happens to be in that role to move the process forward.

...

**QUESTION:** Any particular reason why you're taking these steps now, the office and also the extra money?

**MS. HARF:** Well, obviously, President Jarba just arrived in town and will be having a whole host of meetings this week. And this is his first official visit, the first official SOC visit to Washington. So I think we probably timed it with that.

**QUESTION:** Sorry, what I meant was the whole general – the meetings and everything.

**MS. HARF:** Oh, what – oh, all of them. I don't know why. I don't know if it was just a scheduling issue or if there now is a specific reason. I don't think there was.

**QUESTION:** Sorry. This is the first official visit of the SOC?

**MS. HARF:** Uh-huh.

**QUESTION:** Hasn't – haven't other leaders --

**MS. HARF:** The first official visit --

**QUESTION:** -- been here before since they were recognized in, God, where was that, Istanbul? Where were we when --

**MS. HARF:** But this is the coalition's first official visit to the United States since 2012. You can visit here and it not be an official visit.

**QUESTION:** Right, but --

**MS. HARF:** This is their first official visit.

**QUESTION:** -- wasn't the previous -- no? The previous leader didn't ever come?

**MS. HARF:** This is the first official visit.

**QUESTION:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** Given that you work, to use your words, in lockstep with your European allies, do you expect a similar recognition to be coming from any of the other European capitals?

**MS. HARF:** I don't know what their regulations are for foreign missions in their countries. I don't -- the answer is I just don't know.

**QUESTION:** This isn't something that you've coordinated then, necessarily, with Europe?

**MS. HARF:** I'm not sure. I'm not -- on this, I don't think so but --

**QUESTION:** Okay. And I just wondered if you had any announcements about any upcoming talks, Friends of Syria talks, anything like that?

**MS. HARF:** I know that we're going to be having conversations with our partners, especially with the London 11 coming up. I don't have any specifics to announce for you, but we will be having discussions with them soon.

**QUESTION:** Just on the --

**QUESTION:** Same issue?

**MS. HARF:** Syria?

**QUESTION:** Yeah. I just want -- sorry. I just wanted to clarify a little bit more on the status of the mission. Was there -- so before this, before this recognition today, what was the -- was there some kind of prior step under the law that --

**MS. HARF:** Well, not under -- not to my knowledge, under the law. We had taken the political step in December 2012 of recognizing the SOC as the legitimate representative of the Syrian people. To my understanding, that was not a legal step. That was a political declaration of our support. This is now a legal step.

**QUESTION:** So as far as the missions in D.C. and New York were concerned, they had no standing according -- with the U.S. Government whatsoever before this?

**MS. HARF:** Well, I wouldn't say "no standing," but they didn't fall under the --

**QUESTION:** No official --

**MS. HARF:** -- Foreign Missions Act. That's correct.

**QUESTION:** Okay. And then you said that this would allow them to conduct more outreach to the Syrian diaspora community --

**MS. HARF:** Uh-huh.

**QUESTION:** -- in the U.S. as well as more broadly. Is that as a result of the increased capacity that you anticipate, increased financial wherewithal, and things of that nature?

**MS. HARF:** I think partly and also partly the increased status as well. I think both.

**QUESTION:** Okay. And then your status of the Assad, like, how you consider the Assad regime -- are they still the Government of Syria in your view, or what is their -- what is your view of how they --

**MS. HARF:** Well, again, this does not confer government status upon the SOC. The regime is still in power, yes.

**QUESTION:** Okay.

**MS. HARF:** But to be clear, we see no place for President Assad in a future Syria, period. What we've said is the two sides need to work together on laying out a transitional governing body. That's a very difficult process, but that's what needs to happen from here.

**QUESTION:** Yes, please.

**MS. HARF:** Uh-huh.

**QUESTION:** Regarding the mission in New York, are they allowed to be in touch with the UN mission or not?

**MS. HARF:** I would assume so. I assume they are in touch with the -- I can -- I'm happy to check with our UN folks.

**QUESTION:** Thank you.

...

**QUESTION:** Just one more on Syria and the foreign missions. I -- just to follow up on the question about the United Nations, do you consider this like a pretext to possibly helping this -- the SOC get recognition at the United Nations?

**MS. HARF:** I don't -- I'll check with our UN folks. I just don't have any details on that.

**May 2, 2014**

**Marie Harf**, Deputy Spokesperson  
**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Syria**  
**Washington, DC**

**QUESTION:** Recently it was mentioned, yesterday – maybe you discussed already this issue, which is the chemical weapons – that there is some kind of, whatever, posing or retreating from the handling the chemical weapons.

**MS. HARF:** That who's retreating from it?

**QUESTION:** Syrians.

**MS. HARF:** The regime?

**QUESTION:** The regime.

**MS. HARF:** From their declarations? Is that you're referring to?

**QUESTION:** No. I mean, not completely, but the flow of the things. At a certain point, you reach, I think – we reach to the 70 or 80 percent of the chemical weapon storage, whatever it was, there. And then in the last few days, there is kind of – the process is slowing down or even stopping from being done as it was done before with the same pace.

**MS. HARF:** Well, it's gone in fits and starts, as we've seen this process has. So we are continuing to push through the OPCW and the UN this process to be finished. Obviously, we have been working very hard with Russia specifically on pushing the Syrian regime to fully comply with its obligations. And we'll continue to monitor the situation.

**QUESTION:** So do you still believe that they are still complying – the regime is complying with the – with this system?

**MS. HARF:** Well, I don't think we've used that term specifically. We've reached some benchmarks that we think are important, but they will not be in compliance until it's all out.

**QUESTION:** So the benchmark – is that the date, which is like June 20 --

**MS. HARF:** The 30th.

**QUESTION:** Thirtieth.

**MS. HARF:** Uh-huh. We still believe we can meet it.

**QUESTION:** So another question related to the – what is the situation now with the humanitarian aid going from UN or through UN channels to the refugees? Is there any update about that?

**MS. HART:** I don't have any update on that. I'm happy to see if there is one. I don't think there is one.

**April 28, 2014**

**Jen Psaki**, Spokesperson  
**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Syria**  
**Washington, DC**

**MS. PSAKI:** [T]he United States condemns in the strongest possible terms the Assad regime's missile strike today on the Aleppo Provincial Council headquarters, which killed one person and injured eight others. The Aleppo Provincial Council is a key civilian governance institution that works with more than a hundred local councils in Aleppo to meet the basic needs of its people.

Despite inadequate resources and in the face of the regime's relentless attacks, local councils in Aleppo and throughout opposition-held areas of Syria provide education, water, electricity, civil defense, and relief to its residents. Teams of emergency responders supported by the provincial council regularly respond to the regime's indiscriminate shelling. As the regime continues to protect only its interests, slaughter its citizens, and suppress the aspirations of its people, we applaud models of local governance like the Aleppo Provincial Council, which is working tirelessly to support the Syrian people. These attacks will not deter those who are working for a better future in Syria.

...

**QUESTION:** Yeah. Do you have any comments on Assad declaring that he's going to run for the presidential election?

**MS. PSAKI:** I think we've spoken to this.

**QUESTION:** No, but he did today. He submitted the papers today.

**QUESTION:** His specific candidacy.

**MS. PSAKI:** His specific – his specific announcement.

**QUESTION:** Right, his specific announcement.

**MS. PSAKI:** I would say, obviously, I spoke to this pretty extensively last week when there was rumor of him running or there were just talk of him running. I would point you to those comments. They are still applicable about our views of his intention.

**QUESTION:** Okay. Just a quick follow-up on the chemical weapons aspect on the --

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** -- the chlorine. Now, the Russians are saying that this is all a figment of somebody's imagination, it's not true, and it was – it's just a way to sort of – or an excuse to maybe strike Syria. Is that the thinking here?

**MS. PSAKI:** As we've said, we've seen indications, of course, of the use of a toxic chemical, probably chlorine. We're examining allegations, continue to examine allegations, that the Assad regime was responsible. We take all allegations of the use of chemicals in combat very seriously. So we're continuing to consult and share information with the OPCW and international partners as we work to determine what has happened, and that's the phase we're in at this point.

**QUESTION:** Are you independently examining these allegations on your own?

**MS. PSAKI:** We're obviously --

**QUESTION:** Are you doing it as part of the UN or --

**MS. PSAKI:** We're working closely with international partners, through the OPCW, with the UN as well.

**QUESTION:** Okay.

**MS. PSAKI:** Go ahead. Oh, okay.

**QUESTION:** And lastly, on what -- did you -- do you have any information on Brahimi resigning?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have any new information. I would point you to Mr. Brahimi and his team.

Ali, did you have --

**QUESTION:** Yeah, on Syria.

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** In light of the failure of Syria to meet the deadline on Sunday, I just wanted to know if you had any reaction in general to that. And where do we go from here?

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure. As you noted, Syria has failed to meet the April 27 target date for the removal of all chemical weapons materials, one that it set for itself, just as it failed during the past three months to meet the milestones set by the OPCW for CW removal.

As of last week, approximately 92 percent of declared chemicals have been removed. While that is significant progress, we're not finished. There is more work, clearly, that needs to be done.

With our international partners, we're going to continue to press the regime to live up to its obligations, including by removing the remaining 8 percent. Syria has an obligation to complete packing and preparations at the remaining site and transfer those materials to Latakia. They have the capability to do this, and there should be no further delay.

**QUESTION:** And there have been comments by Western officials in recent days that there are doubts resurfacing that the declared weapons that are left are not all the declared – are not all the weapons that are there, that Syria is withholding information. So does the United States share these concerns that Syria is withholding information about chemical weapons they haven't declared?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we've never taken Assad, the Assad regime, at its word, and we will continue to approach this process with our eyes wide open. It's important to remember that the removal process is not the end of the OPCW's work, and the OPCW's inspection and verification teams' efforts will continue to ensure the accuracy and completeness of Syria's declarations that its CW production facilities are dismantled and that the entire CW program has been completely eliminated. The OPCW will, of course, have our full support. So it will continue, and we will take every step through the OPCW to ensure that that is all looked into.

**QUESTION:** You've never taken Assad at his word? Is that – that's what you said?

**MS. PSAKI:** That is what I said.

**QUESTION:** Okay. But you're willing to take his word that he's going to run for president?

**MS. PSAKI:** If he doesn't, if he's kind of joking us about that, then that's fine with us.

Go ahead.

**QUESTION:** Would there be any consequences for the failure of meeting the deadline or not?

**MS. PSAKI:** We're continuing to press through with our international partners for them to meet the deadline. I don't want to make any predictions. I know we'll keep talking about this in here.

**QUESTION:** Actually, it seems that Kaag in her press conference was quite positive in her assessment of Syria's cooperation. Do you feel that the Syrians are underhandedly keeping 8 percent, or they are just not able to meet the deadline?

**MS. PSAKI:** There is – they have the capability to ensure that the declared chemicals are removed, so now they need to do so.

**April 24, 2014**

**Jen Psaki**, Spokesperson

**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Syria**

**Washington, DC**

**MS. PSAKI:** The United States strongly condemns the Assad regime's deadly barrel bombing today of an Aleppo vegetable market where dozens were killed and injured. Through its continued slaughter and starvation of the Syrian people, the regime has made clear that it protects only its interests and does not represent or respect the aspirations of its people. In the face of these appalling tactics, the regime's call for presidential elections rings hollow and false. We call on the Syrian Government to immediately cease its unrelenting, indiscriminate attacks across Syria and to allow humanitarian assistance to reach all those in need.

**April 23, 2014**

**Jen Psaki**, Spokesperson  
**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Syria**  
**Washington, DC**

**QUESTION:** On Syria, I'm wondering if the issue of that toxic chemical usage in Syria came up during the conversation with Lavrov at all yesterday.

**MS. PSAKI:** It was not a part of the conversation yesterday. But I will say that Under Secretary Rose Gottemoeller, other senior officials from the Department, have been in touch with our – their Russian counterparts who work closely on this issue.

**QUESTION:** And since there was a briefing on it up at the UN today, I'm wondering what Secretary Kerry's awareness is. I mean, is he also being debriefed on this, and what kind of information do we actually have? Do we know anything more now than we did yesterday?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have any new information. I can – one quick update. I mentioned this yesterday, but just to be more specific, our ambassador to the OPCW Bob Mikulak has met with OPCW – the OPCW director general, and we're continuing to consult and share information with key partners, including the OPCW. The Secretary is kept closely abreast on this – of the updates on this issue. He asks about it on a daily basis. But I don't have any other updates for you today.

**QUESTION:** So there's no confirmation yet on --

**MS. PSAKI:** Correct. I don't have any additional --

**QUESTION:** And is there any – what you said yesterday about the distinction between chlorine being used as an industrial agent, and all that stays the same? There's no refinement to that?

**MS. PSAKI:** No, there hasn't been a change to that. No.

**QUESTION:** Following up on that, you said that the use of weaponized chlorine is a violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** The Chemical Weapons Convention is cited repeatedly in the agreement that was brokered by the United States and Russia. Is a violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention by Syria a violation of the U.S.-Russia brokered agreement? Does that translate?

**MS. PSAKI:** So part of the agreement was to become a member of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Obviously, there isn't – there's a lot that needs to happen to determine the facts on the ground. But the UN Security Council decided in the UNSCR, UNSCR 2118, that it would impose measures under Chapter 7 of the UN Charter in the event of noncompliance, including the use of CW.

**QUESTION:** Right.

**MS. PSAKI:** So we will see what happens here.

**QUESTION:** So also in the agreement, it wasn't just membership in the Chemical Weapons Convention. It was – there were specific provisions of the convention that were cited, including the following: “The detailed procedures for its implementation shall apply to all chemical weapons.”

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** And chemical weapons, of course, are categorized into different schedules. And you were talking about how chlorine is a schedule three chemical. Since the actual weapons are -

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't think that's what I said yesterday.

**QUESTION:** Okay.

**MS. PSAKI:** But go ahead. Sorry, continue your question.

**QUESTION:** Well, it is. It turns out it's a – it's not a schedule one or two, which are weapons that are solely produced for mass killing.

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** Like sarin or VX or whatnot.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, it's used – I think what I said is that what the accurate information is, just so you know, is that since chlorine is used in commercial and industrial processes in a peaceful manner often, it's not required to be declared under the Chemical Weapons Convention.

**QUESTION:** Right. But schedule three --

**MS. PSAKI:** It's not one of the declared chemicals.

**QUESTION:** Right.

**MS. PSAKI:** But obviously, the use of a toxic chemical, including chlorine, would be a violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

**QUESTION:** Yeah. Schedule three chemicals are exactly that.

**MS. PSAKI:** Toxic chemicals.

**QUESTION:** They're chemicals that are – yeah, toxic chemicals that are widely produced for industrial purposes other than weaponization.

**MS. PSAKI:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** But nevertheless, they are categorized as chemical weapons if they are used for the purposes which you cited yesterday, which is the harming or killing of people.

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** So I guess what I'm asking is: Because these chemical weapons have been categorized in three different schedules, are violations categorized in different tiers as well? Is it – if it's only chlorine as opposed to sarin, is it treated differently? Are the violations not the same?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not going to speculate on that. And that would be an OPCW-UN process. Obviously, they would conduct the investigation and they are the ones who are implementing the UN Security Council resolution.

**QUESTION:** Okay. But at the beginning of the agreement, the Secretary of State said anything but full compliance with the deal that was brokered by the United States and Russia would mean – would mean a violation, period, and it's not graded or tiered. So is it really up to the OPCW, or do we not – does the United States not have a standard for noncompliance?

**MS. PSAKI:** I think I answered this pretty extensively yesterday. If there's new information to provide, we're happy to provide that.

...

**QUESTION:** I have one on Syria, slightly different. I don't know if you've seen the news today that there's an MP from the Communist Party in Syria who's registered to be – to challenge Assad in the elections which he seems to be pushing forward. I just wondered if you had a reaction to that. Does it confer some kind of legitimacy on this process, that obviously --

**MS. PSAKI:** It certainly should not, given the history of the Assad family and the steps they've taken to make it difficult if not impossible to have a fair and free election in Syria.

**QUESTION:** How about the history of the Syrian Communist Party?

**QUESTION:** Communist Party.

**MS. PSAKI:** Fair points. Go ahead.

**QUESTION:** On the subject of politics in Syria, it turns out that the head of al-Qaida's victory committee has – was reported to be dead and killed last month in Syria. Sanafi al Nasr is alive

and well and he is a member of core al-Qaida. And would you say that core al-Qaida has an increased presence in Syria and that al-Nusra – the head of al-Nusra – it's not just an affiliate?

**MS. PSAKI:** Nothing has changed about how we designate affiliates versus core al-Qaida. You're familiar with our concerns about the growth of extremism in Syria. That hasn't changed; in fact, it's increased over time. But I don't have any change in the way we designate or --

**QUESTION:** Would you say that al-Qaida's presence in Syria has grown stronger in the past few months?

**MS. PSAKI:** I am not going to put a definition on that. Obviously, the growth of extremism, the growth – that is an area of concern and one that we are extremely focused on as we look at the path ahead.

**April 22, 2014**

**Jen Psaki**, Spokesperson  
**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Syria**  
**Washington, DC**

**QUESTION:** I just want to know if there's anything more you can say about the chlorine that apparently was used that you talked about yesterday.

**MS. PSAKI:** There's nothing new to update you on. We have been in touch with the OPCW. I should say our ambassador to the OPCW has been in touch. Beyond that, I know you asked a couple of questions yesterday, technical questions --

**QUESTION:** Right.

**MS. PSAKI:** -- outside of broadly -- what's happening with this specific process, and I wanted to just give you a few answers on that, if that's useful.

**QUESTION:** Yes.

**MS. PSAKI:** So one is the Chemical Weapons Convention, which as you all remember is -- was part of what Syria was required to join as part of the September agreement. It does -- prohibits the use of any toxic chemical, including chlorine, with the intent to kill or incapacitate people, regardless of whether it's specifically listed or not in the schedule of chemicals. So obviously, when people were asking yesterday about whether -- if there was a use to be -- if there was a use found of chlorine, whether it would violate -- what it would violate, the use with intent to kill or intent to injure would violate the Chemical Weapons Convention, and obviously that was a part of what was agreed to in September. So that was one of the questions yesterday. I don't know if there were other technical ones, but if not --

**QUESTION:** Well --

**MS. PSAKI:** But I can do my best to address them, or we can also continue to work through this over the coming days.

**QUESTION:** Well, the technical one was -- you said that it -- yesterday -- that it wasn't on schedule A or 1 or 2 or whatever it was, A or B. But it is covered, correct?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well --

**QUESTION:** Was it covered in the agreement that was reached in Geneva?

**MS. PSAKI:** Okay. So let me try to explain it again in a better way. The chemical -- Syria was required to join the Chemical Weapons Convention.

**QUESTION:** Right.

**MS. PSAKI:** So the use with the intent --

**QUESTION:** Yeah.

**MS. PSAKI:** -- is covered in the -- by the Chemical Weapons Convention, so -- that they were required to join last September.

**QUESTION:** Right.

**MS. PSAKI:** So it's covered in that degree.

**QUESTION:** Last -- okay. So in other words, if it was proven that they had used chlorine with the intent to kill or injure, they would be in violation of the agreement that was reached in Geneva, because it would violate the OPCW, which they were required to join because of that agreement.

**MS. PSAKI:** That is a long, extensive -- yes. But -- and to be more --

**QUESTION:** Yes.

**MS. PSAKI:** -- broad about it, not just chlorine -- I know, again, we're of course looking into this -- but the use of any toxic chemical with the intent to cause death or harm is a clear violation of the convention.

**QUESTION:** Right. But -- so in other words, when -- but you haven't yet determined whether or not it was chlorine and whether or not it -- if it was, who used it. Is that --

**MS. PSAKI:** Correct.

**QUESTION:** -- correct?

**MS. PSAKI:** And as you know, but it's worth repeating, there are several possible mechanisms for investigating a possible violation. The OPCW Technical Secretariat's international group of experts on CW will almost certainly be involved in that. Point being, it wouldn't be the United States, as you all know, but it's worth repeating --

**QUESTION:** Right.

**MS. PSAKI:** -- going in and investigating. There would be an international mechanism. There's a range of ways that could take place.

**QUESTION:** Well, at the moment, I'm less interested in -- although others might be -- in how exactly it will be determined whether it was chlorine and who used it. But I am a little bit confused if there is even the suspicion or there are indications that chlorine was used and that the regime was behind the use of it, how it is that people are still going around saying that the agreement reached with the Russians back in Geneva is worth anything. If it violates it not just in

the spirit but also in the letter of the agreement, which required them to join the OPCW, how can people, the Secretary included, this morning say that this is a success and it's something that you're working well with the Russians on?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, Matt, just a brief update on that. The percentage of declared chemicals removed is now at 86 percent. As you know, there are different categories of chemicals.

**QUESTION:** Right.

**MS. PSAKI:** The point that I was making is that obviously any use of any toxic material with the intent to injure or kill is something we'd be concerned about. We're not at the point of there – we're obviously in touch with the OPCW, we're in touch with our international partners. I don't have any new updates on that.

**QUESTION:** Were they required to declare chlorine stocks, stocks of chlorine gas? Because I mean, if 86 percent of what – appears not to include any – or it doesn't include chlorine. And if they're going to get – I don't understand.

**QUESTION:** Does it include chlorine?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, again – so let me just – on the Chemical Weapons Convention, just to be clear here, the schedule of chemicals are intended to facilitate – its declaration inspection regime are not intended to be an exhaustive list of all toxic chemicals.

**QUESTION:** (Off-mike.)

**QUESTION:** Isn't it --

**MS. PSAKI:** Let me finish my answer. Chlorine, as you all know, is a globally produced industrial chemical with many peaceful uses. Obviously, the intent – the use of chlorine with the intent is a different category.

**QUESTION:** But isn't this one of the problems with the agreement as it stands, and that we talked about at great length at the time of the agreement? That just because you have this limited agreement to remove some of the most deadly chemicals, that Assad was not going to – was going to start killing his people in other crude ways, such as barrel bombs, and now we see possibly barrel bombs with chlorine. I mean, you said this was all – I just don't understand, like, where U.S. policy in Syria has done anything to change effectively on the ground if he's skirting – just because he doesn't use mustard gas and sarin doesn't mean he's not able to kill his people in other ways.

**MS. PSAKI:** Okay. Well, I would say first, again, just, it's worth repeating, that we're still investigating what happened here. We're looking --

**QUESTION:** But isn't it --

**MS. PSAKI:** Let me finish. We're looking closely at the allegations. I just want to be very clear.

But second piece, I don't think anyone would question that removing priority one and two harmful chemicals is still not a positive step in terms of what the Assad regime has access to. We've removed now 86 percent of those chemicals – not we, the OPCW process. Certainly, regardless of chemicals and regardless of what's been found here, there are remaining concerns about the brutality of the Assad regime, about what they have done and continue to do to their people. They've been using access to food as a weapon. We all are familiar with this. Those concerns have not changed, but we still feel it is positive to remove the most harmful chemicals.

**QUESTION:** But is it – has it stopped in any way the kind of percentage of people that are dying? I mean, I think it was horrible if even one person died of a chemical weapon, but when you look at the numbers of ways that he's killing his people, I mean, certainly there are tens of thousands more people killed in other ways and there are indications that – indications, anyway, that he's still using other types of chemicals.

I just don't – yes, it's good that you got that out, but how is it really changing the balance on the ground in any way?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, Elise, again, we're horrified by any effort, any step the Assad regime has taken to brutalize, to kill his own people. There's no question about that. We've never said that this was going to solve every issue of what's happening on the ground. That's why we've continued to pursue other avenues. But what the point is here is that we've removed 86 percent of the most harmful chemicals; that still is a positive step. Is there more work to do? Absolutely. And we certainly take every allegation seriously, which is why we're looking into it.

**QUESTION:** If I could – just one more.

**MS. PSAKI:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** If I could go back to the actual chlorine incident itself, I mean, isn't it indications that this was delivered by a barrel bomb or some kind of canister by the air in which the opposition doesn't have access to that type of aircraft?

**MS. PSAKI:** There was indications, as I mentioned yesterday – I don't have new information to share with all of you from here – of the use of a toxic industrial chemical.

**QUESTION:** Delivered by the air?

**MS. PSAKI:** Probably chlorine. I don't have any other additional details in terms of how, why, if, by whom. That is, of course, what we will be continuing to look into.

**QUESTION:** Jen --

**QUESTION:** Can I follow-up with just a couple of things?

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** So I'm clear, chlorine is not included in those – in the sum total of the most dangerous chemicals, of which 86 percent have been removed?

**MS. PSAKI:** Correct.

**QUESTION:** Okay. Second, are you certain that the declared stocks of the most dangerous chemicals represent all of Syria's such stocks? Or is it possible they didn't declare some?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, on the first question, I think I answered it. And just to repeat: The Chemical Weapons Convention prohibits the use of any toxic chemical, so including chlorine.

**QUESTION:** I get that. I get that. I get that.

**MS. PSAKI:** In terms of – what we're talking about here is the declared chemicals, obviously we continue to explore this. I don't have any other additional updates. I will talk to our team and see if there's more we can share.

**QUESTION:** So you can't say whether you're confident or certain that the declared chemicals, indeed, captures the total universe of those chemicals?

**MS. PSAKI:** I will check with our team and see if there's more that I can convey. I certainly understand your question.

**QUESTION:** Jen --

**QUESTION:** Okay. And then one – and then --

**MS. PSAKI:** Go ahead.

**QUESTION:** -- sorry, one more, if I may. How – two more – how long do you think it will take the OPCW to establish the facts of this incident? And secondly, do you believe that the OPCW will receive unimpeded access to be able to do this on the ground?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, the second question you asked is a big factor in answering the first question. So the time required to conduct any investigation of alleged CW use would be dependent on the circumstances surrounding the investigation, not least of all the cooperation of the host country. And again, they have not announced – obviously, they would be – broadly speaking, they would be a key player in all likelihood in any investigation. They have not announced that. They are pursuing that. We're in touch with them, as are a number of international partners, and we're continuing to work closely.

**QUESTION:** But – so, in other words, you can't say how long it might take, and you can't say whether you're optimistic, given the agreement with Syria and Russia, that the Syrians will, in fact, provide access?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well --

**QUESTION:** You just – those are unknowns?

**MS. PSAKI:** Those are unknowns. That's exactly correct.

Go ahead, Michael.

**QUESTION:** Jen, the President had threatened the use of force last year – cruise missile attacks – because Syria had used chemical weapons against its own citizens and killed a large number of people. And then there was a diplomatic activity that took place that resulted in the agreement to remove the precursor chemicals, but also led Syria to join the Chemical Weapons Convention, as you just pointed out. Two things happened.

If it's established that Syria used – the Syrian Government used chlorine as a weapon of war, would that violate the assurances that led the President to withdraw his threat of force?

**MS. PSAKI:** I certainly think it's a good question, but I'm not going to speculate on what may or may not happen before we know what the facts are. And obviously, we're working to determine that now, working with the OPCW and others, to see how we can determine that. But I don't want to speculate on what we might do --

**QUESTION:** Well, I'm not asking a question on facts.

**MS. PSAKI:** -- and whether – mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** I'm just – I'm asking a question on policy. Does the Administration, does the State Department, does the White House consider that the use of toxic chemicals as a weapon of war violates the basic diplomatic accomplishment it achieved, which prompted the President to withdraw the threat of force?

**MS. PSAKI:** I just don't want to get ahead of the process, Michael. I understand your question. I will talk to our team and see if there's more we can convey more clearly on that.

**QUESTION:** Jen.

**MS. PSAKI:** Go ahead.

**QUESTION:** You agree that chlorine is commercially available in many markets around the world, right?

**MS. PSAKI:** I do.

**QUESTION:** And conceivably, people can – with rudimentary equipment can produce allegedly a toxic weapon, correct? Am I --

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I think, again, Said --

**QUESTION:** You have anything to --

**MS. PSAKI:** -- I think I've already addressed the fact --

**QUESTION:** Right.

**MS. PSAKI:** -- that it's a globally produced industrial chemical with many peaceful uses. Obviously, the use of any toxic chemical with the intent to cause death or harm is a clear violation. That's what we're talking about here.

**QUESTION:** Are you aware of any military use for chlorine as a weapon in the past?

**MS. PSAKI:** Certainly there's a history, as I'm sure you're familiar with.

**QUESTION:** Right. Okay. But we know that this happened in Kfar Zeita, which is an area under the control of the opposition, correct? This --

**MS. PSAKI:** Again, Said, I'm not going to speculate on the details that we're still under the process of looking into.

**QUESTION:** But just going back to some – to the assertion that it was an aerial bombardment – are you sure that this was an aerial bombardment? Or could have it been, like, maybe an artillery shell or --

**MS. PSAKI:** I didn't confirm any details, and obviously, we're still looking into that.

Michel.

**QUESTION:** I've asked you yesterday about this, too. Does the use of chlorine in Syria violate the UN Security Council resolution in this regard, or not?

**MS. PSAKI:** I think I addressed it, but let me try – if I can do it more clearly. As part of the agreement in September, Syria agreed to join the Chemical Weapons Convention. The use of any toxic chemical with the intent to cause death or harm is a clear violation of the convention. Obviously, that's broadly speaking. We're still looking into the details here, so I don't want to speculate beyond that.

**QUESTION:** In the morning, Secretary Kerry has said that there is a big progress in Syria regarding the chemical weapons. Why he didn't mention the use of chlorine in Syria? And does he consider this as a setback?

**MS. PSAKI:** Because we have indications of the use of a toxic industrial chemical. We're looking into those indications. But again, there is a process that we'd have to – that would be – we'd undergo to do that. And certainly, as I stated earlier, the removal of the most harmful chemicals that have been moved to the port of Latakia is still, we feel, a positive step.

**QUESTION:** And will there be any consequences in case the regime has truly used the chlorine?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not going to speculate on what we – what steps we may take until we have the facts.

**QUESTION:** Syria?

**QUESTION:** But surely, though, even the indication or having indications of the use of a chemical agent that would violate a treaty would – is troubling, no?

**MS. PSAKI:** Of course. That's why I talked about it yesterday.

**QUESTION:** Because had they been – so – I mean, had they – had the Syrians been following or – their agreement, you wouldn't have these indications at all. Isn't that correct?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, again, we don't --

**QUESTION:** I mean, the opposition – I mean, in the tiny percentage chance that it was the opposition, that this happened and that the opposition was behind it, they are not actually bound by the agreement that Syria signed with the Russians. I mean, with you and the Russians. Right? I mean, they should be; everyone should be. But they're not.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, any – we've said this long before that agreement --

**QUESTION:** Right.

**MS. PSAKI:** -- any use would be of concern.

**QUESTION:** Yeah, but the opposition – the SNC is not a party to that agreement. So if it was proven to be – if it was chlorine and it's proven to be used by the regime – I mean, by the opposition – they wouldn't be violating this agreement. As bad as it would be, it wouldn't be – they wouldn't be in violation.

It's – the point – the problem is that you seem to be presuming – and not just this agreement, with other – but with other agreements that you have reached – that you're negotiating a gentlemen's agreement and expect the other side is a gentleman and will go along with it, when in fact they're showing you time and time again that they're not. That's the

**QUESTION:** Are you still confident in this agreement that was reached in Sept -- last September with the Russians and the Syrians, that -- are you still confident that it is holding?

**MS. PSAKI:** We -- I just conveyed that we're at 86 percent removal of declared chemicals.

**QUESTION:** Yeah, but that doesn't include chlorine, and it doesn't include god-knows whatever rat poison if they start to -- if they start doing that. You substitute one chemical agent for another that might not be as dangerous -- does that really matter? Are the -- can you still hold the agreement up as a -- an 86 percent success?

**MS. PSAKI:** We -- I think we can, Matt. But beyond that, I think -- and this speaks to Elise's question before -- it has never changed our concerns about the ongoing brutality by the Assad regime using a range of other tools, whether it's weapons or whatever it may be.

Go ahead.

**QUESTION:** Can we change topics?

**QUESTION:** (Off-mike.)

**QUESTION:** There's -- but this would indicate -- just to follow up on Matt -- I mean, that they're just kind of skirting the agreement to, like, be implementing it to the quote-unquote "letter," and maybe not even so, if they're using it as a weapon of war. But do you think that your policies to date have kind of signaled to them that as long as they -- well, as long as they don't cross some specific provision, that they're okay? And even if they do, I mean, the fact that the President laid out this redline and they crossed it anyway -- it doesn't seem as if your agreements with them, that they hold that much -- they can implement some of it, but they don't have to.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I would strongly disagree with that. And this goes with -- to some of Michael's question as well in that the threat of the use of force, which obviously the President made, the Secretary made -- our strong view -- and the Secretary has said this publicly -- that we are eliminating a greater percentage of chemical weapons, of what has caused the horrific tragedy of what happened last August, by taking these steps and by implementing this agreement. Yes, it would've perhaps been more satisfying to some had we moved forward with the use of force. However, we were able to secure an agreement, pursue a diplomatic path that now has eliminated 86 percent of declared chemicals.

So I don't think that saying we went back on what we said we would do is an accurate depiction of what happened.

**QUESTION:** Jen, to clarify: you seem to be defining your agreement very narrowly. You just pointed out the agreement has two components. One is the removal of the precursor chemicals, but the other is an action by the Syrian Government to join the CWC and then assume the commitment not to use chemical weapons and including toxic chemicals. So if they have, in fact, used these toxic chemicals, they are in violation of the agreement that you reached with them last fall. The agreement has got two components, you said.

**MS. PSAKI:** By violating the CWC --

**QUESTION:** The CWC accession by Syria and the removal of the precursor chemicals – the use of chlorine would violate that very fundamental understanding you reached with them.

**MS. PSAKI:** I certainly understand and I've laid out also the details of what would violate. So I'm not disagreeing with your point. I'm just conveying, obviously, those are the facts broadly speaking, but we're going to look into this, see what happened, get down to the facts and the details, and allow that process to --

**QUESTION:** But it would seem that you can't say that by removing the 80-plus percent precursor chemicals, by that activity alone Syria is in compliance with your understanding with them from last fall, because if they've in parallel carried out attacks with toxic weapons, they were in violation of one element of that agreement.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, again, we don't know the details yet of what happened, so that's why I'm just speaking broadly about the Chemical Weapons Convention.

**QUESTION:** Jen --

**QUESTION:** How do you go about determining what exactly happened and who used what in your view?

**MS. PSAKI:** I think I did answer it, Said. But just briefly, there are several mechanisms. Obviously, the OPCW Technical Secretariat's experts would be likely involved. There are a range of ways that we could look into what happened.

**QUESTION:** We know that the Syrian regime is answering the question of coming from OPCW regarding this chemical weapons stockpile. I know – I understood that you're not including this chemical agent to the most dangerous stockpile, but in the last questioner, according to the news reports, the Assad regime answered all the questions sent by the OPCW. Should --

**MS. PSAKI:** You mean last year, or when are you referring to?

**QUESTION:** After the agreement in fall.

**MS. PSAKI:** In the --

**QUESTION:** In last September --

**MS. PSAKI:** Last – okay.

**QUESTION:** After the agreement, they sent additional questions to regime. And according to the press reports, regime answered all these questions.

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** But was this questioner including the chemical agent like chlorine, or just you focused on the most dangerous stockpile?

**MS. PSAKI:** Again, I think I answered this. But the use of any toxic chemical to cause harm or cause death would be a violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Obviously, there are a range of industrial chemicals, including chlorine, that have many peaceful uses, so it wouldn't be in the list of the – the chemicals included in the CWC Schedule of Chemicals is not exhaustive to include all toxic chemicals. So --

**QUESTION:** So you are not aware of the chlorine stockpile in the hand of regime right now, at least as far as --

**MS. PSAKI:** Again, it has a range of peaceful uses. Obviously, the use for harm or death would be of great concern.

**QUESTION:** And the last one, back to Michael's questions. Is chlorine – I mean, to ask this more directly, actually: Is chlorine included to the redline of the President, Mr. President?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not going to speak to the President's redlines. I would just repeat what I've said a few times that the use of any toxic chemical, including to harm or cause death, would be a violation of --

**QUESTION:** I don't want to parse this thing. If you – if a toxic chemical which is not classified as a chemical weapon because it has some civilian uses as well is used to cause harm or death, is it then considered to be a chemical weapon?

**MS. PSAKI:** It's a good question, Matt. It's beyond my depth of chemical weapons expertise.

**QUESTION:** Okay.

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm happy to take it and see if there's more we can convey on that point.

**QUESTION:** Jen --

**MS. PSAKI:** Go ahead.

**QUESTION:** Has the U.S. delivered TOW anti-tanks missiles to the Syrian opposition lately?

**MS. PSAKI:** I think I answered this question last week. I don't have anything new to detail for you in terms of assistance.

**QUESTION:** Okay. If not – or I'm not sure what was your answer. But if not the U.S. directly provided the opposition with this kind of missiles, did one of your partners or friend consulted the U.S. before delivering this kind of American weapons to the Syrian opposition?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I'm certainly not going to provide details of private diplomatic discussions with foreign governments. What I said last week and I'm happy to repeat is we are committed to building the capacity of the moderate opposition, including through the provision of assistance to vetted members of the moderate armed opposition. As we have consistently said, we're not going to detail every single piece of our assistance.

**QUESTION:** And do you consider that TOW missiles can build the capacity of the opposition?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have any more details on this particular line of questioning.