

Daily Press Briefing: Discussion on Iran

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August 12, 2014

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

QUESTION: Iran has endorsed Iraq's new prime minister-designate. How do you view this statement from Iran?

MS. HARF: Well, we encourage any country to encourage the Iraqis to form an inclusive government as soon as possible to govern inclusively. That's been our position all along, and so, obviously, we would welcome any statements to that effect.

QUESTION: And have you been in discussion with the Iranians regarding the situation in Iraq?

MS. HARF: We have not. We have not.

QUESTION: And last week during the meeting between the U.S. delegation and the Iranians, have you discussed Iran?

MS. HARF: Have we discussed Iraq?

QUESTION: Iraq, sorry.

MS. HARF: To my knowledge it was not raised in the way that it had been raised previously on the sidelines of the P5+1 round. It may have been brought up in casual conversation, but it was not discussed in a substantive way.

QUESTION: And a follow-up question on Roz's question, too, regarding al-Maliki. To what extent you are confident that he will leave power after the formation of the new government?

MS. HARF: Well, there's a process in place, and that's what will happen at the end of it. That's what should happen at the end of it. Look, we're not going to entertain hypotheticals at this point. The Iraqis have hit the benchmarks as part of this process. Again, we knew it wouldn't be entirely smooth. We never thought it would be. But that's what we're working towards right now. So let's hope that happens. We'll continue to have conversations with all of the Iraqis about making sure that happens.

QUESTION: Thank you.

QUESTION: (Inaudible) the -- on the Iran angle. You mentioned that you couldn't comment on the Der Spiegel --

MS. HARF: I just couldn't confirm it. I just don't know if --

QUESTION: Couldn't confirm it, the Der Spiegel report?

MS. HARF: We can't confirm it one way or the other.

QUESTION: Sure. But the issue of Iranian arms – does the U.S. have a position on that?

MS. HARF: Well --

QUESTION: Should Iran have the right to small arms --

MS. HARF: Well, it's not a question of a right. There are some sanctionable – there are potential sanctions that could be involved with the export or import of Iran – arms in or out of Iran. There are specific sanctions in place. Without being able to confirm whether or not it's happening and the specifics, I can't say whether or not this would be, but there's a likely chance it could be if this is true. We just have to look at it.

QUESTION: So, in general, the U.S. would be opposed to Iranian arms flowing into Iraq.

MS. HARF: In general, we believe we should --

QUESTION: Even if it's for the same side.

MS. HARF: -- continue to implement sanctions that are on the books.

August 11, 2014

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

MS. HARF: On Iran, on behalf of the U.S. Government, we wish to extend our sincere condolences to the family and friends of those who lost their lives on a Sepahan air flight, which crashed shortly after takeoff outside of Tehran, Iran yesterday. There are no reports of any U.S. citizens on the flight. We are aware of reports that Iranian authorities are investigating the crash, and again wanted to extend our sincere condolences as well.

Also on Iran, on a happier note, we want to welcome the Iranian men's national volleyball team to the U.S. to wish them well on their series of friendly matches against the U.S. national team. The Iranian team arrived in the U.S. late last week. They've already played one in a series of four matches against the U.S. team. On Saturday night, the teams played to a full crowd at the Galen Center on the campus of the University of Southern California. The match was close, but the U.S. team won three games to one. The remaining matches will take place on the 13th, 15th, and 16th of August all in southern California. They're being broadcast live into Iran via Voice of America's Persian Service. They're also available livestream on the VOA Persian website and the Team USA site. We've talked a lot in this room about sports diplomacy and how important we think it is, and this is just another example of that.

August 7, 2014

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

MS. HARF: I want to give everyone a brief update on the upcoming schedule for the EU/P5+1 talks with Iran on its nuclear program. As you saw in the Media Note we released last night, today, Deputy Secretary Burns, Under Secretary Sherman, and Jake Sullivan are in Geneva meeting bilaterally with an Iranian delegation which is led by Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi as part of the nuclear talks. Our team in Geneva also includes Rob Malley, who is the NSC senior director for Iran, Iraq, and the Gulf States; Jim Timbie, who is one of the USG's top nuclear experts and a senior advisor here at the State Department; and Paul Irwin, who is the NSC's director for nonproliferation.

As you know, we meet with the Iranians bilaterally during the P5+1 rounds in Vienna, as all of the delegations do, as well as separately from those rounds as we did in Geneva in June, if people remember. These bilateral consultations take place in the context of the P5+1 nuclear negotiations led by EU High Representative Cathy Ashton.

I know there have been some questions about the role that Deputy Secretary Burns and Jake Sullivan will play going forward, as they are both leaving their current positions in the not-too-distant future. Given their history working on this issue, particularly with the Iranians, I can confirm today that they will both remain involved in the Iran negotiations as special government employees after their departures from their respective positions.

QUESTION: Sorry, it was both Burns and Sullivan?

MS. HARF: Uh-huh. In terms of schedule, we expect to hold an EU/P5+1 round of talks in September in advance of the ministerial meetings at UNGA at a location that's still being determined. We will also likely hold an EU/P5+1 meeting on the sidelines of UNGA as we did last year, if people remember, possibly with ministers participating in some way. The specific details of these meetings remains to be worked out. In the meantime, we will have bilateral consultations, as we are doing today, and experts meetings to continue working through the very complicated and technical issues that are a part of these negotiations.

These few weeks right now will also, of course, be a useful time for delegations to have serious conversations in their capitals, including, importantly, in Iran about the path forward and how we can make progress towards concluding a comprehensive agreement over Iran's nuclear program.

...

QUESTION: Just so – when you talked about the EU/P5+1 meeting in September, that would not include Iran? It's just the P5+1 and the EU?

MS. HARF: No, no, no. That would include Iran, a normal plenary round like we have.

QUESTION: And at what level? Is that political directors?

MS. HARF: I just said the details remain to be worked out.

QUESTION: And then --

MS. HARF: They traditionally have been -- these are more than one clarification.

QUESTION: Got it, and then the one on the sidelines again --

MS. HARF: It's the last one and then I'm going to do my last topper.

QUESTION: The one on the sidelines of UNGA would also be with Iran?

MS. HARF: Yes.

QUESTION: Thank you.

...

QUESTION: I just want to go back to the talks on Iran. Do you have any specific readout that you can give us about the meeting that Wendy Sherman and Burns and company had with the Iranian officials today?

MS. HARF: It was, I would say, a constructive discussion -- you've heard me use that word before; another step in the process here. We're not going to, I think, get into details of that. As I said, we are now in the extension phase of the Joint Plan of Action, and there will be a host of different kinds of meetings throughout this process, whether it's bilaterals that all the countries have with Iran -- not just us -- experts meetings to work through the very technical issues, and plenary sessions. And part of this will be around the General Assembly, as it was last year, and we're just going to keep having meetings and try to make progress.

...

QUESTION: Regarding the team and you mentioned with Deputy Secretary Burns, that -- his status going to be a special government employee, is --

MS. HARF: Mm-hmm. It's a technical term. It is. It's a technical term.

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. HARF: Yeah.

QUESTION: For him and for other person?

MS. HARF: For Jake Sullivan.

QUESTION: Yeah.

MS. HARF: Yep. I know there's been a lot of questions given their role in the talks.

QUESTION: Yeah. I mean, is this --

MS. HARF: If -- once they leave their current positions, they will still work on this.

QUESTION: This title is to be specific for these --

MS. HARF: For these negotiations.

QUESTION: Not for other things?

MS. HARF: Correct, correct. Deputy Secretary Burns and the Vice President's National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan --

QUESTION: So wouldn't --

MS. HARF: -- have been very involved in the Iran negotiations, and since we have an extension and each of them will be leaving their current positions -- Jake actually fairly soon -- they will remain just in that capacity as part of the Iran talks.

August 5, 2014

Jen Psaki, Spokesperson
Daily Press Briefing, selections on Iran
Washington, DC

MS. PSAKI: I just wanted to start by giving you all just some readouts of the meetings the Secretary has been having over the course of the last few days. There are quite a few, so bear with me.

Yesterday, the Secretary met with President Kabila of the D.R.C. They discussed their shared vision for a more prosperous D.R.C. that can build on the progress achieved during the past year and bringing stability to the Great Lakes region. The Secretary and President Kabila affirmed their joint commitment to the continued demobilization and repatriation of the M23 – of former, sorry, M23 combatants and to ending the threat from the FDLR within the next six months through a continued process of voluntary demobilization backed by a credible military threat.

The Secretary also expressed support for the D.R.C. Government’s goal of establishing a more transparent international adoptions process, but reiterated U.S. concerns about the humanitarian impact of the D.R.C. Government’s suspension of visa issuance for adopted children.

During his meeting with Vice President Vicente of Angola, the Secretary welcomed Angola’s leadership in Africa and world affairs, particularly in the Great Lakes region. The United States considers Angola a key stakeholder in the Peace, Security, and Cooperation Framework peace process, and strongly supports Angola’s efforts in its role as chair of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region to help resolve the conflict in the D.R.C. The Secretary also noted Angola’s efforts on trafficking in persons through a recent recommitment to combat trafficking and USUN Ambassador Powers urged – or called for a continued engagement on peacekeeping operations both regionally and internationally.

The Secretary – hmm?

QUESTION: Power.

MS. PSAKI: I don’t know what --

QUESTION: There’s no “S”.

MS. PSAKI: Powell. I don’t know why I just said “Powell.” Long day.

QUESTION: No, Power. Power.

MS. PSAKI: I know. I know what her name is. Thank you, Matt.

The Secretary called for the next iteration of the Security and Economic Dialogue to be held in the fall. The Secretary also met yesterday with Burundi President Nkurunziza. During their meeting they discussed how to work together to build a peaceful, stable, and prosperous nation, including support to the Burundi Government law enforcement, judiciary, and military to develop the institutions and procedures that will protect citizens and establish a foundation for long-term national and regional stability.

They also discussed the critical importance for Burundi's continued economic growth and stability for the 2016 national elections there to be peaceful, fair, free, and consistent with the spirit of the Arusha Accords. In support of these elections, they talked about the strong U.S. support for a continued robust United Nations presence in Burundi, including the current UN office in Burundi which concludes in December, and the follow-on UN electoral observation mission.

He also met yesterday with President Compaore of Burkina Faso. Secretary Kerry expressed condolences to the families of the 28 citizens who were among the 116 passengers and crew who lost their lives in the crash of the Air Algerie flight in Mali – flight in Mali just a few weeks ago. Secretary Kerry discussed the importance of developing strong institutions and peaceful transitions of power. He also expressed appreciation for Burkina Faso's contributions to the UN peacekeeping missions and regional mediation efforts, including support of the Mali peace negotiations recently begun in Algiers.

And last one of yesterday, during an August 4th – during the meeting yesterday on the margins of the Africa Leaders Summit, Secretary Kerry congratulated Mauritanian President Aziz on his recent reelection and for assuming the chairmanship of the African Union. The Secretary applauded him for his leadership role in negotiating a cease-fire between the Malian Government and rebel groups in the country's north, and recognized the strong U.S.-Mauritania partnership on counterterrorism initiatives in the region.

Today – just a few from today. The Secretary and Prime Minister Hailemariam of Ethiopia discussed security in South Sudan and in the Horn of Africa. The Secretary commended Ethiopia for moving the South Sudan peace process forward and working to bring the two sides of the conflict together. The Secretary also commended Ethiopia for its contributions to fighting Al-Shabaab in neighboring Somalia and for helping Somalia create a more just, peaceful, and democratic society. The prime minister remarked that regional peace and stability is the basis for economic growth, and noted that Ethiopia is working very hard to bring investors to the region. The Secretary, finally, underscored the U.S. commitment to continuing to help Ethiopia's strength and capacity in the fields of health, education, agriculture, energy, and democracy, and human rights, noting that we provided Ethiopia \$800 million in assistance annually.

The Secretary also met with AU Commission Chairperson Zuma this morning. He expressed his sincere gratitude to her for her work as chairperson of the African Union Commission. He reiterated that the African Union is a key strategic partner in implementing President Obama's strategy for sub-Saharan Africa, strengthening democratic institutions, spurring economic growth, trade and investment, advancing peace and security, and promoting opportunity and development. They discussed the potential positive role of the summit in changing perceptions in

Africa – of Africa in the United States, highlighting opportunities in Africa for U.S. investment outside of the extractive industries.

Finally, the Secretary also met this morning with South Sudan President Kiir. The meeting came at a very critical time, especially given our concern about lack of progress in peace negotiations, ongoing violence, and a worsening humanitarian crisis, which we see as the worst food security situation in the world now made worse by the recent killings of a number of humanitarian workers in South Sudan. Secretary Kerry and Ambassador Power expressed their concern about continued fighting and the growing humanitarian crisis, which will reach even more catastrophic levels in the coming months. The Secretary stressed that in order for a transitional government to be established, the parties need to come to the table and need a peace agreement.

That is the summary of our bilateral meetings. Go ahead, Matt.

QUESTION: Wow, did he have time to do anything else?

MS. PSAKI: He has done a few other things in that time, it turns out.

QUESTION: Okay. Listen, can we start with – maybe some of them have been on the Middle East. Have they?

MS. PSAKI: They have not.

QUESTION: Oh, they haven't?

MS. PSAKI: But we can certainly start with the Middle East.

QUESTION: All right. Well, listen, we saw your comments and the comments of the White House, your comments last night and the comments of the White House, about the cease-fire and you being supportive of it and also being supportive of the talks that are now going to happen whenever they start in Cairo. What is the Administration's thinking about U.S. participation in these talks, if at all? And if the parties who are the direct parties to this are not particularly enthusiastic about U.S. participation, are you going to try to force your way, barge into this, much in the same way the President and former Secretary of State did with the Chinese and the climate talks in Copenhagen?

MS. PSAKI: Well, that was quite a unique event. But this is an issue that, of course, the Secretary and senior levels of the Administration have been closely involved in. We expect that will continue. In terms of who will participate, we're still determining who and at what level. Obviously, we're in discussions not only internally but with the Israelis and the Egyptians about that as well.

QUESTION: But you do --

QUESTION: So you definitely will?

QUESTION: Yeah. You --

MS. PSAKI: Our expectation is that we will continue to remain closely engaged. In terms of who and how and when, we're still determining that.

QUESTION: But you have decided that U.S. participation in these talks in Cairo is important and should happen, correct?

MS. PSAKI: I think it is likely we will be participating in these talks.

QUESTION: Can you --

MS. PSAKI: We will -- we are determining at what level and in what capacity and when.

QUESTION: And can you say if you feel -- if the Administration feels that its participation is welcome?

MS. PSAKI: I think our effort and our engagement on this process from the beginning has been welcomed by the parties. We've been -- we were in Egypt --

QUESTION: Really? We just spent an entire, like, 10-day period where both sides were telling you the exact opposite.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think, Matt, there is sometimes a difference between what is stated publicly and what is communicated privately.

QUESTION: Aha.

MS. PSAKI: In this case, as we know, this cease-fire just took hold this morning. Obviously, in -- over the course of the last 10 days or more, the Secretary has been very closely engaged, making more than a hundred phone calls related to the cease-fire. We all know he spent five days in Cairo, a day in Paris, a day in Israel. The President's spoken with Prime Minister Netanyahu three times over the course of the last few weeks as well. So obviously, we want to see a cease-fire that will be prolonged, that will hold, that will give an opportunity to have negotiations. But there are, of course -- where we are now is determining our engagement moving forward.

QUESTION: Did the U.S. Government have any direct role in achieving the cease-fire that has now taken hold?

MS. PSAKI: Well, absolutely, Arshad. I think our engagement over the past 10 days has built and led to the point we reached last night. And that's why I referenced the number of calls and the number of visits the Secretary was engaged in. I think there are two important factors that obviously have changed over the course of the last couple of days and -- or two conditions, I should say. One of them is that Israel completed work on the tunnels. At their insistence, of course, the cease-fire agreed to last week allowed for Israel to continue that work. That's something the United States supported. Of course, that obviously made it more difficult to

sustain a cease-fire, given sometimes the confusion that causes on the ground. And the second factor is, of course, that – the growing concern and pressure that has built over the course of the last 10 days, in part due to the Secretary's involvement, from the international community. That has – there's been a building chorus of support for a cease-fire, obviously to see an end to the rocket attacks, but also to see an end to the humanitarian crisis that we've seen on the ground in Gaza.

QUESTION: How – I mean, there were at least two cease-fires that were – well, there was definitely one that was more or less announced in the middle of the night in India that did not take hold. And then there was a --

MS. PSAKI: It took hold briefly. But yes, go ahead.

QUESTION: Excuse me. It took hold for 90 minutes or whatever was the number of minutes. But I think if it's a cease-fire that lasts for less than two hours it's – whether it actually took hold or not is kind of debatable. But in any case, it didn't succeed. Similarly, the prior cease-fire, which was originally 12 hours and then maybe extended, did not end up lasting a long time. And what I'm trying to understand is what was the direct U.S. role in the last, say, 48 hours. Because from the outside, it kind of looks like the Israelis simply decided that they had done what they needed to do, and therefore they had decided to stop. So what was your role in the last, say, 48 hours on the current cease-fire?

MS. PSAKI: Well, in the last 48 hours the Secretary has continued to be closely engaged with Prime Minister Netanyahu, with Egyptian Foreign Minister Shoukry, with all of the parties. The point I was trying to make, Arshad, is that obviously the work of the last 10 days, built by the Secretary, by the UN, by a range of international partners, built to the point we reached now. But there are conditions that, of course, changed over the course of time, including the fact that Israel completed their work, by their own public statements, on the tunnels. Not only does that create more of a condition perhaps to have a sustainable cease-fire, it also, of course, gives the people of Israel more security that that piece of the job is done. So that certainly is a factor in terms of the conditions of how we got to this point.

And then the second piece is over the course of the last 10 days and even the last 48 hours there's been continued, building international support for a cease-fire, concern about the civilian casualties we're seeing, concern about the ongoing rocket fire, and those are all factors that have contributed to the point we led to last night.

QUESTION: One other one on this. There is – and I know you're not responsible for what op-ed writers write, but there is a piece by David Ignatius today that lays out what purports to be Secretary Kerry's ideas for the next steps. And it talks about a circumstance under which you would try to strengthen President Abbas: There would be a transfer of the border of control on the Palestinian side to PA forces; both on the Israeli and the Egyptian side, talks about disarming Hamas. But what he doesn't talk about and what I don't understand – and again, I know this is just somebody's op-ed piece – but it doesn't explain at all why Hamas would be interested in doing any of these things or in seeing any of these things happen in Gaza. Does that piece reflect

the Secretary's thinking? And if so, how do you hope to get Hamas to agree to do all these things that one would think it would be quite opposed to?

MS. PSAKI: Well, let me first say there's no "Kerry plan." I'll put that in quotes. There are – there has – he has been – has long supported an effort to strengthen President Abbas and to work with other parties in the region to do just that, and that will continue. So that certainly is supportive of his view.

The reason why the negotiations are so important is because these are issues that we believe and he believes need to be worked out in Cairo with the host, the Egyptian hosts, certainly with our support. But the issue of how demilitarization would work, which we certainly support, or how efforts to open up greater economic opportunity to the people of Gaza – those are issues that need to be discussed between the parties.

QUESTION: Jen, just two – a couple very quick points. You mentioned – you said over the past 48 hours the Secretary has been actively engaged, talking with Prime Minister Netanyahu, the Egyptian foreign minister, and others. But unless something is – but I thought you answered my – you answered earlier by saying he hadn't been in touch with Prime Minister Netanyahu over the last day. And --

MS. PSAKI: Well, he was in touch with him on Sunday.

QUESTION: Right. And what you said was the very brief phone call, interrupted by some communications problem.

MS. PSAKI: And --

QUESTION: So – but, okay, so if we go back 48 hours from right now, which is almost 3 o'clock on Tuesday --

MS. PSAKI: You want me to give you a rundown of the calls he's --

QUESTION: Yeah.

QUESTION: Yeah.

MS. PSAKI: He's spoken today – I would remind you since you asked me, since he's had 12 bilats, he hasn't had as much --

QUESTION: Right.

MS. PSAKI: -- quality phone time as perhaps he would like, but he spoke with secretary – UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today. He also spoke with Egyptian Foreign Minister Shoukry yesterday. He spoke with Special Coordinator for the UN Robert Serry yesterday. So those are just the calls that he's done over the last few days.

QUESTION: Okay. But as far as you know, he hasn't managed to reconnect with Prime Minister Netanyahu since the --

MS. PSAKI: Not over the last 36 hours, no.

QUESTION: All right. And then you said that "there is no Kerry plan," quote-unquote, but is -- what was notable in the Washington Post piece, at least something that jumped out at me, was that there wasn't any method or -- well, you say that it -- that the general goals outlined there are what the Secretary has been pushing for for months now.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: But is the Administration convinced that Hamas has to disarm? Because one of the -- and if it is, how exactly does that happen? Because it doesn't seem to be addressed in that piece.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I don't know that that piece was meant to be a rollout document or -- of any sort, certainly not officially from the government. But demilitarization, the point I was making, is something we certainly support. How we get there is a good question.

QUESTION: But is that --

MS. PSAKI: There are a lot of parties that will have that discussion. There are also pieces -- this is just the last thing I'll say. There are also priorities that the Palestinians have, including opening up some of the crossings, like Rafah crossing, more access to goods, economic opportunity, that are some of their asks in this discussion. So obviously just like in any negotiation, there are pieces that both sides are interested in.

QUESTION: But is disarmament or demilitarization, is that critical to these talks in Egypt?

MS. PSAKI: Well, it's critical in the sense that it's a big priority for the Israelis, and obviously they are an important party in the discussions.

QUESTION: Right. But I mean, is that something that you think must be addressed in these negotiations?

MS. PSAKI: I don't think we're going to be dictating what terms they will be, but certainly we understand why it needs to be part of the discussion.

QUESTION: And then my last one is just -- I want to get an answer: If you're not welcome at these -- if you, meaning the Administration, is not welcome at these talks, are you going to insist, are you going to force your way into them?

MS. PSAKI: I don't think we anticipate that at this point in time, Matt. So --

QUESTION: So what happens on Friday 1:00 a.m. Eastern, 8:00 a.m. local, when the cease-fire is supposed to be done?

MS. PSAKI: Well, Roz, I think obviously one of the priorities or one of the focuses early in any discussions will have to be an extension of the cease-fire so that there can be a longer period of time to continue the negotiations, and we don't expect that these very difficult, complicated issues with a great deal of history will be resolved in a matter of hours.

QUESTION: Is the special envoy, Mr. Lowenstein, working the phones right now?

MS. PSAKI: Certainly. He just returned last – yesterday, but he certainly would be one of the individuals who could return to Egypt, and he certainly has been engaged on the phone. I expect that will continue.

More on this issue?

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

MS. PSAKI: Or on Gaza?

QUESTION: Yes, one more quickly.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

QUESTION: This issue will be coming next month at the United Nations General Assembly gatherings, and what do you think UN or the international community will play a role as far as a permanent cease-fire is concerned?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the UN has been an important partner with the United States and many in the international community in supporting a cease-fire, and we expect that will continue. Obviously one of the people that Secretary Kerry has spoken with in the limited time he's had over the past 24 hours is Robert Serry, and he was closely engaged with him throughout the course of the last several days.

Do we have any more on Gaza?

QUESTION: Yeah. Can you go back to the allegations primarily against the Israeli military, but also against Hamas, of civilian casualties, some using language such as “genocide,” “human rights violations”? The U.S. has expressed its concern over the way that some of the Israeli military's actions were conducted during this operation, and I note your colleague at the White House did so very pointedly last Thursday. What is being done in terms of accountability since it seems that the fighting has stopped, an accountability for both sides?

MS. PSAKI: Well, Roz, I think, one, the point we were – we made with our public statements from the State Department as well is that while we certainly respect Israel's right to defend

themselves, there's certainly more that could be done or could have been done to prevent and avoid civilian casualties. That's the case in any war zone.

And I know – and this may be what you're referring to – that there are reports of a push for an ICC investigation. Our view is that we continue to strongly oppose unilateral actions that seek to circumvent or prejudge the very outcomes that can only be negotiated. We've been very clear that, while we've expressed concerns when we've had them, there is – the only realistic path for realizing Palestinian aspirations of statehood is through direct negotiations between the parties. Obviously, our focus right now continues to be on addressing this current situation.

So, go ahead.

QUESTION: Does that mean that as part of whatever these talks will be that the question of overreach, atrocities, whatever word that you want to use, from both sides would be addressed in that venue as opposed to in ICC?

MS. PSAKI: I think that wasn't what I was saying at all, Roz. What I was saying – I think we know what the issues will be, which are the issues that were presented by both sides. That would be the focus of the negotiations, whether that's security for Israel or that's economic opportunity for the Palestinian side.

QUESTION: Well, I guess what I'm asking – just – sorry, Matt. I guess what I'm asking is: Things happened in the last 29 days, and there are going to be people on both sides expecting some sort of resolution of what happened. How will that be done?

MS. PSAKI: Well, right now our focus is on seeing if the cease-fire can be extended, seeing if these core issues can be – these key issues can be addressed. The question of what the UN Security Council might do will be evaluated at a later time.

QUESTION: I don't understand how you are concerned about an ICC investigation prejudging the outcome of final negotiations unless you are saying that the potential or possibility of war crimes having been committed is going to now be part of the peace process, in which case I think that the chances are --

MS. PSAKI: That's not what I was saying.

QUESTION: Like, what --

MS. PSAKI: I think the reason I used that broad reference is because there have been – this is not the first time there have been rumors of; certainly, there have been issues raised in the past, and we think there's other forums to address them.

QUESTION: Right, but --

QUESTION: Why shouldn't – just in the interests of justice, why shouldn't allegations of war crimes in any conflict be addressed in some forum? Why not?

MS. PSAKI: I wasn't saying that in any broad – I wasn't making a broad point that it shouldn't be, Arshad. I think our focus --

QUESTION: Just not at the ICC?

MS. PSAKI: Our focus right now is on addressing the current situation.

QUESTION: Why shouldn't an allegation of war crimes by any side in any conflict be addressed at the ICC? Why is that a bad forum? Why shouldn't that happen?

MS. PSAKI: We – as you know, there have been occasions where we have been supportive of that.

QUESTION: So – but my question is, why not now? I mean --

MS. PSAKI: I think there is going to be a great deal of time to make a determination about what happened and what issues should be raised at a higher level, but right now we think the focus should be on addressing the current situation.

QUESTION: But why? I mean, I understand the underlying argument, I think, which is that if the Palestinians seek to join the Rome Statute or to sign onto it and then raise it, that that is a unilateral action that you believe prejudices the outcome. Correct?

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: But I don't understand why, leaving aside that one piece of it, why the Government of the United States of America would not argue that if there are credible allegations of war crimes – and there are certainly things which you, in your name, said were disgraceful and that the U.S. Government was appalled by them – why it should not support an independent investigation into what happened.

MS. PSAKI: I think we're not at that point right now, Arshad. And I certainly didn't in any statement call anything a war crime. Obviously, there will be a great deal of time to determine what happened and what steps should be taken. That's not our current focus at this moment.

QUESTION: I guess that there is another route to the ICC, and that's through the UN Security Council. Can we assume that the Administration would veto any – that the U.S. would veto any move at the Security Council to bring not just whatever Israel is alleged to do, but what Hamas is alleged to do as well, to – is that – would that be a fair assumption?

MS. PSAKI: I'm just – there hasn't even been a UN Security Council resolution proposed.

QUESTION: Right. Well, the – so thus far --

MS. PSAKI: So I don't think I'm going to go there at this point in time.

QUESTION: Thus far in this conflict, which has now stopped because of the cease-fire, there has been a total of one vote on any kind of an investigation into it, and you guys voted against it because you said it was one-sided.

MS. PSAKI: I understand. I'm aware.

QUESTION: So – but you're not saying that you're opposed to any investigation at all, as long as it's fair.

MS. PSAKI: I have no comment on this, no evaluation of it.

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. PSAKI: We will determine at a later date what the appropriate steps are.

New topic or – go ahead.

QUESTION: I cut off Michel (inaudible) his question.

QUESTION: Yeah, on Lebanon. Please go ahead, if you want. You'll take Lebanon or Asia?

MS. PSAKI: Sure, I'll do Lebanon.

QUESTION: Okay.

QUESTION: I have one on rockets in Gaza.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

QUESTION: (Inaudible) the Palestinian Authority go back into Gaza to help clear the area of illegal weapons, is that it?

MS. PSAKI: I think, Lucas, there's a great deal that needs to be discussed in terms of what is going to happen from here. A lot of those discussions will happen in Cairo. I'm not going to prejudge what the steps will be, when they'll be, anything beyond that.

QUESTION: But aren't there already outstanding treaties that say – like Oslo, for example, from 1995 – saying that there should not be any illegal weapons throughout Gaza?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think there are a lot of issues that need to be addressed in Gaza that will be a part of the discussions moving forward, Lucas.

Go ahead.

QUESTION: On Lebanon, to what extent are you concerned about the clashes between the Lebanese army and ISIL and Aarsal at the border with Syria? And are you providing any arms and any help to the Lebanese forces?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think we put out a statement just a few days ago on this, Michel, but I will say – I can give you an update on what we are providing. As you know, we provide significant security assistance and we are currently providing \$75 million in support to Lebanon’s armed forces just in FY 2014 alone. This assistance is intended to bolster the efforts to preserve Lebanese security and stability, including minimizing the spillover violence from the Syrian crisis that is impacting Lebanon. Our support for the Lebanese army, also, of course, a key institution of Lebanese statehood is critical, and the spillover effects of the Syrian crisis have increased the strain, as we all know – hence why you’re asking – and we remain fully committed.

In FY 2015, our request includes \$80 million for FMF security assistance for Lebanon. The Administration’s \$5 billion Counterterrorism Partnership Fund request includes funds specifically to help mitigate the spillover effects for Lebanon. As we look to the future, we’ll continue to assess, of course, how we can best assist.

QUESTION: And are you planning to provide the Lebanese army with sophisticated arms since they are fighting ISIL in a complicated area?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think our assistance includes what I’ve just outlined. I have nothing to predict for you in terms of future assistance.

Go ahead, Anne.

QUESTION: Can we stay in the region? I just wondered if the State Department has any new information or any updated comment on the case of a Washington Post correspondent, Jason Rezaian, and his wife, Yeganeh Salehi, who were detained on July 22nd and have not been heard from. Particularly, there was a report yesterday uncorroborated by IranWire that a caretaker for their building was killed at the time of their detention for asking for documentation and an arrest warrant from whoever it was who grabbed them. Do you have any information that might substantiate or refute that report?

MS. PSAKI: Unfortunately, we don’t have a great deal of information, so let me share with you what we have. We, of course, have seen the reports that an individual in Mr. Rezaian’s building died from injuries sustained – the reports you referenced. We don’t have any further information or confirmation of those reports.

We remain concerned about his detention in Iran, along with one other U.S. citizen and the non-U.S. citizen spouse of one of the two, one of which you referenced. We, of course, call on the Iranian Government and continue to call on the Iranian Government to immediately release him and the other individuals. Our focus is on doing everything possible to secure the safe return and release of Mr. Rezaian and the others detained with him.

We have requested consular access via our protecting power Switzerland. In general, however, Iran's response to our request for consular access to dual U.S.-Iranian citizens is that Iran does not recognize their U.S. citizenship and considers them to be solely Iranian citizens. I don't have any specific update at this point in time in our request, but we, of course, continue to monitor the situation very closely.

QUESTION: Just a quick clarification on that.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

QUESTION: You said that's the Iranians' position generally.

MS. PSAKI: Has generally been with the other American citizens, yes.

QUESTION: Right. But they – do I take it from that and what you said after that they have not given the Swiss any specific yes or no --

MS. PSAKI: There's no specific update in this case, yes.

QUESTION: Okay, all right. Got it.

QUESTION: Do you know whether the Swiss have been able to see Jason and his wife at all?

MS. PSAKI: There's no specific update in the case.

QUESTION: There's no specific update or no – or there's been no response from the Iranians to the Swiss request?

MS. PSAKI: No specific update I can provide to all of you.

QUESTION: Okay.

QUESTION: If – I'm sorry, go ahead.

QUESTION: Different topic?

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Can I --

MS. PSAKI: Oh, sorry. One on Iran? Sorry. I'm sorry. Go ahead. Go ahead.

QUESTION: On Asia, can you confirm a report that the State Department had a meeting with former comfort women from South Korea last week? And if that's the case, could you share who met from the State Department and who requested this meeting?

MS. PSAKI: Well, at their request, two members of the House of Sharing met State Department officials on July 31st and discussed their experiences. It's important to note that State Department officials have periodically met with members of the House of Sharing in the past, so this is not the first time or it's not without precedent. I don't have any other updates on the level. Of course, it was here in Washington, so from our bureau here.

QUESTION: So you don't know if it's requested from South Korean Government?

MS. PSAKI: They were – no, it was requested from the members of the House of Sharing.

QUESTION: Okay. Do you have any concern this kind of meeting might have a negative impact on U.S.-Japan relationship, given Japan has different opinions on these issues?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think this is an issue that we have discussed, certainly, in the past with Japan. As we've stated many times, it is deplorable and clearly a grave human rights violation of enormous proportions that the Japanese military was involved in the trafficking of women for sexual purposes in the 1930s and 1940s. And we – as we know, that was quite a long time ago, but we encourage Japan to continue to address this issue in a manner that promotes healing and facilitates better relations with neighboring states. We have had meetings – State Department officials have periodically met with representatives from this group in the past, so it shouldn't set a new precedent. And obviously, there's a great deal we work with Japan on.

QUESTION: Last **QUESTION:** So you don't rule out any future meeting like this?

MS. PSAKI: I don't think I'm ruling it out. I think we meet periodically with representatives from this group.

QUESTION: Sorry, which bureau was that with?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think the EAP would be the natural --

QUESTION: Not DRL?

QUESTION: DRL?

MS. PSAKI: I'd have to check on that, actually, but it wasn't at a – it was a working-level meeting, so --

QUESTION: Right. I'm just curious as to what bureau or multiple – maybe there were multiple --

QUESTION: Could you check on it?

MS. PSAKI: I will see if there's more clarity we'd like to provide.

QUESTION: So you don't have any (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: I'm sorry?

QUESTION: More detail of any – you don't have any --

MS. PSAKI: I don't think I'm going to have more detail to provide, no.

QUESTION: Going back to Iran for a second, how can you in good faith negotiate with the Iranian Government over their nuclear program when they're taking American hostages?

MS. PSAKI: Well, Lucas, let me say first that the reason that we're working with the P5+1 members, the reason why we have been negotiating with Iran, is because of the great concern the President, many members of Congress, the Secretary of State have about Iran acquiring a nuclear weapon. And we think preventing that is not just a priority for the United States, but for the international community.

At every point in this process, we've had remaining concerns about other issues where we have strong disagreements, not just the detaining of American citizens, which of course is something we have a strong concern about, but also issues like human rights violations and their work and support for terrorist activities. But preventing Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon remains an objective and a goal we think is worthy, and one that we will, of course, continue to pursue.

QUESTION: So as all the – as these events transpire, would you say Iran is a good negotiating partner?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think Iran has abided by the JPOA. Obviously, we're moving into a new stage of negotiations that will begin soon. As you know, in each of these negotiations, whenever we have the opportunity, we raise concerns about the American citizens who have been detained and our desire to see them return home.

QUESTION: Speaking of the nuclear talks, there are reports that there might be a sideline meeting at UNGA next month on the negotiations. Can you confirm that?

MS. PSAKI: I have seen those reports. I don't have any update on the timing of the next meeting.

QUESTION: Yes, please. Egypt?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Do we have any more on Iran?

QUESTION: Go ahead.

MS. PSAKI: Okay. Go ahead. Egypt.

QUESTION: Yes, please. The first one is an American FMO – MFO soldier was shot in Sinai. Do you have any information or update about him?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I know there were reports, but the media reports are incorrect. The MFO camp was not targeted during this incident. No U.S. soldier was injured. A U.S. contractor was slightly injured as a result of a stray round fired in the vicinity. The U.S. contractor has received treatment, was released, and has since returned to duty.

QUESTION: Okay. The second question regarding the – Secretary Kerry yesterday met yesterday evening – met the prime minister of Egypt. Do you have any readout of the meeting?

MS. PSAKI: I believe I do. If I don't, I was there, and I will give you a readout.

I'll just say that he had a meeting, as you mentioned, with the prime minister of Egypt last evening. It was his last of the day. They discussed not only our strategic and security relationship with Egypt and the path forward, but also steps that Egypt could take to continue on the path to democracy. That's something the Secretary, of course, raises during every meeting. He also raised the issue, again, of the arbitrary arrests and our concern about that and the concern he hears from members of Congress about that as well.

QUESTION: The (inaudible) case, did that come up?

MS. PSAKI: It was more of a general conversation. He had – did raise that as recently as the last time he was there.

QUESTION: Yeah.

QUESTION: How long was the meeting in --

MS. PSAKI: If I remember, it was about 30 minutes.

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. PSAKI: These meetings are never as long as you want them to be because they're all trying to fit in so many.

QUESTION: So there is another question. One of the main issues of – I mean, yesterday, the Secretary had meetings and other people had meetings all related to Libya.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: What's the main – what is your understanding now of what's going in Libya and how it's going to be somehow solved or find out – exit to this situation now?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the Secretary also met with the prime minister of Libya yesterday. We continue to call on all Libyans to respect the June election of the Council of Representatives, to support the work of the constitutional drafting assembly, and to reject the use of violence. Libya's challenges can only be resolved by Libyans working together to secure a more stable and

prosperous future, and we continue to stand solidly by the Libyan people as they endeavor to do so. And certainly, Libya and – actually, it was certainly an issue – I should have mentioned that – that was discussed last night during the meeting, and it's been discussed in some of his meetings over the course of the last several days.

As you know, there's – we've been working with the international community to try to address the security issues on the ground. We know this is inherently a political problem, but certainly we have remaining security concerns that we're trying to work to address as well.

Go ahead, Arshad.

QUESTION: How much does it impair your ability to work with the Libyan Government on such things as training and establishing a security force that would be answerable to the Libyan Government that the U.S. has had to – or has withdrawn its diplomats from Tripoli?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think, one, it's important to note that this is a temporary relocation. Ambassador Jones was in the meeting yesterday. She's remained closely engaged with the Libyans. And as you know, this is not just a United States endeavor. It is one that we're working with the international community on, and so those conversations are continuing at a high level. Our preference would certainly be to have our staff there, but we've been able to continue to engage and work on these issues, both with the Libyans as well as others in the international community who are closely engaged with it.

QUESTION: Does it make it harder not being there?

MS. PSAKI: I think, again, because a lot of these conversations and coordination are happening at a very high level, whether it's Ambassador Satterfield, Ambassador Jones, those are continuing. But of course, it's preferable and – to have our team on the ground, and our full team on the ground, and that's certainly what we'd like to return to.

QUESTION: Who's working on the issue of trying to, for lack of a better word, demilitarize Libya?

MS. PSAKI: Well, who from the State Department?

QUESTION: Well, just in general, what parties are working on it? Are there any protocols that can be looked to to try to make – to help the government secure the country so that people don't have to get caught in between these militias fighting?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think there are a great deal of international efforts. The Secretary has been engaged in a number of meetings with a number of other countries that the British – the U.K. has hosted, others have hosted, to discuss exactly that issue. I think it hasn't moved as quickly as we would like, Roz, but obviously, Ambassador Satterfield, certainly Ambassador Jones, others who are engaged at a very high level here, that's one of the primary issues that they're working on.

QUESTION: Just to be clear, are – Ambassador Jones and Ambassador Satterfield are in the same place or different places?

MS. PSAKI: Well, Ambassador Jones is the Ambassador to Libya.

QUESTION: Yeah.

MS. PSAKI: She was --

QUESTION: And Ambassador Satterfield is – I think, is special envoy?

MS. PSAKI: Correct, and he's been working sort of as a – in coordination with other international partners on kind of how to coordinate as we work to address the issues going on in Libya.

QUESTION: The other question – you said Libyans. I mean, are you in touch with all the factions or the fighting – whatever you call it – I don't know, it's groups? Or just the central government?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have a list of our engagements. We can see if there's one we can get to all of you, if you'd like.

Should we move on to new issue?

QUESTION: Jen --

MS. PSAKI: Michel, go ahead.

QUESTION: -- there is a perception in the Middle East that the U.S. was behind the creation of ISIL in the region. And --

MS. PSAKI: Behind the creation?

QUESTION: The creation or supporting the ISIL. And they say that since the U.S. didn't attack yet or so far ISIL in some parts of Iraq after they took over some parts of Iraq, that's why the U.S. is behind the creation and supporting ISIL. What can you say about that?

MS. PSAKI: Well, that's a ludicrous and absolutely false accusation or view. Our view is that ISIL is a group of vicious terrorists. Their campaign of terror, grotesque violence, and repressive ideology poses serious threats to the stability and future of Iraq. We've seen the nature of ISIL fully exposed by its ruthless attacks on not only the Iraqi people but the Syrian people. This is an issue that not only the Secretary but the President of the United States remains focused on, and I think our actions speak to how concerned we are about ISIL.

QUESTION: And why the U.S. didn't react or didn't attack ISIL in Iraq and Syria so far?

MS. PSAKI: Why did we not attack?

QUESTION: Yeah.

MS. PSAKI: Well, as you know, there are a couple of factors, including the assessment on the ground that, of course, DOD has the lead on. We have sent additional resources, and they've been there for weeks. The other is government formation, and we believe – and the Secretary's believes and the senior members of the Administration believe – that government formation is an incredibly important part of what needs to happen in Iraq in order to proceed and that, of course, is a factor in our own decision making.

QUESTION: But Jen, I think what – I mean, it's well and good for you to say it's ludicrous and absurd that you created ISIL or – but I think the perception that Michel's talking about is that you have unintentionally given this group – not – given is the wrong word, but the U.S. has armed this group to some extent because of the stuff that they've stolen from the Iraqi military. Is that – I mean, you don't deny that, do you?

MS. PSAKI: We've all seen the same reports, Matt.

QUESTION: I mean, they – right. I mean, they've taken this – Humvees and other stuff and arms, correct? You don't dispute that, right? So I guess the question is: Why doesn't the U.S. destroy that stuff?

MS. PSAKI: Why don't we retroactively destroy --

QUESTION: No, why don't you go in now and take out, destroy, the U.S. equipment that this group is now using against your friends, the Iraqi army and the Peshmerga?

MS. PSAKI: I'm just not going to do an analysis from here --

QUESTION: A military analysis.

MS. PSAKI: -- on what we should take, what steps militarily we will or won't take.

QUESTION: Okay. But I think that that's kind – that may be something that's keeping this perception alive.

MS. PSAKI: Well, the point I'm making is obviously that's an inaccurate perception.

QUESTION: Yes, Jen.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Regarding the ISIL, a few weeks ago you were mentioning that there was kind of a confrontation going on in the Twittersphere, as you can call it, between tweets that – so is there – this thing is still going on or they – you stopped it?

MS. PSAKI: I think a few weeks ago I spoke to our efforts to combat that. I don't have any real updates since then in terms of their – the activity of ISIL's Twitter account. I would you let you do analysis on that.

Do we have a new topic? Oh, go ahead, in the back. Go ahead.

August 4, 2014

Jen Psaki, Spokesperson
Daily Press Briefing, selections on Iran
Washington, DC

QUESTION: And just going back to Iran, is there any concern in the Administration that this move has – that these detentions are in any way aimed at trying to – a move by the hardline people in Iran to sabotage the nuclear talks?

MS. PSAKI: I don't think we're ascribing motivation at this point in time.

QUESTION: On Iraq, high ranking Iraqi Kurdish official said that the United States has agreed to provide arms to Peshmerga. Would you confirm or do you have anything to say about this?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any confirmation of that. It's actually – our focus remains encouraging cooperation and continued coordination between the ISF and the Peshmerga forces. And again, I just spoke to the statement by the ISF today about their plans to provide air support to the Peshmerga, and we certainly support that effort.

July 30, 2014

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

MS. HARF: The first: Today, on July 30th, you've probably seen that the U.S. Government took steps to impose visa restrictions on certain Venezuelan officials responsible for recent human rights abuses. Venezuelan officials affected by these restrictions include individuals at various levels of government, from government ministers and presidential advisors to judicial officials, law enforcement, and military officials as well. The actions we have taken today are not directed against the people of Venezuela, they are in support of our human – of human rights and narrowly target specific individuals responsible for repression. We cannot name specific individuals who are subject to these restrictions because of visa confidentiality governed by the Immigration and Nationality Act.

QUESTION: Could I just – however --

MS. HARF: Can I do my --

QUESTION: No, because it's specifically about this. However --

MS. HARF: I have four items at the top. Can I just get through them?

QUESTION: Yeah, however, if one of those individuals who's been hit comes out and talks about it publicly, you can confirm it, correct?

July 29, 2014

Jen Psaki, Spokesperson
Daily Press Briefing, selections on Iran
Washington, DC

QUESTION: As you know, there's – on Capitol Hill the Iranian opposition groups are meeting. Would you consider recognizing any Iranian opposition groups?

MS. PSAKI: Recognizing officially in what capacity, Lucas?

QUESTION: Financial.

MS. PSAKI: Not that I'm aware of, Lucas.

July 28, 2014

Jen Psaki, Spokesperson
Daily Press Briefing, selections on Iran
Washington, DC

QUESTION: Okay. Last one, very brief, on Iran. This Washington Post reporter, I understand that you had seen, or the – sorry --

QUESTION: Swiss.

QUESTION: -- Swiss.

MS. PSAKI: Yes. We remain concerned about reports of Washington Post reporter's detention in Iran, along with two other U.S. citizens and the non-U.S. citizen's spouse of one of the three. We are also aware of reports that Iranian officials have confirmed some of the detentions. If true, we call on the Iranian Government to immediately release Mr. Rezaian and the other three individuals. We continue to monitor the situation closely. We have reached out to our Swiss protecting power in this case as well.

QUESTION: Do you know – have the Swiss seen them?

MS. PSAKI: I do not have any update on that. As you know, we request consular access, but I don't have any further updates to provide.

QUESTION: And can I just ask, since the beginning of the secret diplomacy with Iran on the nuclear issue, we've been told that the issue of detained Americans was brought up, at least in the initial phases of it. And I'm wondering now, since it is no longer taboo or forbidden to speak to Iranian officials, at least on the nuclear issue, the detention of these people plus the ones who are already in detention that we know about – Abedini and Amir Hekmati – in addition to Levinson, who you think the – are you raising this at all in conversations with the Iranians that are now --

MS. PSAKI: Well, we've raised the detained Americans prior to. This is obviously very recent.

QUESTION: I understand that, yes.

MS. PSAKI: I'd have to check and see if there's any other contact on these specific new, recent individuals. But the others we certainly have raised.

QUESTION: And it – yeah. And it would be good – yeah, okay. Thank you.

July 25, 2014

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

QUESTION: I have a question about the Washington Post reporter and the other journalists detained in Iran. Has the Interests Section – the U.S. Interests Section with the Swiss Embassy in Tehran been able to make contact with them? Do you have anything new on that?

MS. HARF: So we are concerned about reports that three U.S. citizens have recently been detained in Iran, including Washington Post reporter Jason Rezaian, along with the non-U.S. citizen spouse of one of the three. So I just wanted to be clear there are three U.S. citizens involved here. We aren't able to comment further at this time due to privacy considerations. As you know, our highest priority is the safety and welfare of U.S. citizens abroad. In general, in any case involving the detention of a U.S. citizen in Iran, we would work with our protecting power, Switzerland, to request appropriate consular services. And again, I don't have further details to share at this time because of privacy.

QUESTION: But does that mean that they had visited and they have not – and the detainees had not signed a Privacy Act waiver, or does that mean that the Swiss have not yet been notified or they've been notified but they have not yet been able to go?

MS. HARF: I don't have further details about the case to share at this point because of privacy considerations.

QUESTION: Right, but you should be able to say at least whether the Swiss have been notified by the Iranians that these people have been detained.

MS. HARF: Well, the Iranians – you've seen reports that the Iranian officials have confirmed publicly some of the detentions.

QUESTION: Yeah, but that doesn't mean that they --

MS. HARF: I don't have further details, Matt, that I'm able to share.

QUESTION: -- formally gone to the Swiss.

QUESTION: Marie --

MS. HARF: Yes.

QUESTION: I think that again, the Privacy Act is being over-used. I don't see why you can't say if the Iranians have told the Swiss that these people have been detained.

MS. HARF: I think I'll let the Iranians speak for themselves.

Yes.

QUESTION: Is the Secretary returning tonight to Washington?

MS. HARF: We don't have any travel updates. He'll be speaking from Cairo, and I don't know exactly when he'll be returning to Washington.

QUESTION: But if in fact the Israelis rejected, which they did, he would have no reason to stay, would he?

MS. HARF: Guys, I haven't even seen that announcement. It's happened since I've been up here. I have no predictions about the Secretary's travel. I have given up making those a long time ago.

July 22, 2014

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

QUESTION: Earlier today, the IAEA issued a report saying that they are concerned about Iran's lack of engagement with investigation into their nuclear program and the deadline was forthcoming. Iran has another deadline, apparently. And I was just wondering --

MS. HARF: So that's a separate issue from the ongoing negotiations. The IAEA did acknowledge -- first, let's talk about the IAEA's report on July 20th, which confirmed Iranian compliance with 14 specific measures agreed to under the Joint Plan of Action. So basically, at the end of the first six months here, the IAEA has confirmed that they have upheld their obligations under the Joint Plan of Action. There are, of course, outstanding concerns that Iran has been working with directly with the IAEA, which is separate from the P5+1 process. We agreed with the IAEA's concerns, obviously, which is part of the main reason we are at the negotiating table trying to get a comprehensive agreement here. We know Iran has more work to do with the IAEA.

QUESTION: Is this another area where you think Iran is making progress?

MS. HARF: Progress in what way?

QUESTION: You just said you share the concerns with the IAEA over this nuclear problem?

MS. HARF: Well, we certainly share the concerns. We've said in the negotiations room -- the negotiating table, we have made progress. But we've also said if you looked at what the Secretary said in Vienna that there are some very large gaps that remain. So clearly, that's why we said we needed a little more time to address them.

QUESTION: Can I just ask, Marie, on the -- under the JPOA, there was 7 million -- 7 billion, sorry, that was going to be transferred in various tranches.

MS. HARF: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: So has that all -- has that all been transferred now?

MS. HARF: Yeah. We have -- the last tranche was, I believe, was at the very end of this. So it's my understanding that we have fulfilled all of our obligations in terms of releasing that money. We obviously don't hold it, right? It's held overseas. So we've upheld our end of what we're supposed to do here, and then it's up to the Iranians to figure out how they're going to get it back. But we've released it and done what we needed to do.

QUESTION: And have the Iranians done -- because it was in return for each step --

MS. HARF: Yes, and they have – they have. They have fulfilled all of their obligations under the Joint Plan of Action.

QUESTION: Okay. So my next question is, under the extension Secretary Kerry mentioned in his statement there would be 2.8 billion that would be released --

MS. HARF: Yes.

QUESTION: -- over the next four months.

MS. HARF: Correct.

QUESTION: Do you have a detail – a calendar of how that will be handed out in tranches and what the Iranians have to do in return to get – for getting it?

MS. HARF: So let me get the schedule for you after this; I thought I had it in here. The 2.8 is prorated at the same rate that the money was released under the six months. So it's the exact same rate. They're not getting anything additional. It's just prorated. If you take the amount of money they got over six months and prorate it for four --

QUESTION: So – but it was about 550 billion – million they were getting each month.

MS. HARF: Well, take out – so two of those – at least two of those installments were for specific things they had to do with their – in terms of conversion or dilution of their uranium stockpile. The others were just monthly payments, so I believe it's – let me check on the – but I know it's prorated for one of the two.

QUESTION: It would be helpful if we could have the schedule of what they have to do in return.

MS. HARF: Yep. Well, so there's not – the things are linked up one to one, right? So we have agreed to continue payments at the prorated amount we did for the first six months. But the additional steps Iran has committed to take as part of the extension – they have committed to convert 25 kg of its 20 percent enriched uranium oxide into fuel plates for the Tehran Research Reactor and continue converting that oxide into plates in a timely manner until all of the oxide has been converted into fuel. Why this matters is because in this form, Iran would find it difficult and time-consuming to use this 20 percent enriched material for further enrichment in a breakout session. So that's why it's significant that they're converting it into fuel plates.

They also – I have all of this in here, sorry – Secretary's statement – so they agreed to do that. Let me see, I think that's – that's it.

QUESTION: But they don't have differences? They don't have to by the end of August have to have done 5 kilos and – kg --

MS. HARF: Well, they have to – everything they committed to in the Joint Plan of Action in terms of not moving the program forward and freezing it – all of that stays. So everything they've already committed to doing, that all remains in place. They can't install things that – Arak, they can't – all of the things that we've said they can't do, they still cannot do. In addition, they've committed to converting this into fuel plates, which again, we think is a significant step. We have agreed to provide payments metered out at the same rate we did for the first six months.

QUESTION: Marie, you said – I know you said that there's no date been set yet for the resumption of talks.

MS. HARF: That is true.

QUESTION: But when are they likely to start? Because --

MS. HARF: I don't know.

QUESTION: -- August is like a vacation month for everybody --

MS. HARF: Well, not for the United States of America, it's not.

QUESTION: (Laughter.) All right.

MS. HARF: Look, I think the next four months will be a combination of sort of the big P5+1 plus EU meetings we have with the Iranians, bilaterals we'll have directly with the Iranians, experts meetings we'll all have. So I think you'll see a combination of that over the coming four months. We certainly are not seeing August as a vacation month as much as I would like to, although we won't brief on Fridays, per our tradition. A little bit of news for you all today.

July 18, 2014

Jen Psaki, Spokesperson
Daily Press Briefing, selections on Iran
Washington, DC

QUESTION: So the deadline's Sunday --

MS. PSAKI: Correct.

QUESTION: -- for a treaty with the P5+1 negotiators. The Chinese chief negotiator this morning said that it was likely that today there'd be an agreement on an extension of that deadline, and the Russians are saying that it could be as long -- it could be a four-month extension to November. Could you update us where we are and what's the likelihood of an extension --

MS. PSAKI: Well, our --

QUESTION: -- that we see one today or this weekend?

MS. PSAKI: Our team is on the ground in Vienna talking to the Iranians about what the contours of an extension would look like. And tangible progress has been made, but there's more work to do. And there are a range of options, of course, being considered and discussed with our partners and with the Iranians. Of course, there's a lot of speculation, as there always is in these sorts of cases, about what that will mean and when it will be concluded and how. And I'm not going to make a prediction of that, because the discussions are ongoing on the ground.

QUESTION: Can we just back up a bit? So you are now talking about an extension?

MS. PSAKI: I think -- yes. Yes.

QUESTION: You just said that, yeah. So we -- the Sunday, July 20th deadline is now null and void for --

MS. PSAKI: Well, I don't -- I wouldn't make it null and void, but we're certainly discussing what the contours of an extension would look like.

QUESTION: Okay. And so could you tell us when you are likely to make a definitive announcement on that? Would it be later today, or would we see something on Saturday?

MS. PSAKI: I just don't have any prediction of the timing on that.

QUESTION: And do you believe the extension is going to be for weeks, or will it be for several months?

MS. PSAKI: Again, there are a range of details and options that are being discussed, but I don't want to get ahead of the negotiators and the discussions that we're having with the Iranians and with our partners.

QUESTION: And would it be that the terms of the current JPOA, i.e. that there's a freeze on a certain amount of uranium enrichment in return for a certain amount of sanctions relief, would then be applied to any extension of the talks? Or would there be added, additional things which would be added to that?

MS. PSAKI: I am certain that when we make an announcement about whatever the next step may or may not be we'll have more details to share about what the details of that would look like. But everything's being discussed right now.

QUESTION: So there will not be a comprehensive agreement announced on Saturday?

MS. PSAKI: Well, Lucas, I think we're talking about an extension. Stay tuned all weekend.

QUESTION: Right. Does that mean that the team is staying?

MS. PSAKI: Well, they're currently on the ground. I don't have any predictions on that.

QUESTION: Because apparently the Iranians have left or are in the process of leaving.

MS. PSAKI: There are still individuals who are discussing the contours of an extension.

July 17, 2014

Jen Psaki, Spokesperson
Daily Press Briefing, selections on Iran
Washington, DC

MS. PSAKI: QUESTION: To Iran. The Secretary met this morning over breakfast with some lawmakers. Can you tell us what was discussed and whether or not he, as some participants are saying, said that – or expressed any interest or openness to sanctions, to new triggered sanctions? That's the end of the question.

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Well, the Secretary had a meeting with a range of House – members of Congress this morning. There is a broad level of engagement from a number of senior Administration officials, including Under Secretary Sherman, Deputy Secretary Burns; Tony Blinken has done a range of meetings and calls as well. So this was a part of that effort, and part of the discussion was certainly on the P5+1 negotiations that are ongoing. They also discussed the situation in Gaza and shared concern about that. They discussed Iraq; they discussed Syria. So it was a wide-ranging discussion.

In terms of reports that the Secretary had proposed or embraced any proposal on a trigger, I can tell you that is inaccurate. Our position – his position – has not changed. We do not support additional nuclear-related sanctions while we negotiate. Secretary Kerry made that clear this morning. Part of our role and his role is to engage with members. It's no secret that they have proposals on the table that include triggered sanctions. Certainly, they raised those this morning, and we will continue our close consultations with Congress. But that has not changed and our position hasn't changed.

QUESTION: So what breakfast was Congressman Sherman at?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think there are times when members of Congress hear and project what they want to hear. But the Secretary's position hasn't changed, and he certainly made that clear this morning.

QUESTION: Okay. And do you know if – and I realize this is probably a White House question, but I mean, is it your understanding that if such legislation containing new sanctions was to pass on the Hill, that it would be vetoed? Is that --

MS. PSAKI: I would certainly point you to them, but I'm not aware of any support in the building that's-- in the White House for this – for a proposal like that.

QUESTION: Thank you.

...

QUESTION: So earlier you sent out a tweet saying Secretary Kerry does not support additional sanctions. Doesn't this kind of fly in the face of some comments he made back in December, as well as you and Mr. Carney?

MS. PSAKI: In what capacity?

QUESTION: That you that said if there was not a comprehensive agreement made after six months, there would be new sanctions. And Secretary Kerry said if Iran does not meet its commitments – I'm quoting here – “we will be the first ones to come to you if this fails” for additional sanctions.

MS. PSAKI: Sure. No, it doesn't conflict at all. The negotiations are ongoing on the ground. We've been – consistently said we don't support additional sanctions legislation while the negotiations are ongoing. We're going to spend the next couple of days determining what's next. But if Iran doesn't meet its obligations, certainly he'd be the first in line. That hasn't changed.

QUESTION: But hasn't for eight straight months Iran has been selling more oil than is allowed under the JPA, in violation of your agreement?

MS. PSAKI: Actually, over the past six months, Iran has met its commitments under the interim deal we reached last year. We believe that it's consistent that the numbers we've seen – we feel comfortable that the crude oil exports of Iran are remaining in the million to 1.1 million barrel a day average, as we anticipated under the JPOA. That remains the case.

QUESTION: So no redlines being crossed? It's not a Syria-part-two situation?

MS. PSAKI: I don't believe so, but obviously if the Secretary maintains, the President maintains, of course, the right to call for, embrace, endorse, advocate for any legislation if they so see fit in the future.

QUESTION: So it looks like there'll be an extension on the negotiations over the course of the weekend?

MS. PSAKI: Well, today on the ground, Lucas, in Vienna our team is discussing what the contours of an extension would look like if all parties were to agree to one. That – we're not at that point yet, but certainly those discussions are ongoing on the ground and over the course of the next couple of days we'll consult with Congress and certainly make a decision.

QUESTION: So if all countries agree on an extension, there will be an extension?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not predicting that. I think we're going to see how negotiations play out on the ground, and certainly all countries would have to agree. That's part of the requirement.

...

QUESTION: This is all just massaging of statistics, isn't it? I mean, there are statistics out there that are not inaccurate that show that Iran is in violation of the JPOA.

MS. PSAKI: Well --

QUESTION: Those statistics, though, include things, items, condensates, whatever, that you, meaning the Administration, do not include.

MS. PSAKI: Well --

QUESTION: I mean, you do accept that, right?

MS. PSAKI: Nor does the accounting or the -- or Congress or the way that we measure the JPOA include condensates. And the numbers we calculate also don't include oil that is going to Syria, given that is not producing revenue to Iran. So there are a range of public accounting mechanisms, but our mechanisms, which are based on a range of public and private data, still maintain the million to 1.1 million barrels a day average.

QUESTION: Okay. But it was my understanding that even stuff that's not exported to Syria, they don't get the money from, they don't -- I mean, it goes into an account that they're not allowed to use without approval, right?

MS. PSAKI: You're right. Even other countries, you're correct, yes.

QUESTION: So I don't understand what the difference is.

MS. PSAKI: Well, there won't be --

QUESTION: And it would to me that you would, like, count Syria -- the exports to Syria twice because those are going to fuel -- I mean, I'm being facetious a little bit, but I mean, that oil is going to fuel the Assad regime and its -- what you call its killing machine.

MS. PSAKI: Well, there's --

QUESTION: So it's worse, in fact --

MS. PSAKI: It doesn't --

QUESTION: -- than oil that Iran is selling to India or China or South Korea.

MS. PSAKI: Well, let me be clear. We have long opposed and had strong concern about Iran's support for Syria, as well as a number -- a range of other concerns we continue to have about Iran.

QUESTION: Yeah.

MS. PSAKI: But I'm talking about the technical aspect. There's no revenue being paid or sitting in any bank held or not anywhere for this oil, because it's being contributed from Iran to Syria. So it's not increasing their revenue.

QUESTION: Right, but the problem with that is – or the – maybe not the problem, but the argument that those who say they're in violation is they say that this is – it's fungible. So that by giving Syria this oil, Iran is saving money that it might otherwise spend to prop up Assad. So --

MS. PSAKI: I think that's speculative, Matt. I think we're talking about how we account for or count the barrels and concerns about any revenue being held in accounts that's coming in for them.

QUESTION: Well, wouldn't – at least isn't this a violation of the spirit, if not the letter of the law? If you include the oil that is sent – that Iran sends to Syria, that would put them over the limit, correct? And if you – but – and if you do that, or if you – sorry, if you don't do that, it seems to me the problem is that they're – not only are they getting a foreign policy benefit, from their point of view, but they're also giving Assad benefit, which works directly in opposition to what the U.S. policy is.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think it's a separate question. One, the fact that many countries, when they report the oil purchases, they lump in a number of products. It's not just crude oil. I know we already talked about this, but that is one of the contributing factors to a range of the reported numbers. Otherwise, we're talking about abiding by the JPOA. Separately, certainly, we're incredibly concerned about Iran's support for the Assad regime and their continued assistance. And we've long talked about --

QUESTION: All right.

MS. PSAKI: -- how that assisted and boosted Assad on the ground.

QUESTION: Okay. Well, so that concern, though, does not enter in at all to the nuclear negotiations. Your concern that Iran is doing nefarious things, according to you, in Syria and elsewhere with – in Gaza, probably, and with Hezbollah and Lebanon – those concerns about Iranian behavior don't give you any pause in the nuclear negotiation?

MS. PSAKI: They give us pause in general, of course. As do human rights violations, as do a range of media freedoms, other issues. But we're focused on the nuclear aspect and addressing that.

...

QUESTION: If I could ask you on the – you mentioned yesterday that extension will be contingent on progress, correct?

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: You said “progress made.” So how would you – what kind of progress Iran needs to be – to make as opposed to when these negotiations began --

MS. PSAKI: Well, if we make that --

QUESTION: -- to have the merit of an extension?

MS. PSAKI: If we make that determination, perhaps we’ll have more to say publicly. Until that time, I’m going to leave it in the hands of the negotiators on the ground to determine and conversations between the Secretary, the President, the Vice President, and other decision makers in this case.

QUESTION: Jen, can you explain how an extension without more sanctions helps Iran not attain a nuclear weapon?

MS. PSAKI: Well, what we’re talking about, Lucas – and obviously what you’re suggesting is purely speculative, so let me just say that first – but we’re talking about here is preventing Iran over the long term from acquiring a nuclear weapon. We know before these negotiations the path they were on. So if a determination is made that enough progress has been made, that we can seek a comprehensive agreement, that that’s attainable, those are all factors that will be taken into account. What it will mean and what it will entail, I will certainly leave that to the negotiating team to determine.

QUESTION: And isn’t it speculative, though, to say that they’re not attaining a nuclear weapon right now?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think the fact that they’ve abided by the JPOA – they have stepped back a range of steps they had taken previously, I think answers that question.

QUESTION: Isn’t it true, though, that Iran today is actually less capable to manufacture or produce a nuclear bomb than they were when these negotiations began?

MS. PSAKI: Well, they’ve taken a number of steps --

QUESTION: They’re actually setting back, correct?

MS. PSAKI: -- obviously, to halt and roll back – to halt and roll back. But again, what we’re determining is whether enough progress has been made in the negotiations to warrant moving forward.

QUESTION: But that would be calculated as part of that progress, correct?

MS. PSAKI: There are a range of steps and pieces that will be calculated.

Samir?

QUESTION: No, hold on. Just let me know, would you expect that there – that it will run right up until the 20th, or could a decision on an extension or not be made tomorrow or before the weekend? Or do you think that --

MS. PSAKI: The negotiators certainly have the prerogative to make a decision at any time they warrant. I don't have any prediction on the timing, of course, as you are all familiar with the deadline.

QUESTION: Right. Which is the 20th, which is Sunday, correct?

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm, Sunday.

QUESTION: So I'm just trying to figure out if our weekends are all going to be ruined with an announcement on Sunday when it could be just as easily made tomorrow.

MS. PSAKI: Well, Matt, there are a fair number of events in the world, so your weekend is perhaps ruined regardless.

QUESTION: Yeah. (Laughter.) Thank you. I look forward to it. (Laughter.)

July 16, 2014

Jen Psaki, Spokesperson
Daily Press Briefing, selections on Iran
Washington, DC

QUESTION: If no comprehensive agreement is reached by July 20th, will the Administration recommend more sanctions?

MS. PSAKI: Well, let me just give you all a quick update. One, I'm not going to get ahead of the conclusion of this round of talks. Obviously, as you note – as you know, there are discussions that are ongoing on the ground with our team that's continuing to negotiate. The Secretary's meeting today with the President and Vice President to discuss the Iran talks, as I noted in response to Roz's question, and they will, of course, receive a briefing on the Secretary's conversations in Vienna and talk about the path forward.

And part of what they'll be talking about and what our teams will be talking about on the ground is whether taking more time for negotiations makes sense given the progress that has been made. And we'll also be engaging with Congress on that discussion. And obviously, there are a range of proposals that are out there, but we're just going to take this one day at a time and determine whether we have the progress that's needed to proceed and what steps would be taken accordingly.

QUESTION: And what progress has been made thus far?

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, I think as the Secretary noted yesterday, we're going to leave the negotiations behind the – at the negotiating table. You're familiar with the issues that are being discussed and the difficulty of those. But that's one of the factors – of course, the main factor – that will be part of our decision making.

QUESTION: The Iranians are saying, I mean pretty much – well, I think they're going even a little bit more forward-leaning than you in saying that, obviously, the goal is to get a deal by the end of the week, but they're already discussing that it's possible that there may be an extension. And so --

MS. PSAKI: Well, Elise, there's a discussion going on in Vienna and certainly an active discussion about the options, including that option. No decisions have been made at this point in time.

QUESTION: Jen, eight --

QUESTION: But Jen --

QUESTION: Hold on. Eight months ago, you said from that podium, “If the Iranians don’t get to a yes at the end of six months, we can put in place more sanctions.” Is that not the case anymore?

MS. PSAKI: Well, look, I think, Lucas, our focus here and our primary goal is preventing Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon. We are going to let the negotiations proceed on the ground. There’ll be ongoing discussions with a range of senior officials, with members of Congress, and I’m not going to get ahead of that process.

QUESTION: But is what you said no longer the case?

MS. PSAKI: I would have to look at the context of the comments, Lucas. But I think our goal here has remained the same and we’re looking at the negotiations through the prism of what our goal is.

QUESTION: And Jay Carney said the same thing. He said, “If Iran fails to reach an agreement with the P5+1 on the more comprehensive agreement over the course of six months,” he said this back in December, “we are very confident that we can work with Congress to very quickly pass new, effective sanctions against Iran.”

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think the discussion, Lucas, is about whether there’s been enough progress made to continue these negotiations. It’s been written into the JPOA, the possibility of an extension. Obviously, a decision hasn’t been made, but we’re working through what the best – what’s in the best interests of the United States, our P5+1 partners, and our goal of preventing Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon.

QUESTION: Given the fact that it’s --

QUESTION: Was that the terms, though?

QUESTION: Given the fact that you’re still negotiating – you haven’t closed off the negotiations, even though, I mean --

MS. PSAKI: Sure, mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- I know the deadline is Sunday. But it seems as if that would indicate that you think that there’s enough good faith in the negotiations that would merit a continuation of them.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I wouldn’t – I think we’re making that determination right now. So that’s part of the discussion the Secretary will have today with the President and the Vice President, and certainly part of what our team is discussing on the ground.

QUESTION: But I mean, whether – if you haven’t already determined that, then I mean that would indicate that you’re just running out the clock for the next couple of days.

MS. PSAKI: It's not an indication of that at all. I think our team is working to make a determination about whether it makes sense, given the progress that has been made, to proceed. And there are obviously a range of very senior officials who will be a – play a part in that decision making.

QUESTION: But even Mr. Carney was very clear that if Iran fails to reach a comprehensive agreement after six months there would be more sanctions. That's not the case anymore?

MS. PSAKI: Again, Lucas, I'd have to look at the context. I think we've always known it was written into the GPO – JPOA that if there was mutual agreement, there could be a six-month extension. Obviously, we want to take steps that would allow a negotiation to proceed, if that's the case. But we're going to take it one day at a time and see what's needed.

QUESTION: Does an extension help Iran more than the United States?

MS. PSAKI: I think – again, I'm not going to speculate on what decision may or may not be made, Lucas. But our goal here is to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon. That helps not only the United States but countries in the region, and obviously Iran has its own reasons for being engaged in these discussions.

QUESTION: So if Iran has six more months, potentially, does that help them acquire a nuclear weapon, or does not help them acquire one?

MS. PSAKI: I think there have been several steps that were taken in the interim agreement, as you're familiar with. But I'm not going to speculate further on what that may or may not look like, given a decision hasn't yet been made.

QUESTION: Any conversations with members of Congress since the Secretary returned?

MS. PSAKI: Well, he just got back last night, as you know. There have been calls made by Deputy Secretary Burns, by Under Secretary Sherman, by Tony Blinken over at the White House. Those calls were made yesterday. They've continued. I don't have anything else to predict for you, but we're making decisions day by day on our engagement.

QUESTION: Can you say to whom those calls were made? Are we saying foreign relations, are we saying armed services? Who's at the receiving end?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have a list of those calls. I can see if there's anything more specific.

QUESTION: But the Secretary plans on making his own, I would assume.

MS. PSAKI: The Secretary plans to absolutely be engaged, of course, with members of Congress, as he stated yesterday.

QUESTION: Is there any plans for him to brief them or meet with them or anything on the Hill planned?

MS. PSAKI: Not at this moment, but we're making decisions day by day. And obviously, there are a range of senior officials who are – have been very closely involved in this who are certainly qualified and able to also brief members of Congress.

QUESTION: One more. Would the Administration grant an extension with no additional sanctions?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to speculate further on the circumstances that would go into granting or not granting an extension.

QUESTION: You've said several times that people are looking at the progress that has been made and whether it's worth it to continue if an agreement isn't reached by the 20th. What constitutes what you called "enough progress" to do that?

MS. PSAKI: Well, that goes into the discussions of those particular issues.

QUESTION: Just very broadly, what would constitute – not specifics at all. What – very broadly, what would constitute enough progress to make an extension worthwhile?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think, Matt, obviously on the core issues that you're familiar with, whether it's enrichment or other issues that are pivotal to these discussions, whether we've made enough progress on issues to see a path forward. And that's a decision being made on the ground and through discussions at a very high level.

QUESTION: But there has been – but you aver that there has been some progress; it's a question of whether it is enough to warrant an extension.

MS. PSAKI: That's correct, yes.

QUESTION: So would you – if you had to compare the progress made here with the progress that we heard so much about during the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks, how would you – where would that rate? About the same? More? Because as we all know, the progress that was allegedly made during the peace talks amounted to nothing in the end.

MS. PSAKI: Well, Matt, I would disagree with that as well. Just because we didn't talk about it publicly doesn't mean that it wasn't made. There was a great deal of progress made in the peace talks; there has been progress made in the Iran negotiations. I don't – I can't tell you right now if we're going to be able to outline that publicly or not.

QUESTION: Well, given what's happening right now between Israel and the Palestinians, I hope there was more progress made in the Iran negotiations.

MS. PSAKI: Well, as you know, that the circumstances on the ground – the environment on the ground existed long before the Secretary made an effort to reignite the peace process.

QUESTION: Yeah.

QUESTION: Still on the conflict. If it's decided that there will be an extension, will it come out in the form of a statement, press conference?

MS. PSAKI: You always like to ask – how things will be rolled out.

QUESTION: I love it, yeah. I mean – if you know.

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any prediction of that for you at this point in time, Said.

...

QUESTION: In fact, there's talk right now about the – negotiating teams returning to capitals on Friday the 18th and announcing an extension. Was this decision made prior to the Secretary left --

MS. PSAKI: I understand that has come out in some Iranian press, but there hasn't been a decision made yet about an extension. So it's – would be hard to see how a rollout plan would be made.

July 15, 2014

Jen Psaki, Spokesperson
Daily Press Briefing, selections on Iran
Washington, DC

QUESTION: You said before that the Secretary decided to come back to the U.S. primarily to consult on the P5+1 talks, but also because this cease-fire had been announced.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: If my timeline is correct, Hamas had not given an answer one way or the other. Was an opportunity missed for the U.S. to be in the region and to try to, in particular, work with those countries that have a direct connection to Hamas?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would remind you that we have been working with those countries, and the Secretary spoke with the Egyptian foreign minister on his flight. So that diplomatic engagement continues. If there is a role that he can play in the region, he will return to the region and he is happy to do that.

QUESTION: But isn't it preferable to actually be on the ground and to actually have people who agree on the overall framework but not necessarily on the details yet, to actually be on the ground together and actually work more energetically to get both sides to buy into the deal?

MS. PSAKI: It --

QUESTION: Or was this a strategic way of essentially letting Israel and Egypt reaffirm their longstanding relationship that some would argue had been disrupted by the political turmoil in Egypt over the past three years?

MS. PSAKI: Well, Roz, it certainly can be. And you know the Secretary always is happy to get on a plane and roll up his sleeves and spend the night negotiating if needed. And if he needs to do that, he can get on a plane tomorrow, as soon as tomorrow. There's no plans to do that at this point in time, but he reserves that particular option.

But the fact remains that he can still engage with the parties on the phone. He can still engage through a range of tools in order to play the role that the United States can play in this particular case. This is an Egyptian proposal, one certainly we've commended and we've supported, and we'll give it some time to see if it can work its way through.

QUESTION: And I know that there wasn't any -- there was a deliberate decision to not talk about Israel/Hamas during P5+1. What contacts has the U.S. initiated or received to Iran regarding the situation inside Gaza?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything on that to read out for you.

QUESTION: So they passed the point of no return, as it were, on their way back?

MS. PSAKI: To Shannon?

QUESTION: There's no way he could decide to change his mind and head back?

MS. PSAKI: I have not been tracking their movements. We have done that before, but my understanding is he's still --

QUESTION: No? Okay.

MS. PSAKI: -- planning to return to Washington.

QUESTION: He could still go to Frankfurt.

QUESTION: And how -- I mean, I know you said if there's a reason for him to go back then he can go back. But like, what's the earliest that -- how much -- let's not talk about how, when you -- how much time do you feel that you need to give this before saying, look, we really need to --

MS. PSAKI: Well, part of what he'll do over the course of the next couple of days is consult with the President and also be in touch with Congress about the P5+1 negotiations as well. So I expect we'll give that some time to occur.

QUESTION: The Secretary --

QUESTION: Is he concerned about having -- about the perception that some critics have that, as Elise said before, he's spread too thin? That he's showing up everywhere and doesn't have much to show for his on-the-ground efforts?

MS. PSAKI: I actually don't think there's evidence of that, Roz. I think -- look at what happened over the weekend with the deal in Afghanistan. He was doing that while at the same time remaining engaged with our team on the ground in Vienna. Taking on tough challenges, you don't do that because you're guaranteed victory; you do it because they're tough challenges and they need to be addressed. And that's why he's engaged in all these issues. It doesn't mean that you're assured of a victory at the end.

QUESTION: So his motto would be "We do these things not because they are easy, but because they are hard"? Is that what you're saying?

MS. PSAKI: That is fine, Matt.

...

QUESTION: Well, whether or not you've seen them or not, you disagree with them, correct?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I'm not sure if they're accurate, because I haven't seen them printed anywhere. So --

QUESTION: Okay. Well, if Said said it himself, or if I said it, would you agree or disagree?

MS. PSAKI: We certainly would disagree, Matt.

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. PSAKI: But why don't I see if that's actually an accurate depiction of the statements.

QUESTION: Okay.

...

QUESTION: A few days ago, Secretary Kerry said if there is a real – I quote, “real” – progress, we can consider extension. Yesterday he spoke about “tangible,” and I quote. Are they the same, real and tangible, so the extension is on the table?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think he also spoke to this issue this morning, and I would certainly point you to his comments that he made there. We're still working. Our team on the ground is still working. Over the course of the next couple of days leading up to July 20th, the team in Vienna will continue to meet. Progress has been made and the process continues. The Secretary is going to be consulting with the President and with Congress in the coming days. And certainly, an extension will be an option that's discussed, but I'll leave it to the team on the ground to provide any updates of forward movement in the negotiation in that regard.

QUESTION: But you do agree that real is tangible, isn't it?

MS. PSAKI: I'm sorry?

QUESTION: Tangible means real.

MS. PSAKI: Tangible means real?

QUESTION: That's what he said. He said yesterday “tangible;” previously, he --

MS. PSAKI: I think there --

QUESTION: He put a condition to have --

MS. PSAKI: They have similar meanings, yes.

QUESTION: -- real progress.

MS. PSAKI: They have similar meanings, those words do.

QUESTION: Okay.

...

QUESTION: Is the Secretary prepared to recommend an extension of the talks beyond Sunday?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to speculate on that. He spoke to this this morning. Obviously, our team on the ground – that remains an option, but our team on the ground is continuing to work, and we'll just see where things proceed over the coming day or so.

QUESTION: Just in the last few days, diplomat – last few minutes, rather, diplomats in Vienna – Western diplomats, which could be U.S. or any other – or any of the European partners were saying that it's inevitable that the talks will continue for months.

MS. PSAKI: Well, we will see, Elise. Obviously, that has remained an option. We'll see what happens over the next couple of days.

QUESTION: So for the past several months – like clockwork, pretty much – you have been – you and Marie have been asked about oil sales, Iranian oil sales --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- and the – and the cap set by the JPOA. The reason you've been asked is because statistics have been showing that they are exceeding the million barrels a day that was agreed to. And you have consistently said that it's too early to tell, that it's an average; you have to average out the whole six months. It is now mathematically impossible – and actually has been for some time, although you wouldn't concede the point the last time I raised it with you – that they will come in and meet that cap that was set by the JPOA, which puts them in violation already of the agreement.

MS. PSAKI: Well, Matt, I'd --

QUESTION: What do you --

MS. PSAKI: I'd have to take a look at your mathematical calculation and talk to our team and see what their view is on that.

QUESTION: Okay. So you don't have – you're not prepared to say what you have said in the past, at least, that well, it's too – it's way too early to say, that the average might not be --

MS. PSAKI: I just have not spoken with them about this particular issue --

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. PSAKI: -- in a couple of weeks.

QUESTION: I would be curious to an answer of what the Administration – whether the Administration believes that the – that this part of the agreement has been violated by the Iranians or not, and if it has – which I think it may be an unlikely event, no matter how strong the math supporting it is – but if it has violated the JPOA, what you are prepared to do about it. And what do you think it means for not only the JPOA until Sunday, but any extension in the negotiations and then a final agreement? Can you trust the Iranians?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I am happy to talk to our team. I will just remind you that, as we've talked about before, there are a range of factors and data that we look at as we make our calculations. So I'll discuss that with them as well.

QUESTION: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: A number of Republicans on the Hill have been basically repeating the Secretary's line, "no deal is better than a bad deal." And in recent days they have echoed Prime Minister Netanyahu's concerns about not just the Iranian demand to retain their centrifuge arsenal, as it were, but also to develop and expand their arsenal of ICBMs. Are those the two main sticking points?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I'm not going to get into specifics. You're familiar with the range of issues on the table. You've touched on some of them; enrichment, centrifuges, transparency, and other issues. It's all about how they fit together. That's what our team is discussing on the ground. You heard the Secretary this morning talk about how the number of centrifuges that Iran has now are too many. So I think we'll let the negotiations happen behind the scenes with our negotiating teams and refrain – continue to refrain from playing all of these numbers out publicly.

QUESTION: And with whom is the Secretary planning to consult from Capitol Hill?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have a list of members. That's something, obviously, we'll work through with a range of others in the Administration and what's appropriate.

QUESTION: Does that mean that members of Congress will be coming here, or would he be meeting with them in a closed-door session on the Hill?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have that level of detail. I think, obviously, he was in Congress for 28 years and he can also pick up the phone, and I expect that will be part of his engagement, and there'll be other officials who also engage with the Hill in other ways.

QUESTION: Would he be prepared to – absent what's happening in the Gaza Strip, would he be prepared to go back to Vienna this weekend?

MS. PSAKI: He said this morning that he's open to doing that if there's a productive role he can play. That's not currently planned.

July 8, 2014

Jen Psaki, Spokesperson
Daily Press Briefing, selections on Iran
Washington, DC

QUESTION: France foreign minister said today the differences in approach between some of the world powers and Russia had appeared in the last few days during negotiations over Iran's nuclear program. Do you feel the same, or do you have the same feeling as France?

MS. PSAKI: Well, as you know, there – this is a long process that's been ongoing for more than six months now, and there have been concerns expressed in the past – actually, the last round we had – by France, and the P5+1 remains united through the process. We certainly believe that that will be the case here.

That doesn't change the fact that significant gaps remain with Iran. Everyone is working very hard to see if we can get to an agreement here, and we have put on the table a reasonable, verifiable, and easily achievable proposal that can show the world that Iran is committed to what it means. And that means a peaceful program and preventing them from acquiring a nuclear weapon. So we're in the middle of it right now, so I don't have much more to speculate on.

QUESTION: Did you mean that the U.S., Europe, and Russia are still on the same page?

MS. PSAKI: And China, yes.

QUESTION: And China?

MS. PSAKI: The talks are continuing. Obviously, we never said this would be easy, and that certainly is the case now where gaps remain in the discussions.

QUESTION: Is the Secretary planning to attend the meetings in Geneva – in Vienna?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the Secretary is always happy to get on a plane, as you all know and many of you have experienced it. But there hasn't been a decision made at this point in time for him to travel to Vienna.

QUESTION: Because the French foreign minister has said that the United States wanted foreign minister to join the negotiations in Vienna. That means maybe he talked to the Secretary, and --

MS. PSAKI: Well, there are a lot of rumors on the ground, as there always are, around negotiations like these. But we evaluate day to day. I have nothing to announce for you, and there hasn't been a decision made at this point in time.

QUESTION: So I suspect – and I’m only – I know what your answer’s going to be, but I would be remiss not to ask it.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

QUESTION: And that is: Would you expect the Secretary to bring his case for and on Afghanistan to the candidates in person any time in the near future?

MS. PSAKI: I have nothing to announce in regard to upcoming travel beyond his trip in China that’s ongoing.

QUESTION: Somalia. There was an attack today on the presidential election – on the president’s – presidential palace. Do you have any information about this attack?

MS. PSAKI: I don’t have any new information. I know it just happened, I believe, this morning or overnight.

QUESTION: Yeah.

MS. PSAKI: Obviously, we would condemn that attack, but let me circle back with our team post-briefing and see if we have more details. I’m not sure if there’s been any claims or anything along those lines.

QUESTION: Okay.

July 1, 2014

Marie Harf, Deputy Spokesperson
Daily Press Briefing, selections on Iraq/Iran/Syria
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.

...

QUESTION: Yeah. Any chance that Iraq is going to come up during the talks in Vienna tomorrow? Is --

MS. HARF: We don't expect it to. We don't think that's necessarily the best venue. If that changes, we'll of course let folks know. As you know, we discussed it briefly on the sidelines last time. I think it was more of a timing issue more than anything we were there, but this is not the focus. We don't expect it to, but if that changes, I'll let folks know.

QUESTION: So you aren't expecting any financial talks? Because I saw that --

MS. HARF: No, we're not expecting Iraq to come up.

QUESTION: Okay. So --

MS. HARF: Oh, yeah. We certainly -- so we leave tonight, land tomorrow. The talks -- this round begins tomorrow, and we expect to be working through the 20th. You saw the Secretary's op-ed on Iran today, I'm sure, in The Washington Post. This round will consist of a combination of plenary sessions chaired by Cathy Ashton and with all of the P5+1, the political directors, and Foreign Minister Zarif. It will consist of a number of bilateral meetings with us and the Iranians and also us and our other P5+1 partners; a number of expert sessions, where experts from the P5+1 and Iran work on the details of the nuclear side, the sanctions side; will really be a constant flurry of meetings, I think, over the next few weeks working toward the 20th.

QUESTION: But you would -- but you would expect within that at some point --

MS. HARF: To have a bilateral --

QUESTION: -- since this is a flurry of meetings --

MS. HARF: Yeah.

QUESTION: -- at one of these bilaterals you could mention Iraq, Syria, or --

MS. HARF: So we tended to not have -- the bilaterals on the nuke talks -- nuclear talks, sorry -- up until this point have focused on the nuclear issue. We, of course, always discuss the American citizens as well. Last time was something a little bit new because of the severity of what was happening, the emergency in Iraq. We did discuss it on the sidelines of a meeting, but these meetings haven't been focused on anything else. Of course, we'll let folks know if that changes, but I don't expect it to.

QUESTION: Can I ask --

MS. HARF: It's just not the right forum for it.

QUESTION: Can I ask you on the choice of words? It says "Iranian nuclear deal still possible."

MS. HARF: Yeah.

QUESTION: Why the word "still"? Because --

MS. HARF: Because time is running short.

QUESTION: Because -- yeah, but these --

MS. HARF: And because as --

QUESTION: -- things are going according to calendar, aren't they?

MS. HARF: Well, because as the Secretary said – let me pull up the exact words too, Said – “significant gaps still remain.” And as he said, we do not yet know what Iran will choose, if they will choose – assuming what they’ve said is true that they don’t want a nuclear weapon, it’s not a hard proposition to prove. What we are asking for are reasonable, verifiable, and easily achievable measures. So – but we have not yet seen what choice the Iranians will make. This isn’t one of capacity; it’s one of will, and we will see what we can get done.

QUESTION: Time may be running out, but he does – he lauds the Iranians for not only meeting, but exceeding, actually, some of your expectations, correct?

MS. HARF: Well, for being serious at the negotiating table. And I think – and this is an important point – I stood up here six months ago now, and there were many skeptics about the Joint Plan of Action, many skeptics about whether Iran would adhere to it, whether they would live up to their commitments, and they have. And Iran’s nuclear program is frozen today as a result of that.

So as we go forward, I’m sure there will be many skeptics over these next few weeks. But I would remind people that there were a lot of skeptics back in November and then in January when we implemented it. And it’s gone according to plan, which I think has been a significant step, and as we’ve negotiated a comprehensive agreement has provided something to base those negotiations on, that we have put in place an agreement that has been adhered to by both sides.

QUESTION: How likely is it that the Secretary will show up if it appears that some sort of deal is imminent?

MS. HARF: Well, you know the Secretary is always happy to get on an airplane, and particularly on this issue. Look, we’ve always said that the Secretary and the other foreign ministers will come if there’s a need in the negotiations at an appropriate time to do so.

And quite frankly, in all honesty, we have no idea what the schedule over the next few weeks will look like. We know what the meeting setups will be in general, but this is a negotiation, and it will be happening right before our eyes and we will all play things by ear.

QUESTION: Marie, when you said that --

MS. HARF: But I know you like 5 a.m. press conferences, which was really fun in Geneva the last time.

QUESTION: When you said that you won’t expect to negotiate or to discuss Iraq with the Iranians in Vienna, did you mean that there is another channel with the Iranians that you (inaudible)?

MS. HARF: We haven’t had other discussions. We’ve said we’re open to it. I don’t have anything to announce on that. We just don’t think this is probably the right forum. If we have something – some specifics about that at some point to say, I’m happy to.

QUESTION: But do you have another channel with the Iranians regarding Iraq?

MS. HARF: Well, there're other venues through which we could talk to them, and places. But those discussions aren't happening right now. But in theory, they could. We've said we're open to them. There's a number of ways it could happen. We just don't think that on the sidelines of the nuclear talks that's necessarily the right place to do it.

QUESTION: Is there any discussion with the Iranians about Iraq in Baghdad between American and Iranian diplomats?

MS. HARF: Not to my knowledge. I know that's been an issue that's – a question that's been floated out there. I'm happy to check with our team and see if there's an update there.

QUESTION: Marie, can I just ask – in the Secretary's op-ed in The Washington Post, he calls on Iran to choose, he says Iran must choose, but he's not very specific about what it is exactly that you guys want them to choose. He mentions that there are substantial gaps, but he doesn't really go into specifics. Are you able to outline some of the specifics still dividing the P5+1 and

MS. HARF: Well, I mean – and I'm looking in his op-ed right here in front of me. I think one of the things – and this is not specific, but starting generally – is that they've been publicly very optimistic about the potential outcome of these negotiations, which hasn't been matched by date, as he said, with the positions they've articulated behind closed doors. So again, we're talking about all of the issues in a technical sense, right? But up until this point, we haven't seen a decision, really, of will, of political will, to make the tough choices that we think that they have to make.

So again, I think one of the other points he wanted to make is that if they can, the benefits for Iran's economy, for Iran's people, are very clear. There's a clear path forward here. And if they can't, there's also a pretty clear path.

QUESTION: But are we talking about the dismantling of the centrifuges, the complete elimination of highly-enriched uranium? What exactly are the choices that you feel that – or the P5+1 feels that Iran really hasn't yet made the political – taken the political decision to do?

MS. HARF: Well, we're not going to get into specifics about where the biggest gaps remain or sort of what the technical decisions they need to make are. As we've always said, it really is sort of a puzzle how all of this fits together. So we all know the issues, right? They're all laid out in the JPOA: centrifuges, enrichment, Arak, Fordow. They're all laid out there. And we know that to get the right combination so they can't get a nuclear weapon and their program can only be used for peaceful purposes, you have to fit them together in a way that gets you technically to that outcome. There are a couple of different ways they can fit together, and that's what we're working on right now, to find that combination. But there will be some tough choices that have to be made, and we haven't yet seen the same optimism behind closed doors from the Iranians that we've seen publicly.

QUESTION: So the Iranians have come out, and they say that you're asking them for the impossible, that they can't do it.

MS. HARF: I think that's why the Secretary said, and I'm quoting, "Assuming that's true," which is what they've said, "it's not a hard proposition to prove. We have, over the past several months, proposed a series of reasonable, verifiable, and easily achievable measures that would ensure Iran cannot obtain a nuclear weapon." And again, this isn't just because we feel like doing this. It's because, as the op-ed later went on to say, there's a history of Iran with the IAEA of not being in compliance with its nonproliferation requirements, and the UN Security Council therefore imposed a number of steps on them as a result.

So there's a history here. We think there's a different future available, a different path forward, and I think we'll all see in the next few weeks whether that's possible.

QUESTION: Are you able to just give us one of the steps that you'd like us to – like them to do?

MS. HARF: Believe me, I know it's tempting. But look, to give these negotiations the best chance of success – it's not just that I don't want to talk about it – it's that we need to keep the details in the room. And I'm sure we will talk a lot about it over the next three weeks.

QUESTION: Marie --

QUESTION: Marie --

QUESTION: -- do you expect Deputy Burns to stay on the ground or --

MS. HARF: So we did put out a Media Note this morning. Deputy Secretary Burns, Under Secretary Sherman, Jake Sullivan from the White House, and a whole team of experts – a great group of people – we're all leaving tonight. I think we'll just see what the schedule looks like. There may have to be a couple people who have to leave for other meetings and come back. We'll just update people as that happens.

...

QUESTION: Yeah. In his op-ed, the Secretary said – he sounded as if he is a little uneasy that the Iranian may ask for extension. In the meantime, he sounded like he – the goal --

MS. HARF: The Iranians have publicly said they're open to an extension. They very publicly said that.

QUESTION: Yeah, but the Secretary sounded uneasy about it. In the meantime, he left the door open. Would you agree about extension if the Iranian requested?

MS. HARF: Well, I think what he wanted to get across in this paragraph – and again, I'm looking at it – is there might be pressure. I mean, some people have talked about it publicly. But

he was making a factual statement that no extension is possible unless all sides agree. That's written into the Joint Plan of Action. I think it says by mutual consent. And also making the point that the United States and our partners will not consent to an extension merely to drag out negotiations, that we need to see a genuine willingness in the time that remains.

We're committed to the 20th. We are working towards the 20th. That – this was in no way indicating a change in policy on that. So look, we'll see what they come to the table with.

QUESTION: But he's not sure about the 20. He didn't sound firm.

MS. HARF: We are – well, I will tell you we are firm about the fact that the 20th is the date we put in the JPOA here. And look, we'll see how the negotiations go over the next three weeks.

QUESTION: So you're saying, though, if an extension is deemed valuable to all sides, you would not oppose that?

MS. HARF: I'm not changing our position on extension. We've always said throughout this process that we are focused on the 20th. I know there's a lot of hypotheticals here, but the point we wanted to make clear is some people, I think, assume it's a foregone conclusion. And we were trying to make very clear that it's not, actually, that it has to be agreed to by everyone, and who knows if everyone would agree?

June 27, 2014

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

QUESTION: Marie, on Iraq, this has – we haven't asked this for a while – but are you aware, since Vienna, I mean – yeah, Vienna and Deputy Secretary Burns's meeting with the Iranians on the Iraq issue. Are you aware if there have been any more contacts?

MS. HARF: I am not. But let me double-check. I am not, but --

QUESTION: The reason I ask is because the Pentagon now says that, yes, it is flying drones --

MS. HARF: Okay.

QUESTION: -- and the Iranians are also flying drones. And I'm just wondering what the mechanism is to prevent these drones from flying into each other.

MS. HARF: I am happy to check and see if there is anything we can share on that.

QUESTION: Okay. I would be --

QUESTION: Any coordination with the Iranians?

MS. HARF: No. None.

QUESTION: Right. But in terms of contacts in Baghdad and --

MS. HARF: I'm happy to check. Not to my knowledge, but I'm happy to check.

QUESTION: All right.

June 20, 2014

Jen Psaki, Spokesperson
Daily Press Briefing, selections on Iran/Iraq
Washington, DC

QUESTION: Any update on any contacts you have – you may have with the Iranians about Iraq?

MS. PSAKI: No, no new contacts.

QUESTION: And maybe we can wrap this up with – ahead of his trip to the Middle East and Europe, has the Secretary been in contact with anyone regarding the Iraq situation?

MS. PSAKI: He did speak with Foreign Minister Fabius this morning. Let me just pull up the quick readout of that. One moment.

And I expect he'll continue with calls over the course of the weekend. They talked about the – our shared concern about the threat from ISIL. The Secretary talked about his plans to return to the Middle East and Europe to consult with partners next week. They also talked about Ukraine and President Poroshenko's peace plan and declaration of a ceasefire today. So that was the thrust of their conversation.

...

QUESTION: So just one question on – sort of an update on Vienna and then another question --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- on the sanctions legislation that's been passed --

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

QUESTION: -- from Congress. On the Vienna aspect of this, Zarif had some pretty harsh words today. He used the words "unreasonable" and "unacceptable" for the Western demands going into the talks. He said there were indications that the P5 is not serious. He said that Iran is planning to maintain a resistance economy in the expectation that sanctions won't be lifted, so on and so forth. He said that the U.S. has some difficult decisions to make. Do you have a response?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say, first, I know there was a background briefing that was provided on the ground, which answered a range of questions. Our view is that if Iran is open to having a peaceful program and they are as concerned about their – the impact of their sanctions as they've said, then it should be easy for them to make some of these tough decisions. I think as was noted in this briefing, we're at a crucial moment in these negotiations, and while this week was

constructive it was also tough, and the discussions were long, they were intense, and obviously we have more gaps to narrow here. Our team will be working around the clock. I believe the next round has been announced with political directors meeting in Brussels next week and the talks resuming July 2nd. But again, we're focused on the July 20th timeline, and we'll be working around the clock leading up to that point.

QUESTION: And the second question on sanctions legislation, there was a letter sent by members – the leaders of the House Foreign Relations Committee Engel and Royce – that was open for signatures. And what they were saying to the President was that there is no such thing as nuclear-related sanctions in U.S. law, and that this idea that we have demarcated nuclear-related sanctions from drug trafficking, terrorism, human rights, and the like, is simply not a part of the legislation. So is that something that the Treasury Department has done? Is that a different reading of the law by the State Department? What – how do you respond to this bipartisan letter?

MS. PSAKI: I have not seen the letter. Did it come to the State Department or just to the White House?

QUESTION: It went to the President.

MS. PSAKI: I would point you to the White House, and I can circle back with our team and see if we've analyzed the letter, if there's more of a response we can offer.

QUESTION: Do you have any comment on the IAEA report that was revised today, that showed Iran is actually moving forward on getting rid of all its enriched uranium?

MS. PSAKI: I haven't seen the new report. I'm sure I should've taken a look at that. A lot going on today, but we can look at that as well.

QUESTION: But that – you wouldn't consider that to be a step in the right --

MS. PSAKI: Well, let me take a look at the report and see exactly what it says.

June 18, 2014

Jen Psaki, Spokesperson
Daily Press Briefing, selections on Saudi Arabia/Syria/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: Any more discussions planned with the Iranians about Iraq? Because they are – I know you said no yesterday, but I was wondering whether things have changed because they are today making noises about the fact that they're willing to discuss Iraq with you and help if they get to a nuclear deal. So it sounds like they have quite a bit of leverage at the moment. Who wants the nuclear deal more?

MS. PSAKI: I would dispute that. There are still no more discussions planned in Vienna, as I mentioned yesterday. Further discussions would likely take place at a lower level, but I don't have any update on that front. Our view is that any discussion with Iran regarding Iraq would be entirely separate from the P5+1 negotiations, and any effort to connect the two is a nonstarter for the United States.

QUESTION: But it sounds as though they're going to play even more hardball in the nuclear negotiations to get you to talk to them about Iraq.

MS. PSAKI: Well, there's no plans to have further conversations about Iraq at the P5+1 negotiations.

QUESTION: And that's what I want to follow-up. You say there's no more discussions in Vienna, but what about elsewhere?

MS. PSAKI: Well, as I mentioned yesterday, we are open to engagement or discussions on these issues. I don't have anything to predict for you, but it would happen at a lower level.

QUESTION: But – and not in Vienna, but could be in --

MS. PSAKI: Correct. That hasn't changed since yesterday.

...

QUESTION: Can I just go back to the Iran thing? I understand you don't want to link the nuclear negotiations with Iran to any of the other issues.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: But clearly they are. So how do you handle that in your nuclear negotiations with them? Aren't you worried that the talks are going to stall until the Iranians get what they want, which is cooperation with you in Iraq?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we shouldn't forget Iran has a significant incentive here, and cooperating and negotiating on the nuclear – their nuclear program, which is the impact that sanctions has had on their economy and the fact that President Rouhani ran on a platform of improving the economy. So I don't think anyone is engaging in this effort as a favor to us or to the other P5+1 countries. That doesn't change the fact that gaps remain. Significant gaps remain. It's difficult, but our team will make – take every effort to keep them focused on that nuclear program.

...

QUESTION: Can I just clarify one thing?

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

QUESTION: On – you keep saying that there won't be another talks in Vienna, but – on Iraq.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: But it is possible that there could be talks at a lower level in Vienna, isn't that right? I mean, not related to --

MS. PSAKI: Well, I'm referring to these ongoing negotiations.

QUESTION: Yeah, but are you ruling out Vienna completely as a venue for lower-level talks unrelated --

MS. PSAKI: I wasn't speaking to Vienna as in the city. I was speaking to these P5+1 negotiations that are happening now.

QUESTION: Yeah. So, I mean, there could be, at some point next week or whatever – unrelated to P5+1, Vienna could be – is not ruled out as a venue for U.S.-Iran talks on Iraq, right?

MS. PSAKI: It's not ruled in either, Matt.

QUESTION: I know, but I just want to make sure I – just want to --

MS. PSAKI: Just -- I was not implying city --

QUESTION: It sounded like you think Vienna (inaudible) --

MS. PSAKI: What I was – I perhaps shorthanded it. What I was meaning – what I meant was the talks that are ongoing right now on the nuclear program.

Samir.

QUESTION: Were the Iranian officials in Vienna authorized to discuss Iraq?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think we've spoken to this, and I think they've spoken to this. So I think you can assume that they were to the degree the conversation was – briefly took place the other day.

QUESTION: Did you talk about Syria too in Vienna?

MS. PSAKI: No.

...

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: By the way --

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead, Said.

QUESTION: -- is it ISIL or ISIS?

MS. PSAKI: Oh --

QUESTION: Is there like a standard operating procedure?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I know different organizations and different individuals use different terms, but yes.

QUESTION: Okay. I just wanted to follow up on Iran.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: President Rouhani today vowed to protect the Shia holy places, and he spoke from a place nearby the border. Do you have any comment on that?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we've seen, of course, those comments. As I mentioned in response to Lucas's question, ISIL is clearly a common threat to the entire region, including Iran. But Iraq will only successfully overcome this threat by governing in a nonsectarian manner. We've made concerns clear regarding Iranian fighters joining the fight in Syria. We've made -- we would view this as much the same.

QUESTION: So you -- what he said about volunteers and so on, you look negatively on that aspect?

MS. PSAKI: Volunteers in what capacity?

QUESTION: Well, he said that there are basically thousands of -- I'm paraphrasing -- of volunteers who are ready to go and protect these holy places. You would --

MS. PSAKI: I said that?

QUESTION: No, not you. He said that. He said there are Iranian volunteers who --

MS. PSAKI: Correct, we believe that --

QUESTION: -- are ready to go in and protect --

MS. PSAKI: -- our focus should be on encouraging nonsectarian governance.

QUESTION: And would you call on Maliki to reject such an offer by Iran?

MS. PSAKI: We've called on Maliki -- Prime Minister Maliki and any Iraqi leader to not be pulled into efforts to divide the country along sectarian lines.

QUESTION: Do you have proof that Iran is no longer supporting ISIS?

MS. PSAKI: Do we have proof?

QUESTION: Yes.

MS. PSAKI: I --

QUESTION: Because your own Treasury Department in the past said that Iran was supporting al-Qaida in Iraq, which has morphed into ISIS.

MS. PSAKI: I don't think it was as simple as that, Lucas, but I don't think I have anything more to add to your question.

Go ahead.

QUESTION: I'm just wondering if you also had any information or evidence of Iranian forces on the ground in Iraq. This was a question that was raised last week.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: You said you didn't have any information on that. Has there been --

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any new information on that, no.

QUESTION: So do you believe that there are Iranian forces on the ground in Iraq?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we've seen those reports, but I don't have any independent confirmation from here.

...

QUESTION: Since it's confirmed that Iran is also flying drones over --

MS. HARF: Well, I didn't confirm that, but I know there have been reports to that.

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. HARF: Matt confirmed it for you earlier. (Laughter.)

QUESTION: Do you have any issue -- are you taking any issue with Iran is flying drones over -
-

MS. HARF: Well, we had this -- Matt and I have had this conversation this week a few times in this room. Look, what we've said is any actions that Iran or any other country in the region should take should all be used towards promoting an inclusive government to helping the Iraqi army shore up and be able to fight ISIL. It shouldn't be about promoting sectarianism or promoting militias. So I'm not going to comment specifically on some of the reports about Iran, what Iran may or may not be doing, other than to say that anything they would do should -- we would push them and encourage them to play into this overall strategical*.

QUESTION: Have you been also able to ask the questions regarding U.S. Treasury's findings, recent year's findings, that many operatives in Tehran funding and transferring fighters and funds to Syria and to create --

MS. HARF: I don't have anything on that specific issue. Again, if it's a Treasury issue, I'd point you to them.

QUESTION: And one last question. I couldn't find this quote earlier. A key Turkish administration spokesman, *Huseyin Celik*, today said about the U.S. when he was asked about Kurdistan that U.S. did not bring peace, stability, unity, they just left widows, orphans in Iraq, and they created a Shia bloc to the south of our country.

MS. HARF: Well, this is not our countries' future to decide. This is the Iraqis. It's the Iraqi leaders who needed to step up after we ended our mission there and give their country a better future. We gave them the opportunity to do so. We haven't seen that take place yet. And what needs to happen now is not blame on any outside forces but looking at the Iraqi leaders and saying this is very serious time, you need to come together, and you need to give your country a better future. It's not up to us, the United States or Turkey or Iran or any other country to fix this for the Iraqis.

June 17, 2014

Jen Psaki, Spokesperson
Daily Press Briefing, selections on Iran/Syria/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 12, 2014

Jen Psaki, Spokesperson

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

QUESTION: Right. Do you have any thoughts about the Iranians saying that they're willing to help defend the Shia community or defend Baghdad and/or, both, the Kurds taking control of Kirkuk? Do these developments cause you any concern?

MS. PSAKI: Well, let me take the second one first. We support the steps taken between the federal government and the Kurdish regional government to cooperate on a security plan that will enhance the Iraqi army's ability to hold positions and confront ISIL. We're encouraging both Baghdad and Erbil to continue and further their cooperation, given the immediate threat that they're all facing from ISIL on the ground.

In terms of the Iranians, we've naturally seen those statements – or seen the reports, I should say – I guess there are statements and reports. We don't have any confirmation of their presence on the ground, which I think is some of the reports. Clearly, we've encouraged them in many cases to play a constructive role, but I don't have any other readouts or views from our end to portray here today.

QUESTION: You say you've encouraged them in many places, meaning?

MS. PSAKI: I meant Syria as well, obviously.

QUESTION: Right, right, right, right.

MS. PSAKI: It's completely different circumstances, but --

QUESTION: I understand. So is it – does that – has that encouragement taken the forum of anything, other than you saying it just now from the podium?

MS. PSAKI: In Syria or anywhere?

QUESTION: No, no. Has your encouragement of the Iranians to play a constructive role in Iraq, has that come out in any other forum, other than you just saying it on the podium? In other words, what I'm getting at is have you talked to the Iranians directly about this and – in this case? Whether you have or not, could you identify what a playing – them playing a constructive role might mean from the U.S. view?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think the circumstances and the threats obviously posed to a range of countries on the ground is clear. We've talked about that. We know the history here. I don't have anything more to analyze from here in terms of what role they could play. As you know, the talks

that our team has been engaged in with the Iranians in Geneva have focused on the nuclear discussions, and that has continued to be the case.

QUESTION: So that – so the situation in Iraq has not come up in conversations that Deputy Secretary Burns and Under Secretary Sherman have had with the Iranians?

MS. PSAKI: No, the focus has been on the nuclear program.

QUESTION: Well, okay. The focus might have been. It hasn't come up at all that you're aware of?

MS. PSAKI: Not that I'm aware of.

QUESTION: Okay. And I'm just – but playing a constructive role – I'm trying to figure out what that might mean in this case. Would you be supportive of the Iranians sending troops, since you're not willing to send – or you don't want to, and presumably the – many – most Americans wouldn't want you to re-invade Iraq, as it were.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Would the Iranians sending troops be a constructive role?

MS. PSAKI: Again, Matt, obviously these comments and these reports are new. I don't have any analysis from our team at this point in terms of what specific constructive role they could play.

QUESTION: But just taking you up on that, Jen, do you believe that there is some kind of common approach that the United States could forge with Iran on ways to support the Maliki government?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think the fact is we've been out there, obviously, long supporting the Iraqi Government. You know where the Iranians stand, but I'm just not going to get ahead of where things stand right now.

QUESTION: And just to, again, stress, this was not raised at all with the – between Burns – Deputy Secretary Burns and his team in Geneva?

MS. PSAKI: The discussions were focused on the nuclear program.

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

QUESTION: And do you have any – sorry, one more from me – have you got any – the Iraqi foreign minister was talking in London today. He's attending this conference that I believe the Secretary's going to be at tomorrow.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: So Foreign Minister Zebari said today that he believes that the ISIL militants were now on the run with the security forces having fought back. Does that coalesce at all with what you're hearing from the ground?

MS. PSAKI: Well, there are – given how fluid this is, I'm sure it comes as no surprise that there are conflicting reports about the situation on the ground, on the further advances ISIL has made. I've not heard a confirmation of that particular report, but there's also been conflicting reports that I don't have confirmation of either, if that makes sense. So we're obviously tracking this closely. Deputy Assistant Secretary McGurk is on the ground, as you know, but events are incredibly fluid on the ground.

QUESTION: Would you say that your position on Iran has changed? Because you used to say that Iran's role in Iraq is not constructive; in fact, it's negative and meddling and interfering. So would you say that there has been a change in your position on Iran?

MS. PSAKI: I don't think I indicated – I don't think I said very much about our position here. Obviously, we've seen the comments, so – go ahead.

QUESTION: But you said something about these options are not including boots on the ground. But it does not preclude, let's say, drone strikes, does it?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I'm not going to get into eliminating or adding each thing. I think the President's comments made very clear he has a broad range of options, and I was just making clear that doesn't include boots on the ground.

QUESTION: Would you say that the volatility of the situation now has called it – called for, let's say, U.S. interference by air, let's – perhaps by missiles or --

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to indicate what option it may mean or what options, but clearly the grave security situation on the ground that's been deteriorating every day has warranted our team working overtime on a range of options. And ultimately, the President will have to make a decision on what that will be.

QUESTION: Is the United States taking additional steps to bolster support to the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, or is there any evacuation plans?

MS. PSAKI: As you know, we would never indicate that in any case in advance. But the security situation we're clearly monitoring as closely as possible. The U.S. Embassy and consulates in Iraq remain open and continue to operate on a normal status, so I don't have any plans of – any announcements about planned changes to tell you about.

QUESTION: Not even a heightened status in regards to all the fighting? You're not even --

MS. PSAKI: Well, as you know, we put out a Travel Warning yesterday, as we often do when we want to provide information that has become available. This – in this case it is information

that we're all aware of, but we want to make it – point it out to American citizens, and we did that just yesterday.

QUESTION: How about the – does the current security framework with Iraq, does that allow the U.S. to conduct kinetic strikes inside Iraq's borders?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think you're familiar with where we stand with – post 2011 where our agreements are with Iraq. Obviously any decision made would be taken – we would take into account any legal needs at the time.

QUESTION: Can I --

QUESTION: I know the Embassy in Baghdad is one of the largest. Do you have an approximate of how many people there are there? I know you don't get into specific numbers, but if you have any sense of the size.

MS. PSAKI: We also don't like to provide a range for security reasons, and that's no different in this case.

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: (Inaudible) evacuated just since the crisis, since the crisis began in Mosul, have you evacuated any American official from the region, from Mosul or from the approximate regions?

MS. PSAKI: Have we – I'm sorry, can you repeat it?

QUESTION: There was any evacuation from the – evacuation from the region for the U.S.?

MS. PSAKI: Evacuation?

QUESTION: Yes.

MS. PSAKI: We don't have a consulate in Mosul.

QUESTION: But I mean in Erbil or any other places, have you --

MS. PSAKI: All of our consulates remain up and running, as they have been, and we continue to monitor the security situation on the ground.

QUESTION: Do you have any update about the Turkish hostages? Do you have any – I know that Secretary Kerry and Vice President Biden talked on this issue with the Turkish hostages.

MS. PSAKI: Yes, and I know you're aware of that, and obviously watching it closely. I don't have any update beyond that.

QUESTION: So has the Secretary made any calls related to Iraq today?

MS. PSAKI: He spoke with Deputy Assistant Secretary McGurk this morning again, but no other calls to read out for you.

QUESTION: Okay. So is it your understanding – and I realize this is a little bit outside of your lane – but that the Vice President is going to be the one, the main interlocutor with the Iraqis on this? Or does the Secretary plan to meet with – as Jo noted, Zebari is going to – is in London already. Is there --

MS. PSAKI: There's no planned meeting at this time. But I think in this case, as is the case in many other issues, there's often a team of individuals who talks to a range of officials. I expect that will be the case here. And if it's helpful for the Secretary to make a call, I'm sure that he will.

QUESTION: And given the Vice President's having had the lead, essentially having had the lead for the Administration since – for the last six years, and the fact that when he was in the Senate he advocated this three-state solution – Kurdistan and then the Sunni area, then Shia in the south – does the Administration still support the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Iraq as it exists today, as it has existed since post-colonial times?

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

QUESTION: Yes?

MS. PSAKI: Yes, we certainly do.

QUESTION: So there's no – you're not aware of any consideration of a tri --

MS. PSAKI: No.

QUESTION: -- three-way deal?

MS. PSAKI: No. Let me just give you --

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

MS. PSAKI: Can I just give an update on McGurk's meetings just for those of you who it's of interest to? Over the past --

QUESTION: If it's London, it's supposed to be in half an hour.

MS. PSAKI: It doesn't, but I think it just shows how active he is so that's why I wanted to make sure you all are aware. And obviously there's a lot of interest in this issue.

Deputy Assistant Secretary Brett McGurk over the past 24 hours has met with Deputy Prime Minister Shahrastani, with Defense Minister Dulaimi, Party Chair of the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq Ammar Hakim, Parliament Speaker Nujaifi, and the United States Special Representative for Iraq, and others. He remains in Baghdad where he will continue to engage with Iraqi leaders over the next several days.

Catherine.

QUESTION: How long do you expect him to stay in country?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have an indication of this – of that at this point. He'll be there for the next several days. I'm sure that's something we'll evaluate day by day.

QUESTION: Is he in contact with the tribe leaders?

MS. PSAKI: He was. I think in the readout I gave yesterday, he had been in touch. So I don't have – not in the last 24 hours but certainly in the last 48 to 72.

QUESTION: Are you concerned about the tribes who change the side in this conflict? Because according to the press reports, some tribes in the region in Mosul are supporting the ISIL forces' advance against the Iraqi – I mean the Maliki government. Are you concerned about this?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we've seen the reports. As I've noted, it's an incredibly fluid situation on the ground. I think our focus is on not just the assistance bucket, which clearly the President spoke to and we've spoken to extensively in here, but also the political bucket and the importance of unity. And so in that vein, any efforts to work with the Iraqi Government in any capacity is what we're encouraging all sides to do.

QUESTION: Back to Vice President Biden. In 2010 he was very optimistic about Iraq and said that it could be one of the greatest achievements of the Administration. I was wondering if Secretary Kerry thought the same thing.

MS. PSAKI: Again, I'd point you to the Vice President's office on his comments from four years ago.

QUESTION: Back to the embassy. You can't from that podium even say that you are strengthening security at the embassy at this time?

MS. PSAKI: We typically don't discuss security for obvious reasons. And if anything changes, that would warrant making information available publicly, we do that on a regular basis.

Iraq?

QUESTION: Yeah, Iraq. Did you listen to the pretty strong comments of Senator McCain this morning at --

MS. PSAKI: I've seen -- I've seen some tweets and reports of them, yes.

QUESTION: So he was asking to -- was asking the President to change his national security team. What would you reply to that?

MS. PSAKI: I think I'd point you to the White House on that, Nicolas. But I would make clear that this is a situation where the impact of the ongoing crisis in Syria, the overflow of that into Iraq has clearly been a major factor. We have made -- taken a range of steps to increase the capacity of the Iraqi security forces and the Iraqi Government over the last several months. I'm not sure what Mr. McCain -- Senator McCain is or isn't aware of. I assume he's aware of all of that. And right now, we believe all of our focus should be, as a United States Government, regardless of what party you may be in, in making a determination about what steps we can take in the short term to boost their capacity to address the immediate threat from ISIL.

QUESTION: So what steps can you take in the short term?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think you heard the President speak to this, but given what we've seen and the deteriorating situation on the ground, that has warranted a look by the national security team at a range of options. And obviously, we'll give them the space to make any decisions about what we'll do, but we've increased assistance over the course of the last several months given what we've seen on the ground. And I think you heard the President say that this warrants the need to do more, and that's what they're discussing now.

QUESTION: There have been concerns, though, over the past few days that the Iraqi -- in many places the Iraqi army just fled in the face of the offensive. There's been billions of dollars of U.S. taxpayer money poured into training and equipping the Iraqi Government. Has this been squandered? Is it a failure?

MS. PSAKI: Well, Jo, obviously the last events --

QUESTION: Just say yes and get it over with. (Laughter.)

MS. PSAKI: The events of the last several days are clearly -- were -- they're alarming. And I think there's no question about that. We -- there was a clear structural breakdown. We were disappointed by the reaction of -- or the steps that were taken by a range of security forces. But our commitment to Iraq is long-term. We share a commitment to addressing the threats from groups like ISIL, and that's why we are continuing to take steps and consider steps to increase their capacity.

QUESTION: And do you have an analysis of what the cause of the structural breakdown was? Why did this happen?

MS. PSAKI: That is something the Iraqi central government is looking into, and I don't have any updates at this point --

QUESTION: And do you believe that --

MS. PSAKI: -- on what their findings are.

QUESTION: -- sorry.

MS. PSAKI: No, go ahead.

QUESTION: Do you believe the Iraqi army is actually in a position to be able to counter this threat that's coming from the ISIL?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think clearly the events of the last few days tell us that we need to do more. And that's what we're considering here, and we're in touch with a range of partners around the world, and we'll see what is determined out of those conversations.

QUESTION: And just going back to what we were talking about before about Iran, I mean, given the fact that the United States is obviously equipping and training the Iraqi army, do you believe that Iran has a role to do similar things on -- for its part?

MS. PSAKI: I just -- the statements that they've made are just out in the last sort of 12 hours, and I just don't want to get ahead of where we are in our analysis or consideration of what we think would be appropriate.

QUESTION: Irrespective of the statements they've made, in this situation, in the fact that we have this crisis in Iraq, do you believe that there is a military role for Iran?

MS. PSAKI: Again, our focus is on increasing the capacity and doing what we can do as the United States. As I mentioned, this wasn't an issue that was discussed during the talks in Vienna. I will see if there's more that our team would like to add about our --

QUESTION: To turn that around, do you -- can you say that the Administration would oppose the deployment of Iranian troops inside of Iraq to defend the government?

MS. PSAKI: I just don't have anything more to add on this front. Obviously the entire situation is very fluid. I'm happy to talk to our team and see if there's more we'd like to say from here on this issue.

...

QUESTION: So yesterday, the Iranian foreign minister tweet that the negotiation with U.S. actually now were -- it's at -- deadlocked over the restriction on Iran's centrifuge. Is that the case?

MS. PSAKI: I think we've never gotten into the details for good reason, because our negotiating team and the P5+1 for the most part feels that's the appropriate way to approach these negotiations. The team was on the ground the first couple of days of this week having a bilateral meeting on kind of – which has been a normal part of the process all along. They felt that was a good meeting. Gaps remain. There's no question about that. The negotiations will resume next week, and certainly our efforts will only increase from here.

QUESTION: So are you still expecting to achieve a deal before the deadline?

MS. PSAKI: Our focus remains on the July 20th deadline and that has not changed.

June 11, 2014

Jen Psaki, Spokesperson
Daily Press Briefing, selections on Iran/Iraq
Washington, DC

QUESTION: One on Iran. Do you expect an Iranian role in the near future to help the Iraqi Government defending its territories and the government?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we'd encourage them to play a more constructive role, but I don't have any predictions of what role they may or may not play.

QUESTION: (Inaudible) Michel was implicitly getting to are the longstanding and fairly well documented accusations that Prime Minister Maliki has not governed in a particularly inclusive manner, has in fact alienated large portions of the minorities – notably the Sunnis – within his own country. And that one thing that has fueled what now appears to be full-fledged insurgency against his government is that very failure to govern inclusively. You don't think that? You think it's just a security problem and his governance --

MS. PSAKI: Absolutely not, and I didn't state it was just a security problem. And we've expressed in the past our concerns about the lack of inclusivity. We have encouraged that publicly as well as privately. That's part of the strong message that we have been sending, that Deputy Assistant Secretary McGurk has been expressing not just on this visit but on several over the course of the last few months. That's why I emphasized the importance of the call for national unity. Does that fix every – heal every issue from the past? No. But is it an encouraging step moving forward? It could be.

QUESTION: Would you say --

QUESTION: Sorry, one point on this one. Why you cannot say that he is responsible for the situation?

MS. PSAKI: Because I think the situation, that those responsible for the situation, are the terrorists from ISIL.

...

QUESTION: So this morning, your officials – one of the officials from this building, the energy security bureau – that would be one of the accomplishments of the QDDR, the original one.

MS. PSAKI: One of many.

QUESTION: Yes.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

QUESTION: Was on the Hill and testified that yes, in fact, there is oil being sent by Iran to Syria, but this is not in any way helping the Iranian economy.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Can you explain how that is?

MS. PSAKI: Because they're not receiving revenue from it.

QUESTION: Right. But it is still support. I mean, money, among other things, is kind of – is fungible. They're supporting the Assad regime with this free oil, meaning that they're not having to buy stuff, they're not having to spend money for energy for Assad, right? That would seem to be a material – a net, sorry – a net gain for the Iranian economy if, in fact, everything you say about the Iranians supporting Assad and the – and attendant rebel groups fighting on his side is true.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think the point he was making, Matt, was that other countries would purchase by providing revenue to Iran for the oil they receive, and this is obviously a different circumstance. I guess you could make an argument, as you suggested, that it's money they would have spent otherwise. But I think the point was – that the senior official was making was that they're not receiving their own – revenue from the Syrian Government for the oil that they're providing, so therefore it doesn't --

QUESTION: Right.

MS. PSAKI: -- contribute to their revenue numbers.

QUESTION: Right. But revenue isn't the entire aspect of the economy, though. I mean, it still seems to be benefiting the Iranian Government because they're not having to spend money they otherwise would. Is that not – is that – why is that logic not – why is that not logical?

MS. PSAKI: Because I think you're making a number of guesses about what assistance they would provide. When you compare it to other circumstances, they would receive revenue for the oil they provide.

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. PSAKI: Thanks, everyone.

June 10, 2014

Jen Psaki, Spokesperson
Daily Press Briefing, selections on Iran
Washington, DC

QUESTION: Could you update us on how the talks are going in Geneva? Are they still continuing? Have they finished? And could you give us a readout on how you felt the tone was and whether anything was achieved?

MS. PSAKI: Well, as Marie noted, they met yesterday for over five hours. They reconvened this morning at 9 a.m. and expected to meet all day. A range of topics were discussed as expected. We probably won't be giving a lot of substantive readout of the discussions. Obviously, we'd like to keep them private, as – because we think that is the right approach. As you all know, next week the P5+1 will be reconvening for the rest – next round of negotiations, and these discussions were certainly just complementary of that.

QUESTION: Well --

QUESTION: The Iranian side --

QUESTION: Sorry. Go ahead.

QUESTION: Sorry. The Iranian side yesterday characterized yesterday's talks as – no, this morning's talks as positive. Is that something that you would concur with?

MS. PSAKI: I think they must have just concluded. I haven't had a chance to talk to the team that's been on the ground about how they would characterize it, so let me see if we have a more specific readout from the team on the ground.

QUESTION: And President Rouhani, who's in Ankara today for a conference, said that his country would do its best to secure a nuclear deal. That's not very affirmative. I mean, doing your best doesn't mean you're necessarily going to get there. How do you react to his comments?

MS. PSAKI: Look, I think as we've noted many times in the past, there are different audiences that a range of officials, including the Iranians, are speaking to. And our focus is on the core issues being negotiated behind the scenes, and there are – all the issues are on the table. We have never said this would be easy. We continue to believe that. But we'll let the negotiations in the next round continue next week, and we'll see where we are.

QUESTION: So have you made enough progress in the last two days to be confident about going into the next round of the P5+1 talks in Vienna next week?

MS. PSAKI: Well, this – these consultations are just an important opportunity to exchange views in advance of the next negotiations, negotiating session in Vienna. But again, I'm not going to predict what they will mean. That's where the negotiations will be taking place between the P5+1. This is just – as there have been throughout the course of the last more than six months, even before that – a range of bilateral meetings – a range of meetings that have taken place on the side of events or conferences. The Secretary has participated in some of them as well, and this is a natural part of that complementary process.

QUESTION: But do you think that what --

QUESTION: When you said made a range – when you say you discussed a range of topics, are you narrowing that to the nuclear issue, or did these talks in any way bleed into other issues of mutual interest between you and Iran? Syria --

MS. PSAKI: I meant a range of topics on the nuclear issue, so thank you for --

QUESTION: Okay. So this is solely about kind of – more of bilateral talks related to the nuclear issue.

MS. PSAKI: Correct.

QUESTION: And they say stay – like I know that was the intent, but they stay that way. There's not – you're not bleeding into --

MS. PSAKI: That is my understanding. That was always the plan --

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. PSAKI: -- and there certainly is plenty to talk about.

Go ahead, Lara.

QUESTION: Kind of following up on Jo: Do you think that there was enough progress or goodwill made in these consultations this week to push the ball forward in next week's talks, beyond where we were in the last round? I mean, do you think that this – based on what you've seen, understanding that you didn't see the recent Iranian comments right before you came down --

MS. PSAKI: I did see the Iranian comments, but I just hadn't had a chance to talk to our team about their evaluation of it, so --

QUESTION: Okay. I mean, is the U.S. confident that we'll be able to make some progress in the next round, or --

MS. PSAKI: Well again, this is a long process and one where we've been working closely with the P5+1 partners throughout. I haven't – we haven't given a step-by-step evaluation of where

things stand at every moment of every bilateral meeting because we don't think that's particularly productive, and I don't think that we'll do that here either.

QUESTION: Let me ask it this way.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

QUESTION: If these consultations had not been positive, would it even be worth the U.S. while to hold the P5+1 talks next week?

MS. PSAKI: Oh, absolutely. I mean, the P5+1 talks were going to continue. This was an opportunity to have a discussion in a complementary manner to those talks, but that's where the core of the negotiations take place.

QUESTION: Let me ask you, considering that this is really a watershed event, these bilateral talks – I mean, the first time in 35 years the Americans and the Iranians meet one-on-one since the --

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would remind you that Secretary Kerry has met with Foreign Minister --

QUESTION: I --

MS. PSAKI: Let me just continue – Foreign Minister Zarif in Munich as well as in Geneva, and we met with the Iranians bilaterally a number of times on the margins of the P5+1 negotiation.

QUESTION: So this is not a unique event?

MS. PSAKI: I would not call it a “watershed event,” as you mentioned.

QUESTION: Okay, so --

QUESTION: But it is just to --

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

QUESTION: It is unique in the sense that like, yes, these are related to the nuclear issues, which is more of a multilateral process. But most of the times that you've met with the Iranians have been on the sidelines of other talks where the Iranians were there. This wasn't like a scheduled bilateral event between the U.S. and Iran, regardless of the topic. I mean, while it's not a watershed event given that you have over the years had many talks – recently with Secretary Kerry in particular, those contacts have been increasing – it is quite significant that you and Iran are holding direct bilateral talks that are not --

MS. PSAKI: I was just trying to give a context --

QUESTION: No, I understand, but --

MS. PSAKI: -- to the fact that we've had many bilateral meetings.

QUESTION: Right, right. But would you – I mean, you would say that it is significant that the U.S. and Iran are scheduling their own bilateral talks which could kind of – I don't want to say "set a precedent," but could be an indicator that this could continue?

MS. PSAKI: I wouldn't – again, I'm not going to make a prediction of what it means from here. That's not knowable yet at this point. Obviously, the negotiations will continue next week. We believe we need to engage in active diplomacy. This is an example of that, and we need to talk to Iran just like our P5+1 partners do as well. That's been the case throughout this process.

QUESTION: Thank you.

QUESTION: Jen, you talked about context. I mean, considering the context that Iran has a sort of robust diplomacy in the region, it is reaching out, it's talking to the Turks and so on. It is exporting more than ever oil to China, India, and so on. It has increased its level of supply to – by something like 10 percent or 15 percent in one month alone. Do you think that the era of sanctions and Iran sort of being isolated is over?

MS. PSAKI: I would dispute many of your numbers or --

QUESTION: Well, I mean, the numbers speak for themselves.

MS. PSAKI: -- the riff you just had there, Said, with all due respect, in that the sanctions regime has very much, despite the skepticism initially from some critics, has very much stayed intact. And we have even put additional sanctions in place over the last several months. There was an agreement as part of the JPOA, of course, that we abided by, that the IAEA and others have confirmed that Iranians have abided by.

But clearly, reaching a comprehensive agreement is the step that we're working towards at this point, and there's a range of issues that need to be discussed in that context.

QUESTION: At the end of – or by July 20th, I guess, the end of the six-month period and so on, what do you expect after that?

MS. PSAKI: Well --

QUESTION: What do you expect to happen in terms of the negotiations with Iran or where these talks are headed?

MS. PSAKI: Our focus remains on the July 20th timeline.

QUESTION: Jen.

MS. PSAKI: Iran or a new topic?

QUESTION: Yeah, Iran.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

QUESTION: It looks like the French are pessimistic regarding the talks, and the French foreign minister has said Iran talks are hitting a wall and July deadline is in doubt. Do you share this pessimism?

MS. PSAKI: I think I just said our focus remains on the July 20th timeline. I will say I've seen those remarks. As I mentioned a little bit earlier, we feel our efforts should be directed towards the negotiations that are happening behind the scenes on the tough issues and not on public demands. We all want this to be a strong comprehensive agreement. We all believe that no deal is better than a bad deal, and we're approaching these negotiations with that in mind.

QUESTION: Follow-up?

QUESTION: Would you agree to an extension, though, if you felt it was necessary to get a deal?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I'm not going to speculate on that. You know what's allowed for in the JPOA, but our focus remains on the July 20th timeline.

QUESTION: And can I just ask: Where are we with the transfers? Under the JPA, there was a set timetable of when things were going to be transferred, and – I'm sorry, I should have this in my head --

MS. PSAKI: No, it's okay.

QUESTION: -- would you just remind us when the last one's being made? Is it this month or is July?

MS. PSAKI: I'd have to check on that, Jo. It's a good question. Obviously, you know it comes from the Treasury Department. We typically confirm after it occurs.

QUESTION: Right.

MS. PSAKI: They've been occurring on schedule, but we can check and see what the last one was that we can confirm.

QUESTION: And whether that's the last one of the six payments or whether --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm. Sure.

QUESTION: -- there's another one to go in July. Yeah.

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Sure. Understand. Understood.

QUESTION: Are you assuring the Saudis, your allies the Saudis, that any thaw in the tensions between the United States and Iran is not at their expense? That their relationship will continue as is?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I can assure you that we've been in close consultations with the Saudis, as well as a range of our friends and partners around the world. I would remind you that what we're discussing here is their nuclear program. Everyone shares a concern about Iran acquiring a nuclear weapon. We have other concerns outside of this that remain, that we also share with the Saudis.

...

QUESTION: Just following up, President Rouhani was in Turkey yesterday, and Turkey and Iran signed 10 MOUs yesterday. So was wondering if you see these MOUs – first of all, they are coordinated with the White House or Treasury or State Department?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we have a close dialogue with Turkey on a range of issues, including Iran. We share a common goal of preventing Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon. I would refer you to them for more information, and I'm sure you're in touch with them. I would, though, remind you that Turkey has publicly committed to abide by all of its – all relevant UN Security Council resolutions, and that remains our understanding.

QUESTION: So is it – today – yesterday, they stated, the leaders of the countries, that they want to double the value of bilateral trade to \$30 billion by next year. Do you see these goals within the line of the sanction regime?

MS. PSAKI: Well again, I think our policy is well known on Iran, and that is that we have made clear to a range of countries and the private sector that it's best to avoid activity that may be sanctionable or under U.S. or international sanctions. I'm not going to speculate on what may happen or not happen depending on where we are with the negotiations.

QUESTION: During the visit, these two countries again find this partnership is strategic and they created this new council. It is the Iran-Turkey Strategic High Cooperation Council is a milestone. How do you view this strategic partnership between these two countries?

MS. PSAKI: I really don't know that I have any more to add than I've just stated.

QUESTION: And the late – the last **QUESTION:** Has the United States received any clarification on the reported 87 billion euros in Iran sanction-busting from the Turkish businesses? These have been discussed in Turkish press for a number of months now. I was wondering if you have any view on those.

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any other details or update to share with all of you.

June 9, 2014

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

QUESTION: Following the news that Deputy Secretary Bill Burns and White House Advisor Jake Sullivan are leading talks today in Geneva with the Iranian side, can you confirm whether these talks have actually started today? And what is the purpose of them? What do you hope to achieve?

MS. HARF: They have. Today they have met so far for over five hours. They began at 2 p.m. local. Talks are ongoing as of right now. A range of topics were discussed, as expected. They will reconvene tomorrow morning and expect to meet all day tomorrow. I probably won't be giving a lot of a substantive readout of the discussions. Obviously we like to keep the negotiation – or the discussions, not negotiations, private to give them the best chance of success.

QUESTION: What was the --

MS. HARF: I think, in terms of the purpose – is that where you were going?

QUESTION: Mm-hmm.

MS. HARF: Okay. Look, we've always said that we would engage the Iranians bilaterally if it can help advance our efforts, of course acting in total coordination with the P5+1 and the EU. EU Deputy Helga Schmid is on the ground there as well. And look, we also said that there was going to be an intensification of diplomatic efforts, particularly getting closer to July 20th. If we're going to seriously test whether we can reach a diplomatic solution here, we need to engage in as much active diplomacy as possible.

This is not a negotiation round; it's a consultation round to discuss, as I said, a wide range of issues, and as you know, leading up to the P5+1 meeting we'll be having in Vienna next week. And last note is that all of the P5+1 countries have bilateral relationships with Iran, they all meet with them, as does the EU. So putting it in that context and all feeding into that process.

QUESTION: But --

QUESTION: What is the --

QUESTION: Sorry, just one more.

MS. HARF: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: It's not completely just a bilateral, though, if the EU's Helga Schmid is there.

MS. HARF: For part of it. But this is a forum where it's just the United States and Iran. There aren't other – any of the other P5+1 partners. Obviously the reason the EU is there is because we're in close coordination as they are the conveners of the P5+1 rounds. I don't know if she'll be in every meeting or not, but there'll be a wide range of discussions over these two days.

QUESTION: Is this simply to work out sticking points that might come up during an actual negotiating round, or is this to try to come up with agreement on some issues that have yet to be discussed during the broader negotiations?

MS. HARF: It's more the former than the latter, although I wouldn't describe it exactly that way. It is not, as I said, a negotiations round. It is a consultation round to talk about the wide range of issues and exchange views leading up to the next negotiating round in Vienna, and of course, feeding into that.

So this is all done in coordination with the EU and the P5+1, and what we've said is we are at a critical juncture in the talks. We don't have very much time left. We think we've made progress during some rounds, but as we said coming out of the last one we hadn't seen enough made. We hadn't seen enough realism, quite frankly, on the table. And hopefully these discussions, like the other bilateral discussions people have, can help get us to the place we want to be.

QUESTION: Would it be fair to say that it's only dealing with those matters that have been discussed? Does the U.S. have the right to bring in other issues that have not been discussed in the larger forum? Is that an appropriate venue for this?

MS. HARF: Well, on the nuclear issue everything's been discussed. All issues on the table have been discussed in some form or fashion during the now four rounds we've had in Vienna. So this is just on the nuclear issue; not on any other issue. But in terms of the nuclear topics, again, a range of issues was discussed and we will continue them tomorrow and then we'll all head to Vienna next week.

QUESTION: And then from a mechanics standpoint, how does the result of these talks play into the larger discussion? How were they introduced? Is there going to be some sort of memo to the larger P5+1 process – the U.S. and Iran discussed X, Y, and Z, and we agree on this, that, and the other? Or is it more informal than that?

MS. HARF: So how it's tended to work in the past, and I'm assuming it will work in some way similar to this before the next round, is the P5+1 and the EU do a day of coordination meetings internally before we sit down with Iran. So obviously that involves things like reading out bilats we've all had, reading out conversations we've all had. We also talk to our counterparts over the phone, over email, from the rest of the P5+1 all the time. So when our partners talk to them, they give us a readout. When we talk to them, we give them a readout. And we are very coordinated going into each round so we're all on the same page, and until this point we all have been on the same page.

QUESTION: You can confirm that you're not discussing regional issues --

MS. HARF: Correct. We are not.

QUESTION: -- like Syria, Yemen, other issues --

MS. HARF: We are not. This is just on the nuclear issue.

QUESTION: -- and the role that Iran can play in the Middle East in the future?

MS. HARF: We are not. This is on the nuclear issues as has always been the case.

QUESTION: So when you say wide range of issues, all focused on the nuclear file --

MS. HARF: Uh-huh. Correct. Yes.

QUESTION: And regarding this meeting which is, like you said, it's a -- I can't -- I don't know how to describe it -- you can say it's preparatory, complementary, or paving the road to the next week issues?

MS. HARF: Well, these are consultations and all of -- if you think about it, there's a P5+1 process led by the EU with Iran. All of those members have their own bilateral meetings and relationships and discussions with the Iranians. Those are all done in coordination with each other. We're all singing from the same piece of -- sheet of music here, and we all give readouts to each other after those meetings as well. So all of those discussions -- not just ours but all of them -- play into the larger EU-led P5+1 rounds of negotiations that happen where we start talking about text, we start talking about actual negotiations over words. And that's -- I think what you've seen is it really plays in the larger process, and that's what it's designed to do.

QUESTION: When you say "the same sheet of music," you mean P5+1?

MS. HARF: Mm-hmm. And the EU. Yep.

QUESTION: And EU. So my other question is related to the -- what you are expecting? Because at the end -- at the last time when it was stopped, it was stopped for some reason, right?

MS. HARF: When what was stopped?

QUESTION: This talks.

MS. HARF: The bilateral talks?

QUESTION: Yes.

MS. HARF: Well, they stopped when we got the Joint Plan of Action finalized in November. So we came to agreement over the first step to halt their nuclear program. That was what the bilateral talks were working on, and we've always said throughout this process that we would engage with the Iranians in various ways if it could help. I'd also point out that on the sidelines

of each of the Vienna meetings, we have bilateral talks. So we meet bilaterally with the Iranians on the sidelines of every P5+1 meeting. The difference now is that Deputy Secretary Burns and Jake Sullivan have joined. Given their history of negotiating with the Iranians, it made sense, and we always said that could be a possibility.

QUESTION: What was the purpose of their participation, Sullivan and Burns --

MS. HARF: Now?

QUESTION: -- this time? Yes.

MS. HARF: Again, given their history negotiating with the Iranians, they know the folks on the other side of the table very well. We said the diplomacy would intensify, and not just by the two of them but by Wendy Sherman and others it has.

QUESTION: But why they didn't participate in the past and now they went to this meeting?

MS. HARF: I don't think there's any magic reason why. Again, as we've said, we've had discussions up until this point. Under Secretary Sherman leads those. This is just another diplomatic avenue through which we are trying to test whether we can get this done by the 20th.

QUESTION: Correct me if I'm wrong, but at a certain point, the discussion when these talks start, there was this, let's say, attitude or position or policy that there is a deal or no deal, something like a package. Is still this is the -- this is the approach --

MS. HARF: Our approach --

QUESTION: -- that it's a complete deal? I mean, including everything.

MS. HARF: Well, right. So what we've said is in order to get to a comprehensive agreement that nothing's agreed until everything's agreed. And if you look at it, there are all these issues that play into a nuclear agreement and if we can be assured that they cannot get a nuclear weapon, that their program's only peaceful, and then what, on the other side of that, our relief would look like. That's a huge package and all of the issues that play into that have to be resolved in order to get to a comprehensive agreement. I think I said up here once that if we get 98 percent of the way, it's that last 2 percent that matters, and all I care about is 100.

QUESTION: And you still are comfortable with the timeline?

MS. HARF: We are. Look, we know we don't have a lot of time left. That's why we've said diplomacy will intensify. People need to make tough choices. But we are very focused on that July 20th time, yes.

QUESTION: Will the comprehensive agreement lead to a normalization of relations between the U.S. and Iran?

MS. HARF: I think that's very, very far away. I think you've heard the President speak about this, actually, a number of times, that we are focused on the nuclear issue because of the seriousness of the threat that a nuclear-armed Iran would pose to our friends, to our partners, and of course, to other people in the region as well. So we're focused on that. But he's also said that many, many miles down the road, someday obviously we would like to have a different relationship with Iran, and if this could help play into that someday in the future, then fine. But even if we can get to a place where we get a comprehensive agreement, there are many things we still fundamentally disagree with the Iranian regime about what they're doing, including in Syria, including with Hezbollah, including with human rights and women's rights and support for terrorism.

So those things in no way will – our concern over those things will in no way diminish if we can get to a nuclear deal.

QUESTION: And why don't you discuss these issues at this time with the Iranians?

MS. HARF: Because these discussions and consultations in the P5+1 negotiations are just focused on the nuclear issue. It is of utmost national security concern to the United States and our partners and we believe that we need to focus the discussions in order to see if we can get to a comprehensive agreement.

QUESTION: Yeah, just a question related to your partners, or let's say partners so I can say it in the region – Israel and the Gulf countries in particular, Saudi Arabia. Are they abated or somehow informed, or you are waiting 'til it's – everything is finalizing --

MS. HARF: About what specifically?

QUESTION: About – because they are – they have had some concerns about this deal with Iran.

MS. HARF: Well, we routinely consult and update our friends in the region, including the Israelis, the GCC countries, and others. We consulted with all of them and all of our P5+1 counterparts before we began this bilateral round, so everyone knew what was going on. And we talked to them repeatedly before and after each round. Under Secretary Sherman's gone there after one of the rounds, to Israel and to the Gulf, and we believe it's very important to do so.

June 6, 2014

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

QUESTION: Marie, I want to follow up on yesterday's question I had for you. I don't know if you have anything on it.

MS. HARF: The bishops.

QUESTION: The bishops who traveled to Iran --

MS. HARF: I got you an answer.

QUESTION: -- in March and then --

MS. HARF: Yep.

QUESTION: Apparently it's been going on.

MS. HARF: I think I can just take a few more because I have, unfortunately, a pressing engagement this afternoon. But let me just give you what I have on this.

We are aware that a small delegation of U.S. Catholic bishops visited Iran in March. The visit and its preparation were conducted entirely independent of the U.S. Government. Obviously I'm sure the trip organizers can give you some more information.

And more broadly speaking, we are aware of independent initiatives by various U.S. religious figures to foster interfaith dialogue with Iranian religious scholars. We commend such efforts to promote interfaith tolerance and religious freedom, which is, of course, a foreign policy priority for the Department.

QUESTION: Apparently they have reported back to the State Department and the White House about their trip, what they talked about and what they heard. What can you tell us about that? Do you think what was discussed over there and their take, this group's take from what they heard in Iran, has had any effect in the P5+1 talks with that country?

MS. HARF: I don't have a readout for any discussions that may have happened. Obviously, this is about interfaith issues, and the P5+1 discussions are all about the nuclear issue, so they are very quite separate.

QUESTION: Well, they've said themselves that the core of the -- the core reason for them going and starting this discussion was to influence the nuclear talks.

MS. HARF: Again, we – this is an independent effort. We're focused on the nuclear issue and don't have much more to say on it than that.

QUESTION: And apparently, this discussion's been going on – again, I think late May another group was there plus somebody from the White House.

MS. HARF: I don't believe anyone from the White House went to Iran.

QUESTION: Josh Hunter?

MS. HARF: Yeah --

QUESTION: No?

MS. HARF: No. Not to my – that would be news to me, but I am happy to check. But I don't think so.

June 5, 2014

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

QUESTION: There was a report out today that a group of U.S. bishops had traveled to Iran in March to engage the Iranian clerics in Qom, which is Iran's Vatican City --

MS. HARF: Uh-huh.

QUESTION: -- regarding the nuclear program. Were you -- was this -- and they say that the State Department was advised of this trip.

MS. HARF: I recall hearing something along those lines. Let me get the details for you about bishops. Let me get the details for you.

June 4, 2014

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

QUESTION: Okay. Today Ambassador Joseph Macmanus issued a statement acknowledging progress that Iran has made. Could you tell us: What does that mean for the --

MS. HARF: I think he was referring to the -- this is the Board of Governors meetings at the IAEA. And think this is a fairly routine thing that Ambassador Macmanus does through their work -- because he's, of course, at the IAEA.

QUESTION: Okay. So does that mean that you are in agreement with the report that was issued a couple weeks back?

MS. HARF: With which report?

QUESTION: The IAEA report on Iran?

MS. HARF: I can check on the details of that report. I don't have them in front of me.

QUESTION: On the same topic or related topic.

MS. HARF: Yeah.

QUESTION: You were asked yesterday about the letter that Chairman Royce sent.

MS. HARF: I now have the letter right here.

QUESTION: So do you have something to say about it?

MS. HARF: We will be responding, as we do to letters from Congress, but it's in general all about the issue I addressed yesterday that Scott asked about. We don't have any indication that Russia and Iran are moving forward or close to consummating any kind of oil-for-goods deal. We know they've talked about it. They've also come out publicly and said that they're not moving forward with it right now. So nothing to indicate that this is actually getting close to completion. And I'm sure we'll respond.

QUESTION: Any readout of how you plan to respond?

MS. HARF: I just did it. I know now it's catching on. That's probably the best readout I can give before the -- I can't bring myself to do it, Lara.

QUESTION: Contribution to the English language.

MS. HARF: But in terms of in general, we – I know there have been a variety of press reports and some discussions between officials between the two countries, but – and we've been very clear with both sides that this could be sanctionable.

QUESTION: And then just while we're on that, the Supreme Leader of Iran made some remarks in a speech on the 25th anniversary of the death of his predecessor. I was wondering if you had a chance to see those and if you have any response.

MS. HARF: I hadn't seen those yet. I'm sorry. Is there something specific you were interested in, or I can --

QUESTION: He – it was – I mean, it was a lot of the usual sort of fire-and-brimstone rhetoric, but just saying that the U.S. had failed to bring Iran to its knees due to sanctions, so – but if you haven't seen it --

MS. HARF: I haven't seen it. In general, we see a lot of rhetoric from the Iranian side. What we're focused on is actions and the negotiations. We'll head back the week of the 16th to Vienna for the fourth round of – fourth, fifth; oh god, losing my mind here – the next round of comprehensive negotiations with Iran on its nuclear program. But I'm happy to take a look, see if there's more.

QUESTION: On that, there's also been some rhetoric from the American side – not officials, but analysts and think-tankers that --

MS. HARF: I love outside commentators' rhetoric.

QUESTION: -- right – that Rouhani's administration, for lack of a better word, has been disappointing because it has been less moderate than had been hoped, anticipated, or promised. What's your reaction to that?

MS. HARF: Well, a few points. The first is on the nuclear side, which is a specific issue, we have made much more progress with the Iranians under the Rouhani administration, I think for a variety of reasons, one of which is he was elected in large part on a platform of needing economic reform. And they know the only way they can truly get the kind of economic reforms – or economic relief they need is if they get a comprehensive agreement here, because they're not going to get it right now.

So I think on the nuclear side – look, there's – we have a long way to go and we don't know if we'll get there, but we've seen progress on that side that we quite frankly hadn't seen in a long time. But at the same time, you are right; we still have huge concerns about human rights, women's rights, support for terrorism. We need to be – and we have been very clear about that and how much of that has not changed. So I think we've continued to raise all of those concerns publicly as well.

June 3, 2014

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

QUESTION: Chairman Royce has some questions about the Joint Plan of Action associated with the P5+1.

MS. HARF: Oh, a topic I like talking about.

QUESTION: Have you received his letter raising those questions, and can you tell us whether the United States believes that Iran has reached an agreement to provide oil to Russia in exchange for food, arms, and nuclear assistance?

MS. HARF: Let me check on the first. I don't – did he – was it sent recently?

QUESTION: Yesterday.

MS. HARF: Okay. I'm sorry. I will check on that. In general, no, we have no indications that reports of an oil-for-goods deal have moved forward with Russia, and I think the Iranians have actually come out and said it hasn't. And we have no indications that it has.

June 2, 2014

Jen Psaki, Spokesperson

Daily Press Briefing, selections on Iran

Washington, DC

QUESTION: The Iranian Government on Sunday executed a man called Gholamreza Khosravi Savadjani who had been convicted of waging war against God, according to the Iranian courts, but I believe it was because he was affiliated with the MEK. And Amnesty International had actually come out and said that his – he'd been held since 2008, his trial in 2010 had been unfair. I wondered if you had any reaction to the news of his execution yesterday.

MS. PSAKI: Well, we continue to be concerned about the large number of Iranians executed following trials involving serious violations of due process. Even as we test the potential for a diplomatic resolution to the nuclear issue, our support for the fundamental freedoms and rights of all Iranians will continue. We're mindful that another key test in Iran's reintegration with the international community is whether we begin to see progress in Iran's respect for its international human rights commitments and its own constitutions. We continue to call on Iran to grant all prisoners and detainees full due process rights, including a fair trial, in accordance with its international commitments.

May 29, 2014

Jen Psaki, Spokesperson

**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Iran/Ukraine/ and the Department
Washington, DC**

QUESTION: The President in the speech yesterday cited two examples of American leadership and strength, two of them being Ukraine and Iran. Isn't it a little early to be talking about that?

MS. PSAKI: I would argue the President doesn't give himself enough credit for what he's done around the world, and that's how the Secretary feels, too. We would not be engaged in comprehensive negotiations with Iran, which is where the program is stalled and is rolling back, if it were not for the role of the United States, along with the P5+1 partners, certainly. Ukraine – we've been engaged more or as much as any other country in the world in supporting the elections process, in supporting the government, in supporting their efforts moving forward. Yes, there's more work that needs to be done. The point is we need to continue to stay at it.

QUESTION: But isn't this a potential "Mission Accomplished" situation?

MS. PSAKI: Absolutely not.

QUESTION: Jen --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

QUESTION: You would argue the President doesn't give himself enough credit? How much credit would you give him?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think what I'm – I would give him more than he has given himself. That's what I just said.

QUESTION: What, like, 200 percent credit? (Laughter.)

MS. PSAKI: So would the Secretary.

QUESTION: For – and for --

QUESTION: Credit for what? I'm sorry. Credit for what?

QUESTION: -- for what? Yes, exactly. That's

QUESTION: No, I mean, I don't – I don't mean, like, he doesn't deserve credit.

QUESTION: For the Iran negotiations? For --

QUESTION: I mean – I’m talking, what specifically are you talking he doesn’t get enough credit for? That’s what I’m saying.

MS. PSAKI: For engagement in issues like Iran, what we’ve done on Ukraine, efforts to dive in and engage around the world.

QUESTION: Can we just stay on --

QUESTION: I mean, Russia has still annexed Crimea. I mean, Iran – there’s ongoing negotiations, but is that the success here that you’re talking?

MS. PSAKI: We’re talking about engagement in the world and taking on tough issues that present themselves. And the United States continues to play a prominent role doing that.

QUESTION: I just had a quick – I had – on two points that you made, one of which was you said that there was going to be a new approach on counterterrorism.

MS. PSAKI: Well, what I’m talking about is the Counterterrorism Partnership Fund that was announced --

QUESTION: Right.

MS. PSAKI: -- in the President’s speech yesterday.

QUESTION: Right. That --

MS. PSAKI: And his speech, where he outlined that the threats we’re facing are different than they were in a Iraq and – a pre-Iraq and a pre-Afghanistan period, where we were focusing on decimating core al-Qaida. We know that these threats are scattered, and we need to adjust our approach accordingly.

QUESTION: Right. But can you tell us how? I mean --

MS. PSAKI: That’s what we are going to continue to --

QUESTION: So --

MS. PSAKI: -- work through. But the fund --

QUESTION: That’s what I was trying to figure --

QUESTION: As Matt was saying, these are not things that have already happened. These are things you’re now working out.

MS. PSAKI: He announced – obviously, we’ve taken --

QUESTION: That's a fund, yeah.

MS. PSAKI: -- a range of steps to address over the course of the last months and years. But again, this fund was just announced yesterday. We need to work through Congress, we need to work with our international partners, and we will be focused on that.

QUESTION: So can we expect at some point in the coming months you will then roll this out for us, so we actually have some concrete details?

MS. PSAKI: I am sure there'll be more to share about where the funding would go and how it would be used. There's a great deal of flexibility, which we see as a benefit. And I'm sure there'll be more to say in the coming months.

QUESTION: Okay. Just to pick up on one other thing you mentioned, you said that you're going to be working on Syria and helping the moderate opposition. You said there was some attractive language --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- in the bill or the draft bill in front of Congress. Could you point us to the attractive language?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. What I was referring to is there is language that Senator Levin offered to the NDAA. That language, a provision in the NDAA which -- or has already been approved by the Senate Armed Services Committee, would authorize the Secretary of Defense to provide equipment and training to vetted members of the Syrian opposition. And we look forward to continuing to work with Congress on that list.

QUESTION: Okay. So you're talking about -- are you now getting into details about talking about specific equipment with Congress?

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, you need to have authorization in order to train and equip. This would provide that authorization. That's what we're working them -- with them on.

QUESTION: About this fund, the procedure about this fund that you mentioned -- so you said that you are talking with the partners on this fund.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Who will be in charge for the allocations of this fund? The Pentagon, DOD, or the State Department, or there will be another body?

MS. PSAKI: It's a Pentagon -- the Pentagon would be in charge, but obviously the State Department would work with them, the White House. It's an -- would be an interagency process, as I understand it.

QUESTION: So what kind of draft that you are working on for the approval in the Congress? Are you going to, for example, present the breakdown of this plan within the partners? Or what kind of details are we to expect?

MS. PSAKI: It's only 24 hours old, so we'll continue the discussions and consultations. And as more information is available, we will make that available to you when possible.

QUESTION: Jen, on the bill, you and officials speaking on background yesterday, quite a bit about this – about the attractive language that you just – this is in the Defense authorization bill, which could take months to get through. Would the Administration or would the State Department be in favor of perhaps taking Senator Levin's language out of that bill and making it a standalone item that could potentially get through the legislative process more quickly?

MS. PSAKI: It is a good question. Obviously, we're discussing a range of mechanisms with Congress. I don't want to speculate on those publicly. But I'm happy to check with our Hill team and see if there's more we want to say on that front.

QUESTION: Okay. And is it correct that train-and-equip programs, like the one being considered, require congressional authorization?

MS. PSAKI: Well, this type of a program, where this is provided, would require, yes.

QUESTION: You said that – so you said that there's attractive language, that you look forward to working with Congress. I mean, you could have proposed this language to Congress at any point. You could have said, "We want to train and equip," to Congress. "Can you give us the authorization to do that?"

I mean, it seems now like Congress is giving you the push to do it.

MS. PSAKI: I think there have been discussions in the Administration for months, as you know, about a range of options and mechanisms to support. The President's speech was a reflection of that yesterday. Support for this language is a reflection of that. I would remind you that we have ongoing discussions with Congress all the time, so --

QUESTION: Can I ask about Iran? It was briefly mentioned in the speech. Drafting was scheduled to begin this month. It's now the end of May. Clearly, we're somewhat behind schedule. I'm sure you agree with that characterization. When is drafting set to actually begin? And do you have enough time given the deadline is July 20th?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we're continuing to target July 20th and working towards that goal. Nothing has changed on that front. Our team will have another round of meetings coming up in a couple of weeks, so I don't have anything new to update you on.

QUESTION: No concern over the fact that you had said that May was the month that you would begin drafting, and drafting has not --

MS. PSAKI: I think we did extensive briefings around the last round of negotiations. We remain – made clear that gaps remained and this is challenging, but we will keep at it.

...

QUESTION: Just one quick one on Iran. There's a new report coming out – that just came out that looks at Iranian cyber hackers. I was wondering if you have anything at that. It said that it targeted foreign policy officials. I'm wondering if you have been notified that anybody in the State Department has been targeted by this scheme.

MS. PSAKI: I don't have that level of detail. I'm happy to check, Elise. I can say that the use of fake personas for malicious purposes is well known to the United States Government. We are aware that hackers in Iran and elsewhere often use social media to gain information or make connections with targets of interest, including U.S. Government and private entities. To defend against these threats, the United States is committed to helping the public and private sector protect itself in cyberspace by sharing actionable information. And as a part of that, on a daily basis the FBI and DHS notify individual victims or potential victims of specific cyber threats and incidents that affect them.

This report did not seek U.S. Government analytical or technical support in developing their conclusions. They were independently developed. But obviously, as I noted, we've had concerns about this issue and have been taking steps to address.

QUESTION: Are you aware specifically of this particular scheme where these fake journalists tried to target U.S., Israeli, British officials? I mean, when you talk about Iranian hackers and social media, are you saying that you have actual knowledge of this particular campaign?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have that level of detail. Again, I'm happy to check. I mean, we are certainly aware of the use of fake personas in a range of manners to try to access this type of information, but I can check and see if there's more we can offer on this.

QUESTION: On Iran, did you give – I believe you did. Do you have the answer to the oil question I asked the other day? Or maybe it's not in your book in front of you.

MS. PSAKI: Well, we are aware of press reports that Iran's crude oil exports have at times exceeded the target, but there's a range of data that's looked at. We would disagree with the findings that you referenced that suggested it's mathematically impossible. We disagree with that. We'll continue to track, as we have been, for the upcoming months.

QUESTION: Mathematically impossible for the average to go below what it --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm, yes.

QUESTION: -- what it was set out in the joint agreement? Is that correct?

MS. PSAKI: Yeah. Our view is it's way too early to make that conclusion.

QUESTION: Wait, wait. Did you comment on the IAEA report?

MS. PSAKI: I don't --

QUESTION: I mean, I know that the issue was raised by Matt last week, last Friday. But after that, hence, have you commented on the report?

MS. PSAKI: I don't think we've offered an additional comment.

May 23, 2014

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

MS. HARF: We remain concerned about the health and welfare of U.S.-Iranian citizen Saeed Abedini, sentenced to eight years in prison in Iran on charges related to his religious beliefs, especially given reports of mistreatment during his recent transfer from a private hospital back to Rajai Shahr prison. We repeat our request for Iran to permit Mr. Abedini to receive any necessary medical treatment and to grant Swiss officials, who serve as our protecting power, consular access to determine his wellbeing. We again call on Iran to release Mr. Abedini so that he may be reunited with his family.

...

QUESTION: Okay. On that, do you know when the last time the Swiss met with him?

MS. HARF: I don't think we – they've ever had access to him.

QUESTION: They've never?

MS. HARF: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: And I presume that you also would repeat your calls for the release of --

MS. HARF: For Mr. Hekmati and Mr. Levinson to be reunited with their families as well, yes, as we always do.

QUESTION: Okay. And have you – and the last one on this, just have you been in touch with the Swiss so that – to ask them to ask the Iranians to --

MS. HARF: We talk to them about this frequently. We also raise this directly with the Iranians when we meet with them as well.

QUESTION: Okay. And the reason – sorry, that wasn't the last one. This is the last one.

MS. HARF: Okay.

QUESTION: The reason for this statement today is?

MS. HARF: The recent mistreatment.

QUESTION: The recent mistreatment? That's not an anniversary of anything?

MS. HARF: No, it's not. It is not an anniversary.

...

QUESTION: Does the United States have any response to the Union of South American Nations considering a formal complaint about U.S. interference in Venezuelan domestic affairs?

MS. HARF: I hadn't seen that. I haven't seen the specifics. But obviously, we've been very clear that we are not in any way playing a role or interfering in what's happening in Venezuelan. I know the Venezuelan Government likes to talk about us and try to make that the story to distract from what they're doing. So having not seen the statement, I would wholeheartedly disagree with the notion that we are playing any kind of role there. All – what we have said consistently is the parties need to get together themselves, dialogue to find a way forward here, but the government hasn't shown willingness to do so yet.

...

QUESTION: Extremely briefly, do you have any comment on the IAEA report on Iran?

MS. HARF: So it has not been released publicly yet, so I can't speak --

QUESTION: It's all over the place.

MS. HARF: I understand that. Again, there are rules of the road here, Matt.

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. HARF: Let me see what I do have. Yeah, obviously can't comment on the substance because it hasn't been released publicly yet, have urged Iran repeatedly to cooperate fully with the IAEA to address issues. And there was an announcement, I think, on the 21st on next steps under their framework for cooperation, so --

QUESTION: All right. By "not released publicly," you mean the IAEA hasn't put it out?

MS. HARF: Uh-huh. There's a process to this.

QUESTION: Because you – all you have to do is, like, type I-A into the Google search and it will pop up.

MS. HARF: I understand that, but as a member of the IAEA, I cannot comment publicly on the report.

QUESTION: All right. Secondly, do you have any reaction to this Egyptian no-fly list, or Egypt putting this prominent author on a no-fly list? No?

MS. HARF: Let me see what I have. Who – what's the name, Matt? Let me see.

QUESTION: I don't have it with me.

MS. HART: Let me – I don't think I do. Let me – I can get --

May 22, 2014

Jen Psaki, Spokesperson

Daily Press Briefing, selections on Iran/Russia

Washington, DC

QUESTION: Once – we have a story out in Moscow quoting a source that’s saying that Russia and Iran may sign a contract this year for Russia to build additional reactors at Bushehr. Do you have any comment on that?

MS. PSAKI: I haven’t seen the story. There have been reports of that for some time. Obviously, that would be something that would be an issue of concern. We’ve raised it in the past, but I can check with our team and see if there’s any new response to that specific report.

QUESTION: Thanks.

...

QUESTION: On an unrelated region, so – okay. On Iran, there was a large international outcry against the arrest of six young Iranians who were dancing to a video that they made about – set to Pharrell’s song, “Happy.” Just wondering if it’s – this building shares the concerns about those individuals, and then I have one related question.

MS. PSAKI: Well, certainly, we do, and we would. We call on – although there have been reports about their release, which obviously we can’t independently confirm, but we believe that freedom of expression should be guaranteed for all Iranians, and if they are still detained, we would call on their release.

QUESTION: And President Rouhani tweeted about it, using a quote from his victory speech talking about how happiness is a good thing and we shouldn’t punish people for wanting to pursue happiness. So would the fact that --

MS. PSAKI: We agree. (Laughter.)

QUESTION: Would the fact that he was tweeting about this indicate – and going against what was an action by – I don’t know exactly who apprehended these individuals – but does that suggest that there’s a significant break between Rouhani’s influence in situations within the country?

MS. PSAKI: I will leave it to you to do the analysis. Obviously, our priority here is ensuring that Iranians are guaranteed freedom of expression, and certainly this is an example of that.

May 15, 2014

Marie Harf, Deputy Spokesperson
Daily Press Briefing, selections on Iran, via telephone
Washington, DC

QUESTION: Marie, thank you for doing this. My question is about the P5+1 in Vienna, and it is: Is there any provision being negotiated at this point that would monitor and provide for clear, direct, immediate action if Iran is in some way trying to outsource part of its nuclear program, or if it does that in the future? Thank you.

MS. HARF: You're asking if there's something under discussion for the comprehensive agreement?

QUESTION: Yeah. What I'm asking about – exactly, what I'm asking about is – especially in light of North Korea's continuing threats to conduct a fourth nuclear test and the long cooperation between Iran and North Korea over the years, is there any provision, for example, should North Korea provide Iran with some of the sources of technology, research, testing and so on, that Iran might be – that you're negotiating over giving up? Is there any provision for dealing with that?

MS. HARF: Well, a few points. First, we are not going to outline internal discussions we are having in terms of these negotiations. We're just not going to negotiate in public. We've said that from the beginning, so won't get into specifics about any issue in particular. What I will say is that we have a goal here that has not changed: that is preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon and ensuring that their program is for entirely peaceful purposes.

Now, what we've said is how you get to that goal, which has not changed and will not change, is to put together, really, a package on all of the issues – that takes all of the issues into account, that at the end of the day ensures that you reach that goal. It's not a checklist. It's not that you – like you go through it and say, "Check, check, check, here, we're done." It's really how you put all the pieces of that together. Transparency's a huge part of that. You saw in the JPOA negotiations and in the JPOA text that we were given increased access to Iran's nuclear program, increased visibility into it. So that's obviously a huge part of what will have to go into any comprehensive agreement, but beyond that, I'm just really not going to get into details about what we're talking about.

May 13, 2014

Jen Psaki, Spokesperson

Daily Press Briefing, selections on Iran/Saudi Arabia

Washington, DC

QUESTION: The Saudi foreign minister has expressed the kingdom readiness to negotiate with Iran to solve the differences between the two countries and invited Mr. Zarif to visit Saudi Arabia any time. How do you view this development between these two countries?

MS. PSAKI: I've seen the new reports. I don't have any particular comment on them. Obviously, there have been reports of this in the past, so we'll see what happens.

QUESTION: Has the U.S. played any role in easing the tension between Saudi Arabia and Iran?

MS. PSAKI: Not that I'm aware of, Michel.

QUESTION: Is this likely to help the process, the Vienna process that is ongoing?

MS. PSAKI: I'm sorry?

QUESTION: Is this likely to help reaching a deal with Iran, do you think?

MS. PSAKI: The process is ongoing on the ground, as you know. Today, there's the meeting. There are internal P5+1 meetings and the meeting between EU High Representative Ashton and Foreign Minister Zarif. The first plenary sessions and meetings will occur through Friday and they will conclude at that time, but I don't have any speculation as to the impact. Obviously, these negotiations are ongoing, they have been, and this is just an announcement of a possible meeting, so --

QUESTION: So you don't see this as a softening of the opposition of Saudi Arabia and possibly Israel to the negotiated settlement?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any more speculation to offer.

QUESTION: Is it a positive step you think?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any more comment to add.

May 5, 2014

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

QUESTION: Do you have an update on the technical talks going on --

MS. HARF: Uh-huh.

QUESTION: -- in New York?

MS. HARF: They start tomorrow, I believe.

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. HARF: Tomorrow, the 6th and 7th, at the technical level, as part of our ongoing discussions on the sidelines of the NPT meeting that's taking place in New York. And then next week, we will go for the fourth round of comprehensive talks in Vienna at the political director level with Cathy Ashton, Foreign Minister Zarif, and all of us.

QUESTION: Two follow-ups on that: One, do you find any dissonance in the fact that Iran is participating in the NPT conference? And two, are the technical experts a part of the drafting of the deal, just as a process question?

MS. HARF: So – dissonance. How I would answer that question is clearly, we have huge concerns with their nuclear program or else we wouldn't be so heavily engaged in this negotiation. So I think I'll probably leave it at that. As we go forward drafting – which, as we've said, we will start at the next round of political director talks – obviously, the political directors will be involved in it, but we're going to need a lot of expert opinion or fact. And how we move forward from here will absolutely be involved in the details of drafting.

Much of this is very technical. How we ensure Iran cannot obtain a nuclear weapon, that their program is for purely peaceful purposes, that involves a lot of – a high degree of technicality that will have to be informed very specifically by the work of our experts, the EU experts, the P5+1, and of course, Iran.

QUESTION: And when Zarif says that you're at 50 to 60 percent agreement, would you say he's accurate there?

MS. HARF: Well, I think I'll say what other U.S. officials have said, that I'm not going to put a percentage on it. We haven't even started drafting yet. We have had meetings of great substance where we have made progress, but a few points I think I would make: First is it doesn't matter until we get to 100, because as we said in the JPOA, nothing is agreed until everything's agreed, so we could get to 95 percent and still not have an agreement. So really, what we're focused on is getting to 100 percent, and these next three months will be difficult at times. This is a very

tough negotiation with very complicated issues. And I don't want anyone to think a deal is imminent. We have made progress, but we have a lot more work to do.

QUESTION: Just last one on this --

MS. HARF: Uh-huh.

QUESTION: If you have -- you won't put a percentage on it, but just for --

MS. HARF: All I care about is 100.

QUESTION: Right. So let's say you are at this point or in late June at 90 percent. Do you draft 90 percent of said agreement and then save the hard parts for July or --

MS. HARF: I think they're all hard parts. There's not a lot of easy parts.

I think one way to think about it, and other folks have used this as well, is it's sort of like a Rubik's Cube, right? Like you -- if your ultimate goal is to get resolution of the issue, right, to make it look perfect, then all the different parts play into that. So how you ensure Iran can never get a nuclear weapon and they can only use their program for peaceful purposes, when you talk about each of the individual issues, they all play into eventually getting to that place. So what each of those pieces looks like could be a little different, right, and that's part of what the negotiation is about it: Well, does this -- what do centrifuges look like, what does this look like, what does enrichment look like. And there's not one answer; there's a couple, which actually is helpful, right? So that all plays into how we eventually get to this final process. So there's some give and take among the issues, but where there's absolutely no give and take is what our final goal is.

QUESTION: Right. But you definitely -- clearly, you feel comfortable enough to start drafting the deal.

MS. HARF: Absolutely. We've talked about all the issues in the first three rounds; we've seen where -- we can already see some areas of agreement or at least where there's a path forward and been very clear about where there will be tougher negotiations ahead. But we do feel like we can start drafting and do feel like we can get this done by July 20th. We don't know if we will, if we'll all be able to, but we think we can.

May 2, 2014

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

QUESTION: On Iran, Foreign Minister Zarif has an article in the recent issue of Foreign Affairs
--

MS. HARF: He does.

QUESTION: -- and I thought it was notable that he's expressed some -- a pretty high level of optimism about the negotiations, saying that, "the unexpectedly fast pace of progress...so far augurs well for a speedy resolution of this unnecessary crisis." And I was just wondering if you share that sense of optimism.

MS. HARF: Well, I think we share a sense of realism here, but what we've said -- and you heard me talk about it a few minutes ago -- we are all at the table, talking in good faith. We all are committed to getting this done. Does that mean we will? We have no idea. Will we be able to all make the tough decisions we have to make? I don't know. I don't think any of us can say for certain right now. But the fact that we are talking in a very business-like and substantive way about very detailed issues we've never talked at this level before -- this is the best chance we've ever had to get this done diplomatically. We're realistic about the chance that we will. You heard the President say 50/50. But we also go into this knowing fully well this is the best opportunity and most effective to prevent Iran from getting a nuclear weapon, and we're committed to seeing if we can get it done.

May 1, 2014

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

QUESTION: I see that Iran was not pleased about being kept on the list of State Sponsors of Terrorism. They reacted quite angrily this morning to it.

MS. HARF: Well, then they should stop supporting terrorism.

QUESTION: Why didn't North Korea get put in terrorist – terrorism list? Why North Korea --

MS. HARF: Well, they – as you know, they were taken off in 2008. And the Country Reports on Terrorism release is not a time where we re-evaluate people on the State Sponsor of Terrorism list. They're just included in the report. So nothing new for you on North Korea on that issue.

April 30, 2014

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

QUESTION: I have a question on Iran. You put the statement yesterday regarding the Chinese businessman.

MS. HARF: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: And last night the Chinese foreign ministry said they oppose the U.S. citing domestic law to unilaterally impose sanctions on Chinese company and individual. What's your response to that?

MS. HARF: Well, as we've said in a number of press releases from here, from the Treasury Department, the Commerce Department, and others, we enforce the laws on the books. We are very clear about the activities that this individual has undertaken and their threat to international stability and security. And that's why we were very clear from the State Department that we would offer a reward for information about his whereabouts that could bring him to justice and also that we would impose measures against people who are breaking, certainly, our laws and violating our sanctions we have in place.

QUESTION: But if he's in China, what's the need to put this --

MS. HARF: Well, he's -- as the release said, he's a fugitive right now, so I'm not going to speculate on where he might be.

QUESTION: But do you share the same concern that the Chinese said this -- says this may jeopardize the bilateral cooperation on counter-proliferation?

MS. HARF: Not at all. Not at all. We believe it's important to cooperate with the Chinese on counter-proliferation issues, whether it's North Korea where we work very closely together in terms of denuclearizing the peninsula, whether it's on the P5+1 talks with Iran where we sit at the table with China on the same page working to see if we can get a resolution to that issue. So clearly, we're working together on counter-proliferation very, very closely.

QUESTION: But they said already that this will harm the cooperation on this issue.

MS. HARF: Well, again, we haven't seen evidence of that. We hope that it won't.

April 22, 2014

Jen Psaki, Spokesperson
Daily Press Briefing, selections on Iran
Washington, DC

QUESTION: Last week you were asked about that Bank of Utah, that Utah bank plane that was – ended up in – flew into Tehran.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: And you referred the question to Treasury. But apparently, the bank says that it's talking to you guys about the whole situation. I'm just wondering if that's correct and what it is – what the State Department's involvement is in this.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Are you a liaison with Treasury, or what's the --

MS. PSAKI: Let me – I don't have anything new on this today. I'm happy to take the question and see where we are with this. I know it's been a couple of days since we spoke about this.

April 18, 2014

Jen Psaki, Spokesperson
Daily Press Briefing, selections on Iran
Washington, DC

QUESTION: Do you have anything on this mystery U.S. plane that seems to have landed in Iran? Is this – are you knowledgeable about this? What’s going on?

MS. HARF: Well, we’ve seen those reports, as obviously you have as well. Let me just see what the latest information I have on this is. We don’t have any further information. Obviously, Treasury would make any determination if there was any violation of sanctions here. I’m not predicting there was. But certainly we look into any instance.

QUESTION: Well, what would violate sanctions in terms of if a U.S. plane lands in Iran without a license? Is that a violation?

MS. HARF: Well, the Iranian transactions and sanctions regulations prohibit the exportation of goods, services, or technology directly or indirectly from the United States or by a U.S. person to Iran, and would generally prohibit U.S. registered aircraft from flying to Iran. So we will – Treasury will, of course, have the lead on it.

QUESTION: So just a U.S. plane flying into Iran would violate sanctions?

MS. HARF: Well, would generally prohibit it. But again, Treasury has the lead. They’ll take a look at the circumstances here and see if there are concerns about --

QUESTION: But like for instance if a trade delegation or – I’m not saying that they’re trading right now, but like in anticipation of the lifting of eventual sanctions if there’s more – I mean, it’s not illegal for U.S. people to travel to Iran.

MS. HARF: No. No. That’s why there’s a lot of nuance and a lot of different questions here, and all of your questions are good questions. It’s just that we look at every circumstance differently. The Department of Treasury will look at this and see if there’s any concern here.

QUESTION: When you generally prohibited from flying to Iran, does that mean – that means that they’re – if one wanted to fly a U.S. registered plane to Iran, one could apply or one could ask for permission to do so and it might be granted, correct?

MS. HARF: Well, there may be a process in place. I’m not familiar with those details. But --

QUESTION: And does that apply to overflying Iranian airspace as well, or just landed in Iranian territory?

MS. HARF: I don’t have that level of detail, Matt.

QUESTION: Okay.

...

QUESTION: Just following on with Matt's question --

MS. HARF: Uh-huh.

QUESTION: -- on proxy wars, how can the United States negotiate with Iran in good faith about its nuclear weapons when it is fighting a proxy war against Iran in Syria?

MS. HARF: Well, because – well, for a few reasons. We've always said that the nuclear issue is of enough importance that we need to sit down and talk to the Iranians about it because we have to get this resolved. That doesn't take away from how concerned we are about their activities in Syria – which we are very clear about, we sanction them over; we will continue to raise our concerns with them over that – or their human rights record, or their support for terrorism, or the fact that three Americans are still missing and not home with their families.

QUESTION: Will the State Department or the Treasury Department be able to track this 450 million in frozen assets to Iran and be able to see where it goes?

MS. HARF: Well, again, we have provided the necessary mechanism for the funds to be released to Iran. I don't have more details for you on sort of what they can use it for – what they can use it for – what's still applicable under the limited sanctions relief we've given, and just don't have more details for you.

QUESTION: Theoretically, this money could be used to buy rockets to send to ---

MS. HARF: If we found out that the Iranians were using any money of theirs for sanctionable activities, it would be a huge problem. I can guarantee that.

Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: So does that mean the State Department support – would support new sanctions on Iran for its activities in Syria at this point even though there's negotiations going on?

MS. HARF: I think it would depend what the sanctions look like. I think there are pretty heavy sanctions in place already over Iran's support for Hezbollah, which obviously is the main driver of the instability in Syria from the Iranian perspective, or who the Iranians are supporting. I'm not sure there's much left to sanction there, quite frankly.

QUESTION: But there's – there is talk of a new round of sanctions coming up in the House.

MS. HARF: I've seen that, and I haven't seen exact language. I don't even know if there's been a bill introduced yet. But again, I'm not sure there is anything left to sanction over Iran's support for Hezbollah, but if there's some sort of legislation proposed at some point, I'm sure we'll take

a look at it, because we have been clear we will continue to hold Iran accountable for its support for Hezbollah, for terrorism, and destabilizing activities in Syria.

April 16, 2014

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

QUESTION: What is – if it hasn't happened already, can you outline what it is that you expect to come out of this meeting? I mean, this committee appears to be one of the – and this is saying a lot for the UN – one of the more useless committees at the UN. It appears to have produced its last report about five years ago and nothing since then. And it seems to be mainly preoccupied with listening to the complaints of foreign missions about parking tickets that they have accrued over the years on the streets of New York. Can you tell us what you – what the U.S. expects to come out of this meeting?

MS. HARF: I don't have any predictions to make about what might come out of the meeting.

QUESTION: Well, no --

MS. HARF: They can speak about their process and how it will move forward. As I said, we take – as Jen has said, as I've said as well, we take our host country obligations very seriously. That's why cases like this are so rare. We're happy to have a conversation about why we won't be granting this visa with the UN, as we have already. We've also had them with the Iranians. And I don't want to speak for their process.

QUESTION: No, no, I understand that, but I mean, when – this meeting is going to happen, and you're a member of this committee --

MS. HARF: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- and presumably you're going to go in, and I just want to know if you're going to say anything to this committee that is different than what you have said publicly about this situation.

MS. HARF: I don't have any more details on what we'll say. I assume, as we've said publicly, that we will make the case for why we won't be granting this visa. As Jen said yesterday, it's not appropriate for Iran to nominate someone to be their permanent representative, to live in the United States, who was involved with such searing events in U.S. history.

QUESTION: Syrian events?

MS. HARF: Searing.

QUESTION: Oh, searing.

MS. HARF: Searing.

QUESTION: Well, is it not appropriate for them to nominate him, or is it not appropriate for him to serve in the United States?

MS. HARF: It's not appropriate for us to grant him a visa, so we won't be granting a visa.

QUESTION: But do you think that – do you have any reason to believe that they did this as a provocative gesture, or you thought that they thought enough time had passed? I mean --

MS. HARF: I don't – I honestly don't know what their motivations were, and I don't want to guess at them. What we've said is we want to move past it.

QUESTION: Can I --

MS. HARF: And we've made our position clear, and we won't be granting the visa, and hope that the Iranians can move past it as well.

QUESTION: Can you outline for – why is it that you are able to speak about not granting this visa if all visa records are confidential? Is it because the application – an application was never received? I don't think that's the case. What's the legal --

MS. HARF: Well, I'm not – I can't speak about our – I'm not speaking actually about our legal underpinnings for why we're not doing that. There are some things we can't talk about because of visa confidentiality.

QUESTION: But you can – well, you're saying you're not going to grant a visa, which means that --

MS. HARF: Right.

QUESTION: So how is that permissible under the --

QUESTION: They've talked about not granting --

MS. HARF: There are different circumstances under which we can talk about whether or not we will grant a visa.

QUESTION: Okay. And the reason that you're able to do it in this case is?

MS. HARF: Because we've made a decision that it's important. He has made his application public, so once people talk publicly about their own applications, we can then talk about them as well.

QUESTION: Okay.

QUESTION: All the time?

QUESTION: Thank you for putting that on the record --

QUESTION: Yes, thank you.

QUESTION: -- because the next time it comes up, you're going to -- it's going to be interesting --

MS. HARF: Well, hopefully, I won't be here, and someone else can deal with the precedent I just set. (Laughter.) No, but in general, there are few exceptions to when we can, the biggest of which is when somebody has already made a visa -- when they've already publicly talked about their case or their application. Obviously, we think confidentiality is important.

QUESTION: Thank you.

QUESTION: Thank you, yes.

MS. HARF: Wait. I think there are a few more.

QUESTION: Yeah, me. This committee --

MS. HARF: Uh-huh.

QUESTION: -- when it is formed, I mean, the main purpose it seems that to, beside discussing, is challenging this, your decision, right? Or you don't know what they are meet --

MS. HARF: I'll let them speak about their purview and what they are going to discuss.

April 15, 2014

Jen Psaki, Spokesperson
Daily Press Briefing, selections on Iran
Washington, DC

QUESTION: Can we talk about Iran and the – Iran has --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

QUESTION: -- sent a letter to the UN asking the UN Secretary General to get involved over the row, as they say, over your refusal to provide a visa to Mr. Aboutalebi.

MS. PSAKI: Well, Elise, obviously, as we stated yesterday, there are steps that can be taken, and the Iranians have indicated they did take in terms of filing with the Host Country Committee. I know somebody asked yesterday if the United States is a member of the Host Country Committee. We are a member.

But what we have told the United Nations and the Iranian Government is that we will not grant this visa. That has not changed. We've been clear both publicly and privately that this nomination is unacceptable. And while we're not going to get into any specifics of what we do or don't think he was involved in during the hostage crisis, he himself has said he was involved. And given his role in the events of 1979, which clearly matter profoundly to the American people, it would be unacceptable for the United States to grant this visa. And that is the message that we have conveyed very clearly to the UN as well as to the Iranian Government.

QUESTION: One – just one detailed thing here. He said, I believe, or he has been quoted as saying that he was not in Tehran when the hostages were initially taken. As you know, the hostage taking began in '79 but then ran through '80 and into early '81. Do you – when you said the events of 1979, did you mean that he was involved in 1979 itself, or did you mean that he was involved at some point between – when the hostages were taken in '79 and when they were released in early '81?

MS. PSAKI: Well, often, Arshad, as you know, people refer to the overall event as “the events of 1979,” so I was referring to the overall hostage crisis over 444 days.

QUESTION: So the broader period?

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

QUESTION: Right, okay. Great.

QUESTION: But (inaudible) --

QUESTION: Jen, this is the first time that you, from the podium, that you've linked the nominee to the crisis in – to the hostage crisis.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: So you're now saying this is the reason why you believe that that visa will not be granted or should not go ahead?

MS. PSAKI: Yes. And that is the message we've conveyed to the Iranians and conveyed to the UN.

QUESTION: Have you yet outright denied the visa?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any update on that, and I'm not going to outline that further. But it's -- we've been very clear that we will not grant --

QUESTION: You said you don't want --

QUESTION: Has it -- sorry. Has anything changed since Friday?

MS. PSAKI: Nothing has changed.

QUESTION: Okay, thank you.

QUESTION: You said you don't want to get into exactly what he did, but can you say whether or not you believe that he had a significant role as one of the Iranians involved?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to go into it further. He himself has said he was involved.

QUESTION: Well, he played down his involvement, frankly, saying that he was a translator, a negotiator, and he tried to do it in a humanitarian spirit.

MS. PSAKI: Well, Elise, I'm not going to get into from here what we do or don't think he was involved in during the hostage crisis. Regardless of that, as we all know, this was a searing experience for 52 American citizens who were held hostage, and for that reason this is a visa we cannot grant.

QUESTION: But have you been able to establish from, let's say, the former hostages, that he, in fact, that's what he did?

MS. PSAKI: I'm just not going to go into any more details on what we do or don't know, Said.

QUESTION: Also, do you maintain a list of the number of people that you've denied visas to, diplomatic, similar situation? Do you have a list of that?

MS. PSAKI: Do we maintain a list of --

QUESTION: Yeah. Do you have --

MS. PSAKI: -- individuals we've denied visas to?

QUESTION: I mean, yeah, I mean, have you -- do you have a list of, let's say, a number? Do you have a figure on how many people -- I know Yasser Arafat was denied --

MS. PSAKI: I'm sure there are records, but I'm not going to go into those from the podium.

QUESTION: Okay.

April 14, 2014

Jen Psaki, Spokesperson
Daily Press Briefing, selections on Iran
Washington, DC

QUESTION: Yeah. Are you aware if the Iranian – or have you been made aware through the Swiss or through anyone, through the UN, if the Iranians intend to somehow contest your decision or non-decision on granting a – or deciding not to decide on granting a visa to the --

MS. PSAKI: We are aware of reports that the Iranians have filed a complaint with the host country committee. I'm not sure if that's what you're referring to. I would refer you, of course, to the UN or the chair of the host country committee, which is Cyprus, for additional details on that.

QUESTION: Cyprus?

MS. PSAKI: They are. I thought that was interesting as well.

QUESTION: The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus or the regular part of Cyprus?

MS. PSAKI: Cyprus is the chair.

QUESTION: Has anything changed since your announcement that the Administration has decided not to grant Mr. Aboutalebi a visa. Have you, for example, actually denied the visa, stamped "no"?

MS. PSAKI: Nothing has changed, Arshad. I don't have any update for all of you.

QUESTION: Are you – sorry, on this committee, and I'll check with our UN people --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

QUESTION: -- but is the U.S. a member of this committee?

MS. PSAKI: That is a good question. I'm not sure we are. Let me check back with our UN – our USUN counterparts.

QUESTION: My understanding is --

QUESTION: Do you know if it has any – what it's --

QUESTION: As I understand it, but you should – it'd be good to put this out as a TQ, but I think this committee simply has the right to consider stuff and then make recommendations to the General Assembly these decisions are not binding.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Right. I mean, that's just – so what kind of remedy is – could Iran be seeking, or what kind of remedy would the committee be able to offer it if it wasn't – if the complaint was accepted or --

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Well, that, I'd point you to them, but I would certainly find – take your question on whether the U.S. is a member --

QUESTION: All right.

MS. PSAKI: -- and how the process works.

QUESTION: But in answer to Arshad, is it no, you're not changing your mind? What you said Friday is --

MS. PSAKI: Nothing has changed since Friday. No.

QUESTION: So you're – I'm trying to understand.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

QUESTION: Okay. Only on the premise or on the basis of this individual or any individual being a security threat to the United States of America, that you will not allow them or her or him entry into the United States. Isn't that the case?

MS. PSAKI: There are a range of reasons. I'm not going to outline them from here, Said. But what was announced on Friday was that we had made clear that we would not be granting him a visa.

QUESTION: Okay. But Hamid Aboutalebi acknowledged being at the embassy, but he said that he was a translator. So are you aware of that?

MS. PSAKI: I've seen a range of reports, Said. I don't think I have much more to add to all of you on this.

QUESTION: And finally, the Iranians said that they will not replace him, that he will be their ambassador to the United Nations whether he works in New York or elsewhere. You would not have any comment on that, would you?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any more.

QUESTION: Okay.

April 11, 2014

Jen Psaki, Spokesperson
Daily Press Briefing, selections on Iran
Washington, DC

QUESTION: [T]he White House has just changed my mind because they've just said that you're not going to give a visa to the Iranian ambassadorial nominee, and I'm wondering if you can expand on that at all.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I can also confirm, of course, that we have informed the United Nations and the Government of Iran that we will not issue a visa to Mr. Aboutalebi, and we – I don't believe I can expand that much more, but go ahead.

QUESTION: Well, when did you tell them?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to get into details of that. Obviously, these discussions have been ongoing.

QUESTION: How is that – yeah, I'm sorry, how is that – why is that some kind of sensitive bit of information?

MS. PSAKI: In terms of what? Why, when?

QUESTION: When? When did you tell them?

MS. PSAKI: Well, these discussions with the Iranians and with the UN have been ongoing. I'm just not going to detail the timeline.

QUESTION: Well, you didn't say that you wouldn't do this yesterday, so can – should we assume that it happened either yesterday afternoon after – sometime after your briefing or prior to the White House briefing just now?

MS. PSAKI: I wouldn't make assumptions about the timing. I'm confirming the facts here and that's where we stand.

QUESTION: All right. Did you give them a reason?

MS. PSAKI: We've been very clear that – with the Iranians that this nomination is not viable, so there's been no secret of that. But I think they understand what the reasons are.

QUESTION: Why?

QUESTION: Well, did you give them a reason why his nomination is not viable?

MS. PSAKI: Certainly we've had discussions with them about the reasons for why it's not a viable nomination.

QUESTION: What is the reason, for the record, now that you've denied him a visa? Or have you actually denied the visa or have you simply asserted to them that you would deny it or will deny it?

MS. PSAKI: We have made clear to them that we will not issue a visa.

QUESTION: So – but did you – this may sound like a distinction without a difference, but it's not. Yeah.

MS. PSAKI: No, I understand your question. I'm not going to detail it; I'm not going to outline it further.

QUESTION: So you won't say whether or not you actually denied it?

MS. PSAKI: I will not, no.

QUESTION: Why not?

MS. PSAKI: Because I'm not going to go.

QUESTION: And what – why – (laughter) – and, well --

QUESTION: Hey.

QUESTION: -- because – well, why – I know we've discussed this here a great deal --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- for the record, now that you have informed the Iranians that you will not issue a visa to Mr. Aboutalebi, why is his nomination unviable? What are the main issues that came up here?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to speak to that from the podium, Arshad. Obviously, we have confirmed what we've conveyed, which is that we will not issue a visa. It doesn't change the fact that details of visa cases, including the reasons, which gets to your past – your last question prior to this, are not issues that we can talk about publicly for legal reasons.

QUESTION: So here's a question, then.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: How can you announce that you won't give him a visa if visa applications are entirely confidential? Isn't it – to say, "We're not going to do this," doesn't that impinge on the confidentiality of the process?

MS. PSAKI: We've conveyed – I'm conveying what we have communicated to the Iranians, and that's what I'm communicating to all of you today.

QUESTION: So to capture it --

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

QUESTION: You said earlier this week, I believe, that there were a couple of categories where there was a limited exception to the general rule that, as a host nation, you should be granted visas. They were – they included security, terrorism-related matters, and foreign policy concerns.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Should we assume that this application fell within one of those three categories, at least?

MS. PSAKI: I – obviously, all of these issues are looked at by our legal teams, but I'm not going to give a specific reasoning.

QUESTION: All right. So understanding that you're not going to give a specific reasoning --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- you can say, though, that the Iranians have been told why you believe his nomination is not viable. Is that correct?

MS. PSAKI: Well, throughout --

QUESTION: They – this is not – it is not a secret to them why you're saying, "No, we're not going to issue a visa?"

MS. PSAKI: It should not be, no. But as a reminder, Matt --

QUESTION: Right.

MS. PSAKI: -- we've also communicated that it's not viable as well --

QUESTION: Gotcha. Well --

MS. PSAKI: -- prior to the news I'm confirming today.

QUESTION: Right, but they are aware of the – or they are aware of the reasons why you can – even if you're not going to tell us, they know why.

MS. PSAKI: I don't think there should be any mystery to them about that.

QUESTION: All right. And then you said the details of – did this actually rise to the level of a visa case?

MS. PSAKI: Can you just expand on that question?

QUESTION: Well, you said details of visa cases are confidential, but if this didn't actually rise to the level of there being an application that was actually considered, then how is it a visa case?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we've all seen the media reports, or many of us have seen the media reports, that the Government of Iran has stated that a visa application was submitted to the U.S. Government. As I've noted, U.S. law generally prohibits us from commenting on details of visa cases, but I would not dispute that statement.

QUESTION: Right, unless – okay, so they did submit the application --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- according to – and you said – and I guess the – I realize it's a detail and it's --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- but did you actually stamp "no" on the application or did you just say, "We're not going to take any action on this?"

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to get into any greater level of detail.

QUESTION: Is it also not the case that usually if a visa – someone who is denied a visa speaks out about the reasons publicly and speaks out about a denial, that you will discuss or you can discuss, you are no longer bound by the – is that correct?

MS. PSAKI: That has happened in the past.

QUESTION: So we should ask the failed nominee to speak about this and then get back to you – and then come back to you and you should be able to enlighten us all, right?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I'm happy to keep continuing the discussion. Go ahead.

QUESTION: Do you believe that your decision to tell the Iranians that you will not give him a visa to enter the United States will harm – has harmed or will harm the P5+1 negotiations with Iran about their nuclear program?

MS. PSAKI: No, we do not. And obviously, our team was on the ground this week, as you know, negotiating through the P5+1 process, and our team did not find that this ongoing discussion in the public impacted those negotiations.

QUESTION: And why do you think it won't harm them going forward? I mean, it's a rejection of their choice.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Presumably that will upset them to some degree. Why won't that – why do you think that won't have an effect going forward?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I can't analyze what will or won't impact their own views. But obviously, they're engaged in these negotiations because they – and they have their own reasons for that, including the impact of sanctions and their desire to deliver on President Rouhani's promise he ran on.

QUESTION: Jen --

QUESTION: I said, "has or will have," and you said, "No."

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Did you mean no, it has had no effect, and no, it will have no effect? Or did you mean no, it has had no effect?

MS. PSAKI: It has not, and we don't anticipate it.

QUESTION: Did you mean that you --

QUESTION: And can I ask – can I ask --

MS. PSAKI: Let's just do one at a time. Go ahead, Jo.

QUESTION: Sorry. Have you asked the Iranians to put forward another nomination? And presumably it's not your intention that Iran should operate without a representative at the United Nations.

MS. PSAKI: I didn't say that was our intention. I'm not aware of that level of detail on – but again, we've been pretty clear even before today that this nomination wasn't viable. And obviously, there could have been an alternative --

QUESTION: So you welcome – you would welcome an alternative name being put forward?

MS. PSAKI: Well, there have been, just historically, a range of individuals who have represented the Iranians in the UN. So I would point you to that.

QUESTION: And just as a matter of historical precedent, do you know if this is the first time that you've actually turned down a --

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to get into historical precedent from the podium.

QUESTION: You won't tell us from the podium?

MS. PSAKI: No, I'm not. Go ahead.

QUESTION: Did you mean that --

MS. PSAKI: Iran?

QUESTION: Yes. Did you mean that you conveyed the denial to the Iranians before the negotiations? That's why it didn't affect the negotiations from --

MS. PSAKI: I didn't -- no, I wasn't indicating that at all. We've over the last couple of days, as you know -- pardon me, sorry, microphone -- we have stated that we have conveyed it's not a viable nomination. Obviously that conversation has been happening publicly while the negotiations were happening. So our negotiators were clear on the ground, and I've spoken with them as well and they don't feel there was an impact.

Go ahead. Iran? Or --

QUESTION: Yeah, the ambassador.

MS. PSAKI: Iran, okay.

QUESTION: Did your -- or is -- your decision was related to the unanimous vote in the Congress in a way that, "Hey, we are obliged to, because we don't have another exit for it?" Was it connected to the vote in Congress to deny the visa for this ambassador?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the votes in Congress certainly underscore how troubling this potential nomination would be, and we share those concerns. But obviously there's an ongoing process internally in the federal government as well.

Go ahead.

QUESTION: Did Under Secretary Sherman raise this issue with the Iranians in Vienna?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to go into more detail about what channel it was raised through.

...

QUESTION: The International Energy Agency today released its report on Iranian crude oil exports for the month of February.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Those figures show that it exported on average 1.65 million barrels per day during the month of February. As you'll recall, the fact sheet that the White House put out said that your target was to keep Iran to 1 million barrels per day under the JPOA. How are you going to keep them under a million barrels per day if, in the first month after the JPOA took effect, right, on January 20th, they're already at 1.65?

MS. PSAKI: Well, as you know, Arshad, but just for everybody, the current average amounts of crude oil refers to the average volume over a six-month period. It's not referring to one specific month. So month-to-month variability is normal in oil markets, and we expect and we still expect and anticipate that the average over – that this will average out over a six-month period.

QUESTION: To 1 million?

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm, to meeting the bar that was set in the JPOA.

QUESTION: In the JPOA or in the White House fact sheet? I'm sorry to interrupt. The JPOA doesn't actually specify a number, but the White House fact sheet does, which is 1 million barrels per day. So that is what I think is the marker.

MS. PSAKI: Well, what is specified in the JPOA --

QUESTION: Yeah.

MS. PSAKI: -- is that the United States will pause efforts to further reduce Iran's crude oil sales, which allows current customers to purchase their current average amounts of crude oil. And those averages are looked at over a six-month period. Nothing – I don't – we have nothing to dispute what was either in the White House fact sheet or the JPOA. We are still anticipating on meeting everything that was laid out specifically.

QUESTION: So in – and just so I'm clear, so your target – since it came from the White House, it's clearly Administration policy.

MS. PSAKI: Correct. Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: So your target is that over the six-month period beginning when? Beginning November 24th, or beginning --

MS. PSAKI: Beginning January 20th, mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- that Iran's oil exports must be held to an average over that 180-some-day period of one million per day.

MS. PSAKI: Correct. What was in the White House fact sheet still stands, yes. Let me just outline for you a couple of reasons why these monthly numbers have recently looked high. Iran's contributions to Syria are part of what drives up numbers cited on exports. What's important to

keep in mind here is that Iran does not get revenue from this oil. So oftentimes, you see those numbers, but that's not reflected in the revenue Iran is receiving. And that's part of the numbers as well. Also, there are variations in month-to-month numbers because of seasonality, and of course, the numbers you're referring to are February numbers. Winter is traditionally a peak period, so that is often reflected in how high the oil numbers are.

And finally, and this is more of a technical piece but still relevant for those close followers of these issues, export figures often mix condensates and crude oil, which often creates inconsistencies in the way numbers are reported. And what matters as it relates to implementation of the JPOA and the accompanying fact sheet is the crude oil numbers. So we look at all of these factors, as we look at what the average are over the six-month period.

QUESTION: How do you know that they don't get any money for the stuff that they send to Syria?

MS. PSAKI: How do we know?

QUESTION: Yeah.

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to go into greater detail.

QUESTION: Do – are – I mean, are you 100 percent confident that they're not getting anything either in – revenue in cash or in kind?

MS. PSAKI: I wouldn't be saying it if we weren't confident, but --

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. PSAKI: -- I'm not going to put a percentage.

QUESTION: All right.

MS. PSAKI: Do we have any more on Iran?

QUESTION: Just one more on this.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

QUESTION: The OFAC guidance on the JPOA implementation makes very clear that – it's in the sort of frequently asked questions – that any transactions that are now permitted that were not previously permitted must be initiated and completed within the six-month period.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: In other words, you can't agree to sell them something on July 13th and close the deal on July 21st.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Is there, therefore, a propensity for oil buyers to try to make their purchases and pay for them earlier in the cycle rather than later? In other words, is there any possibility that India, China --

MS. PSAKI: That individuals would be buying a lot in February --

QUESTION: Right, that they're front --

MS. PSAKI: -- in anticipation of later months?

QUESTION: That they're frontloading it, exactly. Do you think that's a reason for this?

MS. PSAKI: That's not one that I understand from our team. I will ask them if that's something that we're watching closely.

QUESTION: Okay. Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

...

QUESTION: Sorry, I should have mentioned this back --

MS. PSAKI: No, no problem.

QUESTION: -- back when we were talking about Iran. But there was something that was said in Vienna -- and I just wondered if this was your understanding of it -- by Foreign Minister Zarif that he believes that the next talks to be held in May, mid-May, will get down to the drafting part of the actual agreement. And I wondered if that was your understanding as well on the U.S. side.

MS. PSAKI: That is something that we have conveyed from our end as well. Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Okay. So then you're actually going to be putting things down on paper with the idea of working towards an agreement by July still?

MS. PSAKI: Well, yes, that remains the goal. Again, this doesn't change the difficulty of the issues, the challenge of the issues. But yes, it has been confirmed from our side as well that that is the timeline.

QUESTION: So from mid-May?

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: In order – I mean, are your experts already working on it to present something in mid-May, or are you going to start from mid-May doing the actual writing down --

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think the way that it's been communicated is that the drafting will begin in May.

QUESTION: I've got two very brief ones.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: One, I believe that yesterday was the third round of talks between you and the French on the SNCF compensation for Holocaust deportations.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm. Yep.

QUESTION: How's that going? Is there any progress?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not aware of any specific progress to report. I know we put out a statement the other evening about this. This is a process that we feel is the most effective way to address. There have been some legislation in a couple of states attempting to address, so we are recommending to everyone to --

QUESTION: But the meeting did happen as planned yesterday?

MS. PSAKI: Yes, that's my understanding.

QUESTION: Do you know where that was? Was it here or in France or --

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any details of that. I can check and see if there's more to report.

April 10, 2014

Jen Psaki, Spokesperson
Daily Press Briefing, selections on Iran
Washington, DC

QUESTION: Just to return to the issue of the Iranian nomination for representative at the UN, reports today, there are court papers that allege that he was implicated in the assassination of a dissident, an Iranian dissident in Italy in the 1990s. First of all, is the Administration aware of this?

MS. PSAKI: I've seen the reports. We've obviously expressed our concerns publicly to the Iranians and to the UN about the fact that this nomination is not viable, but I'm not going to detail the specifics of those concerns more.

QUESTION: But this new information, or at least new to us, does that factor into the discussion about whether or not to ban the visa at all?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to detail that further.

QUESTION: But you haven't made a decision yet?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything new to update you all on on this specific issue.

QUESTION: I just want to know if you have any reaction to the passage in the House of the bill.

MS. PSAKI: Well, we certainly share the concerns expressed by members of Congress and we have expressed those to the Iranians, but I don't have anything particular on the congressional vote.

QUESTION: Okay. And then just – I just wonder if you can say – is it the case that by saying that his nomination is not viable and saying that publicly – not just you, but the White House and others as well – is that what you would like to do, what you would like to see, is for the Iranians to withdraw his nomination. Is that a fair assessment of the position that --

MS. PSAKI: Well, that would certainly be one option, but I'm not going to detail any further.

QUESTION: But is that not the preferred option for – would that not be a preferable option than to go – than having to deny a visa or having to approve the visa? Wouldn't be easier if it just went away, if they just withdrew the nomination?

MS. PSAKI: Well, our preference certainly would have been that he wouldn't have been nominated to begin with.

QUESTION: In the first place, right.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

QUESTION: But now that he has been, it's fair to say that the Administration would like to see – that the easiest and quickest resolution to this problem is for his nomination to be withdrawn, correct?

MS. PSAKI: Well, obviously, as I've noted a few times, we've made our concerns clear and they're going to make whatever choice they'll make.

QUESTION: Jen.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: I asked if you could take the questions of whether there had been precedents for this. Are you able to – whether there are – not precedents to this – whether there are past instances of U.S. visa denials for foreign representatives to the United Nations, whether permrep or lower level. Can you address that?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to get into historical precedents from the podium. Certainly, I know everybody has lots of access to information out there, but I don't have anything I can detail for you from there.

QUESTION: And is there a legal reason for that, or is it a policy decision?

MS. PSAKI: I'm just not going to detail it further.

...

QUESTION: Yesterday the American team in Vienna issued a statement that the Under Secretary Sherman had an hour and a half meeting, bilateral with the Iranians.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: And she raised the issue of the Americans detained and disappeared in Iran, which means they are talking more than the nuclear issue. Do you know if they discussed any regional issues beside this?

MS. PSAKI: My understanding from talking to our team, Samir, is that, yes, they did meet for an hour and a half. They talked about two things during that bilateral meeting. That is, of course, the nuclear negotiation as one of them. The other is the issue of American citizens and our concern about Mr. Hekmati, Pastor Abedini, and Robert Levinson, all of whom deserve to be home with their families. So those were the two topics of discussion.

QUESTION: No other regional issues?

MS. PSAKI: Those were the two topics.

QUESTION: (Inaudible) Iran?

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: I think under the schedule that has been outlined for the payments under the JPOA to Iran, the fourth payment, which is for a total of \$550 million, is supposed to happen today.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Has that happened?

MS. PSAKI: So as you noted, we – at the beginning of this process, we made a schedule of installments public. This one was worth the equivalent of 550 million, as you noted. This is actually – the process and the step that happens here is that OFAC would of course notify banks of this step each time it comes due. I would point you to them to confirm whether that's happened or not.

QUESTION: So you can't, but OFAC can let us know what --

MS. PSAKI: Sure. OFAC would be --

QUESTION: -- that the payment has gone through or that --

MS. PSAKI: OFAC – they would let you know if the banks have been notified. I don't think they can confirm whether a payment has gone through, but they can let you know if a bank – if the banks have been notified, which would be the step they take.

QUESTION: That they could make such a payment?

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: I thought Marie had confirmed from the podium in the – or I thought either you or Marie had confirmed from the podium that such payments have gone through.

MS. PSAKI: I can look back. Obviously, if it's happened in the past, maybe that's a different circumstance. Obviously, since this is a due date today I would point you to OFAC and they can let you know if the step on our end has been taken.

QUESTION: Okay. Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

...

QUESTION: I referred to Foreign Minister Zarif yesterday – 50 to 60 percent already been agreed upon with respect to the agreement. But on – yesterday on the background, the senior officer said nothing is agreed until everything is agreed. So it looks like – it is clear there is a disagreement on many thing. What are the major point that there is no full agreement with the Iranian about, or the remaining point to agree upon?

MS. PSAKI: Well, let me walk you through a little bit about where we are. As you know, the last round of talks was completed yesterday. Our team continued our substantive discussions about all of the issues that will be – have to be part of a comprehensive agreement. These sessions have been in-depth and the conversations have given us important additional insights into the biggest and most challenging gaps that we'll be required to address, we'll all be required to address as we move forward.

At this point, as you know, we don't know if we'll be successful in bridging these gaps. And I think that was the point that was being made. We are certainly committed, as are all the parties, to doing so. And certainly from the beginning, Under Secretary Sherman and others who have been leading these negotiations have made clear that there are two principles that are important. One is that nothing is agreed until everything is agreed, and the other is that nothing is agreed until everyone agrees to it, because the unity between the P5+1 on these issues is hugely important.

The next step in this process is to begin actually drafting text, which we have said would happen after this next round. I would caution anyone from thinking that a final agreement is imminent or that it will be easy. That's just the next step in this. And the P5+1 will meet back in Vienna at the political director level again on May 13th. As has been the case consistently throughout, our experts will also be working in the interim together to address some of the technical issues.

QUESTION: But isn't that the same thing? Nothing is agreed until everything is agreed, and nothing is agreed until everyone agrees to it?

MS. PSAKI: Well, not to --

QUESTION: Or is it – or is there a distinction?

MS. PSAKI: I actually – how I view that, Matt, is that nothing is agreed until everything is agreed refers to the content; nothing is agreed till everyone agrees to it means the partners. So that's, I think, what is the meaning – not to put too fine of a point on it – of the saying.

QUESTION: Okay.

QUESTION: May 13th, that's with the Iranians, correct?

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm. It's the next round of negotiations.

QUESTION: Yeah, right, right. Right, right, right. Good.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah, yeah. Mm-hmm.

...

QUESTION: Yeah, I wanted to return to the question of the immunity granted by the State Department to Blackwater employees in Iraq in 2007. Were you able to establish, one, whether you felt that the Department had the right to grant immunity at that time absent the authorization of the Justice Department or the concurrence of the Justice Department?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I'm not going to comment on what people in 2007 thought about a right to grant immunity in Iraq. I will say to kind of expand a little bit on one of your questions yesterday about what we specifically did to address, we have worked to address immunity concerns that arose soon after Nisour Square, including by creating in conjunction with DOJ new warning forms for voluntary interviews and compelled interviews, and emphasizing procedures to follow when using the forms through improved training and notices to overseas posts. So certainly that was part of, among other, issues that we work to address in conjunction with the Department of Justice.

QUESTION: What does that mean? Does that mean – what do the forms actually do? Do they warn people that anything they say can and will be used against them? Do the forms say to the DS or other investigators you have no authority to grant immunity without checking with the Justice Department? I mean, I – it still doesn't to me address --

MS. PSAKI: Sure. I'm not sure if these forms are publicly available forms. If they are, I will talk to our team and see if we can make one available, and perhaps we can get you a briefing with them on the specifics.

QUESTION: And why are you not able to address that question of --

MS. PSAKI: About 2007?

QUESTION: Yeah. I mean, it's not like you haven't had enough time to think about it or figure out what happened. So why not address – get somebody who worked on this to address that?

MS. PSAKI: Well, thank you for your advice, Arshad, but I'm not going to speak to what happened seven years ago in a different administration, and clearly we've taken steps to address this since then, and I think that's the important point we should all focus on.

April 9, 2014

Jen Psaki, Spokesperson
Daily Press Briefing, selections on Iran
Washington, DC

QUESTION: This has to do with Iran, but I – and it has to do with their nominee or their proposed ambassador to the UN.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm, yes.

QUESTION: And I recognize that you can't talk about individual visa cases, so I don't want to – but – I don't want to ask specifically about this gentleman, but I do want to ask in general, in terms of the host country agreement --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- is it the Administration's position that a person who – is it the Administration's position that a person who you – who was once perhaps a threat to U.S. national security but is no more can be denied a visa under the host country agreement?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I'm not going to get into that level of specificity, but I will tell you what our position is in terms of our host country obligations.

QUESTION: Well, let me refine my question.

MS. PSAKI: Okay. Go ahead.

QUESTION: Does a person have to be a current threat to the United States to be denied a visa under the national security exemptions that are in the host country?

MS. PSAKI: Well, there are a range of exemptions, so let me just outline those a little more broadly. As you know – but worth repeating – as the host nation of the United Nations, except for limited exceptions, the United States is generally obligated under Section 11 of the United Nations Headquarters Agreement not to impede the transit to and from the UN Headquarters. And that, of course, means admitting the chosen representatives of member-states into the United Nations – into the United States, excuse me – for the purposes of representing their country at the UN.

As you also know, all visas are of course evaluated in accordance with all applicable U.S. law and procedure. But broadly speaking, among other grounds, there are – they are not exempt from inadmissibility provisions in the Immigration and Nationality Act, Sections – to be specific – 212(a)(3)(A), (B), and (C) for security and related grounds. And that includes security, terrorism, and foreign policy concerns. So there are a broad range of, broadly speaking, reasons that a visa could be deemed ineligible.

QUESTION: Foreign policy concerns?

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: What, so if they disagreed with you on something, you could deny them a visa?

MS. PSAKI: I am not – it is not --

QUESTION: On that basis, former UN Ambassador Lavrov might not have been granted a visa to come to the United States.

MS. PSAKI: Matt, I know you know that's not the case.

QUESTION: Well, I'm just --

MS. PSAKI: I'm just outlining for you, broadly speaking, what the exemptions are.

QUESTION: I understand, but – and – but do they get more specific? I'm just back, so I haven't looked at the law. Do they get more – the foreign policy --

MS. PSAKI: I would encourage you to look up those specific sections. I don't have any other details to outline.

QUESTION: Okay. But does the person have to currently be a threat or be considered a national security concern or a foreign policy concern for them to be denied a visa? Or do past actions come into play?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to get into any greater level of specificity on it.

QUESTION: All right. Just one more on this?

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

QUESTION: I'm sorry, Lucas – one, has the U.S. Government ever denied a visa for a country's proposed ambassador to the United Nations?

MS. PSAKI: It's a good question, Arshad. I know we were looking into it, and I believe we have an answer, so let me get back to you as soon as the briefing ends on this.

QUESTION: Okay. That would be great.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Second, is there an actual visa application that has been submitted by Mr. Aboutalebi?

MS. PSAKI: As in any case with visas, I'm not going to get into that level of specificity.

QUESTION: Okay. If it were to be – if such an application were to be turned down – in other words, the process would subsequently then be completed – would you be able to disclose the outcome of the process, or do you believe that the confidentiality of visa records prevents you from doing so?

MS. PSAKI: I believe it's the latter, but let me check with our team and get a more concrete answer on that question.

QUESTION: And while you're looking at the question of whether the U.S. Government has ever refused a visa, or simply not acted on a visa request by a proposed UN ambassador – by a proposed foreign government's UN ambassador – can you also check whether the U.S. Government has ever refused a visa for a foreign head of state? I'm aware of the – I think it was in 1988 that then-PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat was denied a visa, but he was not a head of state or not treated as a head of state at the time. So I'm interested in knowing whether you've ever actually refused to issue such a visa for a head of state.

MS. PSAKI: Sure. We will check on the available historical information on that front.

...

QUESTION: All right. The Secretary, in his testimony yesterday, was talking about – or was asked about and was talking about, the P5+1 talks in Vienna. And he talked about, at one point, Iran's breakout capability. And this has raised some concerns among people because – the concerns are – is not the point, the whole point of the P5+1 process, to dismantle any part of Iran's nuclear program that could be used – that could have a military application?

MS. PSAKI: There's a range of purposes of the discussions, yes, Matt.

QUESTION: Is that – that is correct, right? I mean, what you're going for here is the dismantlement of anything that Iran can do and it --

MS. PSAKI: Steps that would prevent them from acquiring a nuclear weapon, yes.

QUESTION: Okay. That remains the goal?

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: It doesn't remain to keep them at some point where they're only six months away from having the ability to make a weapon?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I'm just not going to parse it further. Obviously, these negotiations are ongoing, but --

QUESTION: It's just – right. But I just want to make sure the goal is for them never to be able to have the capability to develop a nuclear weapon.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: The goal is not just to keep them six months away from developing that?

MS. PSAKI: I'm just – I don't have anything more for you on this particular question. I will check and see if there's more.

...

QUESTION: Will the State Department block his visa?

MS. PSAKI: I have nothing more to add for you, Lucas. We don't speak to individual visa cases as a matter of policy, and so I'm not going to speculate on that.

QUESTION: Understood. And yesterday, Jay Carney said that Ambassador Aboutalebi's nomination to be the new UN envoy is not viable. And I was wondering what exact method – if that was transmitted back to the Government of Iran.

MS. PSAKI: It certainly was. I'm not going to get into more specificity on how, though.

QUESTION: Is that just through the press?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to get into any greater specificity.

QUESTION: And one more?

MS. PSAKI: Oh, go ahead.

QUESTION: Your counterpart in the Iranian foreign ministry --

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

QUESTION: -- the spokeswoman, said that Ambassador Aboutalebi is highly qualified for this position. And I was wondering what about Ambassador Aboutalebi's past bothers you.

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to get into any other detail in a public forum. We've obviously conveyed pretty clearly that this wouldn't be a viable nomination, and I will leave it at that.

QUESTION: Would you like to see his nomination go forward?

MS. PSAKI: I think saying it's not viable makes clear our view on that.

Go ahead, Ali.

QUESTION: Also following up on the nonviable comment, can we – is it your understanding that that is a comment that is – should be taken completely separately from the issue of a visa application or the denial of a visa application?

MS. PSAKI: Completely separately in which capacity?

QUESTION: In the sense that the – saying he's not viable, should we take that to be an indication of what way the government would go, assuming he has submitted an application?

MS. PSAKI: I wouldn't take it as an indication. We obviously don't speak to the specifics of visa cases, applications, whether we will or won't, et cetera, but the point here is that we have sent the message very clearly that this is not a viable choice for this position.

QUESTION: And one more. Are there concrete manifestations of the belief that he's not viable that the United States could express to the Iranians short of anything to do with a visa? Are there any other --

MS. PSAKI: You mean are there other – I'm not sure I understand your question.

QUESTION: Are there other consequences? Are there any other – what else can you do to express that you believe that he is not viable?

MS. PSAKI: I think conveying it makes it pretty clear, and our view is they understand the message we're sending.

...

QUESTION: Can you explain under the treaty obligations that the U.S. has for admitting diplomats who work at the UN – what are those treaty obligations? Can you spell out what the requirements are for the U.S. as a signatory?

MS. PSAKI: I think I just did, but I can repeat it again if it's helpful.

QUESTION: Yeah. Do you mind?

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

QUESTION: Yeah.

MS. PSAKI: One moment. So as host nation of the United Nations, except for limited exceptions, the United Nations – the United States is generally obligated under Section 11 of the United Nations Headquarters Agreement not to impede the transit to and from the UN Headquarters District, the UN Headquarters among – and – sorry, this is written in a weird way – District of, among others, representatives of UN member states, meaning that we generally obligated to admit the chosen representatives of member states into the United States for the

purposes of representing their country at the UN. I mentioned some specific exemptions for that matter broadly speaking.

QUESTION: Now, obviously, this treaty was reached long before the creation of the Department of Homeland Security, the TSA, the background checks, the secret lists, no-fly lists, and that sort of thing.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Is there anything that precludes these U.S. agencies from putting someone on a no-fly list, a no-admit list, absent the fact that the U.S. may or may not have issued a visa to this person?

MS. PSAKI: Well, that would be under the purview of DHS. I would point you to them. I don't have any other further details on that.

QUESTION: Is that perhaps one way that the U.S. would be able to indicate its displeasure with having this gentleman to go there?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to speculate on that. I'm not going to speculate on that.

QUESTION: In addition to saying he's not viable, don't you have anything more from that podium to suggest why you don't want him to be the new envoy? What troubles you about his past?

MS. PSAKI: Again, I'm just – I'm not going to go into further details from here.

QUESTION: Has the U.S. ever objected before to any state's potential representative to the United Nations? And if so, when?

MS. PSAKI: Arshad asked the same question, and I will see what historical information we have available for all of you.

QUESTION: Do you think that this is an outlier?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to speculate on that. We'll see if there's specific information historically we can provide.

April 7, 2014

Jen Psaki, Spokesperson
Daily Press Briefing, selections on Iran
Washington, DC

QUESTION: Thank you. Licenses to Boeing and GE to sell engines and things to Iran – are those the types of deals that you envisioned when the agreement went into effect in January?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not sure what you're referring to.

QUESTION: The – on Friday, I guess, it was announced by Treasury that they had granted these licenses to GE and to Boeing. Is that the – are those the types of economic things that the State Department would consider a good thing? Boeing makes a sale; Iranian plane travelers are safer. Is that the type of thing that you envisioned?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any particular comment on this. Obviously, we work closely with the Treasury Department, but I would point you to them for any analysis.

QUESTION: It was specifically contemplated in the Joint Plan of Action --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- the sale of spare parts and other aircraft materials. So --

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

QUESTION: -- it was there from the beginning.

MS. PSAKI: So there you go.

QUESTION: Isn't it something that State should crow about, though? It's a deal for American companies. It's safer train – or plane travelers and --

MS. PSAKI: I'll see if there's anything else we'd like to provide.

QUESTION: Okay.

...

MS. PSAKI: Well, I know that an extensive background briefing was done in advance of the trip, so I would point you to that, which I believe we sent out. Broadly, let me just give you a few logistical updates.

There is an internal P5+1 meeting tonight. Foreign Minister Zarif and EU High Representative Ashton have their typical dinner that they do around every set of meetings. There will be plenary sessions tomorrow. As was stated in the briefing but let me reiterate, we are certainly clear-eyed

about the challenges ahead and determined to keep making progress on different issues. As you all know, the experts have been meeting over recent weeks in Vienna, and we know we're starting – we know where we can see points of agreement and we know where gaps have to be bridged. So our team will be on the ground for the next couple of days, and I expect they'll do another briefing as it concludes.

QUESTION: Are you satisfied so far?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think we've spoken to – and not just us but others have spoken to the fact that Iran has abided by the JPOA. Obviously, there's a lot of work that needs to be done. Our technical experts and our negotiating team are on the ground doing that.

April 4, 2014

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

QUESTION: And other one: Yesterday I had asked if you would tell us what are the limited exceptions --

MS. HARF: Yes.

QUESTION: -- under which -- yeah.

MS. HARF: Iran.

QUESTION: Yes. Under which you would --

MS. HARF: On -- well, on our --

QUESTION: Well, just generally under which you can deny visas to diplomats who countries wish to send to the United Nations in New York.

MS. HARF: Yep. So as a matter of U.S. immigration law, foreign government officials, including representatives of the member-states of the UN, are exempted from most visa ineligibilities; however, they are subject to ineligibilities under several INA sections. Those are related to security, terrorism, and foreign policy. Those are the three exceptions. Obviously, those can be interpreted more broadly, but those are the three exceptions.

QUESTION: When you say security, it means if they're deemed to be a security threat?

MS. HARF: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Terrorism if it means that they're deemed to be terrorists?

MS. HARF: Or -- I don't know if -- I don't know, but it could include if they financed -- I don't know how broad it is defined.

QUESTION: Okay. And foreign policy, do you know how that's defined because --

MS. HARF: I don't. But I think that's probably one that's fairly --

QUESTION: Elastic?

MS. HARF: -- fairly broadly defined. But I actually don't know what the code reads, so I'm happy to --

QUESTION: Right. That's okay.

MS. HARF: I've been doing a lot of reading of U.S. code lately. Yes.

QUESTION: In any – it's any of these three --

MS. HARF: Any of. It doesn't have to be all of – yeah.

QUESTION: All of them they have to --

MS. HARF: No. Any. Any. Any. Not all.

QUESTION: It's any of these --

MS. HARF: These are the three exceptions.

QUESTION: -- applied on this candidate, or not?

MS. HARF: Oh no, I'm not talking about this specific individual's case at all. We don't talk about cases while they're being adjudicated.

