



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

March 13, 2017

Case No. F-2016-11026

Segments: PA/EX-0002C1IC1, PA/EX-0002IC1, PA/EX-0002IC3, PA/EX-0003, PA/EX-0001C1, PA/EX-0001IC1, PA-0001, L-0002, L-0003, L-0004, L-0005, L-0006, L-0007, NEA/AC-0001

Mr. William F. Marshall  
425 Third Street SW, Suite 800  
Washington, DC 20024

Dear Mr. Marshall:

I refer to our letter dated February 13, 2017, regarding the release of certain Department of State ("the Department") records under of the Freedom of Information Act ("FOIA"), 5 U.S.C. § 552. The Department has retrieved an additional 78 documents responsive to your request. After reviewing these documents, we have determined that 22 may be released in full, 35 may be released in part, and 21 must be withheld in full.

All non-exempt material that is reasonably segregable from the exempt material has been released. Where we have made excisions, the applicable FOIA exemptions are marked on the document. The documents withheld in their entireties were withheld under FOIA Exemption 5, 6, 5 U.S.C. § 552 (b)(5), (b)(6). An enclosure explains the FOIA exemptions and other grounds for withholding material. All released material is enclosed.

We will keep you informed as your case progresses. If you have any questions, your attorney may contact Trial Attorney Deepthy Kishore at (202)616-8470 or [deepthy.c.kishore@usdoj.gov](mailto:deepthy.c.kishore@usdoj.gov). Please refer to the case number, F-2016-11026, and the civil action number, 16-cv-02027, in all correspondence regarding this case.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric F. Stein".

Eric F. Stein, Director  
Office of Information Programs and Services

Enclosures: As stated

The Freedom of Information Act (5 USC 552)

FOIA Exemptions

- (b)(1) Information specifically authorized by an executive order to be kept secret in the interest of national defense or foreign policy. Executive Order 13526 includes the following classification categories:
- 1.4(a) Military plans, systems, or operations
  - 1.4(b) Foreign government information
  - 1.4(c) Intelligence activities, sources or methods, or cryptology
  - 1.4(d) Foreign relations or foreign activities of the US; including confidential sources
  - 1.4(e) Scientific, technological, or economic matters relating to national security, including defense against transnational terrorism
  - 1.4(f) U.S. Government programs for safeguarding nuclear materials or facilities
  - 1.4(g) Vulnerabilities or capabilities of systems, installations, infrastructures, projects, plans, or protection services relating to US national security, including defense against transnational terrorism
  - 1.4(h) Weapons of mass destruction
- (b)(2) Related solely to the internal personnel rules and practices of an agency
- (b)(3) Specifically exempted from disclosure by statute (other than 5 USC 552), for example:
- |                |   |
|----------------|---|
| ARMSEXP        | Arms Export Control Act, 50a USC 2411(c)                    |
| CIA PERS/ORG   | Central Intelligence Agency Act of 1949, 50 USC 403(g)      |
| EXPORT CONTROL | Export Administration Act of 1979, 50 USC App. Sec. 2411(c) |
| FS.ACT         | Foreign Service Act of 1980, 22 USC 4004                    |
| INA            | Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 USC 1202(f), Sec. 222(f) |
| IRAN           | Iran Claims Settlement Act, Public Law 99-99, Sec. 505      |
- (b)(4) Trade secrets and confidential commercial or financial information
- (b)(5) Interagency or intra-agency communications forming part of the deliberative process, attorney-client privilege, or attorney work product
- (b)(6) Personal privacy information
- (b)(7) Law enforcement information whose disclosure would:
- (A) interfere with enforcement proceedings
  - (B) deprive a person of a fair trial
  - (C) constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy
  - (D) disclose confidential sources
  - (E) disclose investigation techniques
  - (F) endanger life or physical safety of an individual
- (b)(8) Prepared by or for a government agency regulating or supervising financial institutions
- (b)(9) Geological and geophysical information and data, including maps, concerning wells

Other Grounds for Withholding

- NR Material not responsive to a FOIA request excised with the agreement of the requester

**Toufanian, Melissa Turley**

**From:** Psaki, Jennifer R. EOP/WHO [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 02, 2016 9:05 PM  
**To:** Kirby, John  
**Subject:** Re: To core bullpen

RELEASE IN PART B5, B6

B6

Sent from my iPhone

&gt; On Jun 2, 2016, at 9:02 PM, Kirby, John &lt;KirbyJ@state.gov&gt; wrote:

&gt;

&gt; Ok. Got it.

&gt;

&gt; Jen [REDACTED]

B5

&gt; Sent from my iPad

&gt;

&gt;&gt; On Jun 2, 2016, at 8:52 PM, Psaki, Jennifer R. EOP/WHO [REDACTED] wrote:

&gt;&gt;

B6

&gt;&gt;

&gt;&gt; Sent from my iPhone

&gt;&gt;

&gt;&gt;&gt; On Jun 2, 2016, at 8:44 PM, Kirby, John &lt;KirbyJ@state.gov&gt; wrote:

&gt;&gt;&gt;

B6

B5

&gt;&gt;&gt;

&gt;&gt;&gt; Sent from my iPad

&gt;&gt;&gt;

&gt;&gt;&gt; On Jun 2, 2016, at 8:34 PM, Psaki, Jennifer R. EOP/WHO

[REDACTED] wrote:

&gt;&gt;&gt;

B5

B6



**RELEASE IN FULL****Toufanian, Melissa Turley**

**From:** Toner, Mark C  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 02, 2016 8:12 PM  
**To:** Kirby, John  
**Cc:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K  
**Subject:** Re: Editing policy

OK - this is what we will send out to the small bullpen.

Elizabeth - can you send me the core small bullpen list?

Sent from my iPad

On Jun 2, 2016, at 7:45 PM, Kirby, John <[KirbyJ@state.gov](mailto:KirbyJ@state.gov)> wrote:

Colleagues,

As you know, we learned that on at least one occasion this bureau edited a portion of the video of a daily press briefing before posting it to our YouTube channel and the Department's website.

Upon learning of this, I immediately directed the video to be restored in its entirety with the full and complete copy that exists -- and had existed since the day of the briefing -- on the Defense Video and Imagery Distribution System website. I also verified that the full transcript of the briefing, which we also posted on the Department website, was intact and had been so since the date of the briefing.

To my surprise, PA did not have in place any rules governing this type of action. Now we do.

All video and transcripts from daily press briefings will be immediately and permanently uploaded in their entirety on publicly accessible platforms. In the unlikely event that narrow, compelling circumstances require edits to be made, such as the inadvertent release of privacy-protected or classified national security information, they will only be made with the express permission of the Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs and with an appropriate level of annotation and disclosure.

This new policy took effect yesterday. And I have tasked Susan Stevenson to lead an effort to create new language for the Foreign Affairs Manual to institutionalize this approach.

I know you share my commitment to transparency, disclosure and accountability. While the actions taken in relation to the editing of this video broke no protocol -- since none existed -- they clearly were not the appropriate steps to take.

I ask for your help going forward in ensuring that the content of any video or transcript from daily press briefings is not edited or altered in any way without my specific permission.

Thanks for all your hard work and dedication. We're a great team with a great mission.

K

Sent from my iPad

**Toufanian, Melissa Turley**

**From:** Kirby, John  
**Sent:** Wednesday, August 17, 2016 7:17 PM  
**To:** Psaki, Jennifer R. EOP/WHO  
**Subject:** Re: Update

RELEASE IN PART  
B5, B6

Thanks Jen. [REDACTED]

B5

Sent from my iPhone

> On Aug 17, 2016, at 18:53, Psaki, Jennifer R. EOP/WHO [REDACTED] wrote:

B6

>

> Hey there

> Thank you for the heads up. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

>

[REDACTED]

B5

>

> Jen

>

> Sent from my iPhone

>

>> On Aug 17, 2016, at 4:35 PM, Kirby, John <KirbyJ@state.gov> wrote:

>>

>> Jen -- wanted to make sure you knew that tomorrow we intend to give the Hill - and then the media - the results of L's review of the missing video inquiry.

>>

[REDACTED]

B5

>>

>> John

>>

[REDACTED]

B6

>>

>> Sent from my iPhone

>

**Starr, Katherine L**

---

**From:** Toner, Mark C  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 31, 2016 12:52 PM  
**To:** Starr, Katherine L  
**Cc:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K; Stevenson, Susan N  
**Subject:** RE: Public Affairs Manual

**RELEASE IN FULL**

Yep – not sure it would be mentioned in FAM either.

---

**From:** Starr, Katherine L  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 31, 2016 12:49 PM  
**To:** Toner, Mark C  
**Cc:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K; Stevenson, Susan N  
**Subject:** RE: Public Affairs Manual

That is true. These are really focused on PRS and our work with PAOs, video is outside our lane.

---

**From:** Toner, Mark C  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 31, 2016 12:47 PM  
**To:** Starr, Katherine L  
**Cc:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K; Stevenson, Susan N  
**Subject:** RE: Public Affairs Manual

Susan – don't see anything in either of these manuals re editing or not editing of video content.

---

**From:** Starr, Katherine L  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 31, 2016 11:17 AM  
**To:** Toner, Mark C  
**Cc:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K; Stevenson, Susan N  
**Subject:** RE: Public Affairs Manual

Yes, we have the **PAO Survival Guide** which we update in the fall and send to PAOs in the Dept (latest attached), and we also have a **PRS Operations Manual** for internal office use (also attached).

Thanks, Kate

---

**From:** Toner, Mark C  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 31, 2016 11:00 AM  
**To:** Starr, Katherine L  
**Cc:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K; Stevenson, Susan N  
**Subject:** Public Affairs Manual

Kate – what do we call the bible for the Press Office – it's the Public Affairs Manual, right? If so, do you have an electronic copy you can send me?

Thanks, Mark

**Starr, Katherine L**

**From:** Starr, Katherine L  
**Sent:** Friday, June 10, 2016 11:11 AM  
**To:** Dewey, James B  
**Subject:** FW: Meeting next week on updating the FAM

**RELEASE IN PART B5**

Here is the editing section from PRS Operations manual,

B5

FROM PRS OPS MANUAL, EDITING SECTION -

**STEP 3:**

Review and edit the transcript, by opening and listening to the audio while checking it against the written draft document. Make necessary corrections as you go.

*Things to look for when editing:*

- ❖ Compare, word-for-word, the dialogue with the transcript. Never change the verbatim transcripts - they reflect what was actually said, not what someone wishes they said (see Footnote option below).
- ❖ Check spelling and grammar - particularly of names and places, and names of reporters if a press availability (consult the Spelling and Style Guide as needed - found in PRS Shared drive/Transcripts folder). If needed, double check with regional bureau PAOs or embassy PAS if a trip transcript.
- ❖ Look for places where the transcribers have added an "\*\*." This means that they aren't sure what was being said, and they are asking you to listen and see if you can clarify.
- ❖ Also, look at the "(inaudibles)" and fill-in, if possible. If a transcript contains an especially high number of inaudible portions, consult with PRS leadership on how it should be handled. They may choose to hold on release of the transcript.
- ❖ Read for meaning and flow too. If there's unnecessary chatter at beginning or end, you might choose to cut that out of the official transcript.
- ❖ At times, the editor may need to FOOTNOTE information that was stated incorrectly or needs clarification. Often someone will flag misspeaks for you in advance. When you come across something, check with PRS leadership for advice on handling.

*(Note: transcript corrections should always be embedded and numerically annotated in the body of the transcript using the Insert Footnote function in Word. (See: How to footnote.)*

- ❖ If editing a Background Briefing, be sure ALL identifying information about the speaker is withheld. Names are replaced by the determined attributable title within brackets ([Senior State Department Official], [Senior Administration Official], etc.). Even pronouns (she, he, him, her, etc.) should be withheld and replaced by the bracketed title. If additional information about a speaker is discussed, such as position titles, previous positions, specific participation in events, etc., this can be redacted with "[identifying information withheld]."

---

**From:** Stevenson, Susan N  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 09, 2016 6:32 PM  
**To:** Whelan, Moira; Starr, Katherine L; Perry, Monica D; Jackson, Jeff; Brown, Cynthia A

**Cc:** Wang, Mimi; Dewey, James B; (U) Schaub, Daniel D; Trudeau, Elizabeth K; Kirby, John; Toner, Mark C  
**Subject:** Meeting next week on updating the FAM

Colleagues,

By now, you have received an invitation from Dan Schaub to a meeting next Wednesday, June 15<sup>th</sup>, at 11:00 AM, to discuss updates to the FAM regarding PA activities.

**BACKGROUND:**

As A/S Kirby outlined in his June 2 message to the Bureau (attached), we need to update the FAM to help institutionalize the policy that "video and transcripts from daily press briefings will be immediately and permanently uploaded in their entirety on publicly accessible platforms." We also need to ensure the FAM accurately reflects PA's structure, as we noticed the OVS and ODE reorganization and new PA Bureau org charts are not reflected.

**NEXT STEPS:**

I have asked James Dewey, Mimi Wang, and Dan Schaub to take the first crack at revising the relevant FAM sections. Prior to the meeting, they will send you a copy of proposed edits for your review and background.

Thanks in advance for your willingness to participate in this process.

Susan

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

**White, Emily B**

**From:** Schaming, Jennifer  
**Sent:** Monday, August 29, 2016 12:10 PM  
**To:** White, Emily B  
**Subject:** RE: For clearance today - testimony on edited video

RELEASE IN PART B5

Thanks for this; DVIDS should be spelled out for S and for Members, who may not be familiar with the acronym.

B5

Best - J.

SBU  
This email is UNCLASSIFIED

**From:** White, Emily B  
**Sent:** Monday, August 29, 2016 11:09 AM  
**To:** Schaming, Jennifer  
**Subject:** FW: For clearance today - testimony on edited video

As discussed.

SBU  
This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

**From:** White, Emily B  
**Sent:** Monday, August 29, 2016 10:50 AM  
**To:** Richardson, Timothy M; SINI\_Internal; Hahs, Ona M; Malik, Arslan  
**Cc:** SP\_Staff Assistants; Reynolds, Justin E; PA Special Assistants; Lawrence, Elizabeth  
**Subject:** For clearance today - testimony on edited video

All,

B5

Thanks,

Emily White  
Special Assistant  
Bureau of Public Affairs

WhiteEB@state.gov

Office Phone: (202) 647-8926

SBU

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

**White, Emily B**

**From:** Stevenson, Susan N  
**Sent:** Thursday, August 25, 2016 5:54 PM  
**To:** White, Emily B  
**Cc:** PA Special Assistants  
**Subject:** RE: Preparation for Secretary Kerry's Testimony before the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

**RELEASE IN PART B5**

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Completed

Thanks, [REDACTED]

B5

SBU  
This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

**From:** White, Emily B  
**Sent:** Thursday, August 25, 2016 4:00 PM  
**To:** Stevenson, Susan N  
**Cc:** PA Special Assistants  
**Subject:** RE: Preparation for Secretary Kerry's Testimony before the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

Susan,

See attached for a proposed response to this tasker using language sent on by Elizabeth. [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

B5

Thanks,  
Emily

SBU  
This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

**From:** White, Emily B  
**Sent:** Thursday, August 25, 2016 2:39 PM  
**To:** Stevenson, Susan N  
**Cc:** PA Special Assistants  
**Subject:** FW: Preparation for Secretary Kerry's Testimony before the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

Susan,

As discussed, I sent the L report in response to the H tasker [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

B5

B5

Thanks,  
Emily

SBU  
This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

---

**From:** Lawrence, Elizabeth  
**Sent:** Thursday, August 25, 2016 2:26 PM  
**To:** White, Emily B  
**Cc:** PA Special Assistants; Lorman, Amanda L  
**Subject:** RE: Preparation for Secretary Kerry's Testimony before the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

Emily,

Thanks again for reaching out on this.

B5

B5

Let us know if you have any further questions.

Thanks,  
Elizabeth

Elizabeth Lawrence  
Special Assistant  
Bureau of Legislative Affairs (H)  
U.S. Department of State  
Office: (202) 647-1890

SBU  
This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

**From:** White, Emily B  
**Sent:** Thursday, August 25, 2016 1:22 PM  
**To:** Lawrence, Elizabeth  
**Cc:** PA Special Assistants; Lorman, Amanda L  
**Subject:** RE: Preparation for Secretary Kerry's Testimony before the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

Elizabeth,

Pursuant to our phone discussion, I am sending the attached L report in response to this tasker for PA. [REDACTED]

B5

HQ 9	Why Did State Department Doctor Tapes on JCPOA Negotiations?	PA	NEA, L, S/P, S/INI
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Let me know if you have any further questions.

Thanks,  
Emily

Emily White  
Special Assistant  
Bureau of Public Affairs  
[WhiteEB@state.gov](mailto:WhiteEB@state.gov)  
Office Phone: (202) 647-8926

SBU  
This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

---

**From:** SES-Line\_Tasker

**Sent:** Wednesday, August 24, 2016 12:52 PM

**To:** TTL-1A

**Cc:** Lawrence, Elizabeth

**Subject:** Preparation for Secretary Kerry's Testimony before the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

**UNCLASSIFIED**

Dear Colleagues,

The attached memo assigns responsibilities for the preparation of briefing materials for Secretary Kerry's potential testimony before the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

All papers are due to H by unclassified e-mail at LawrenceE@state.gov no later than noon on Monday, August 29, 2016.

Thank you,  
Executive Secretariat Staff, Room 7241  
202-647-8879

**UNCLASSIFIED**

**White, Emily B**

---

**From:** Toufanian, Melissa Turley  
**Sent:** Friday, August 26, 2016 2:04 PM  
**To:** White, Emily B  
**Cc:** Hallock, Catherine  
**Subject:** Re: For Kirby: H Tasker on Edited Video

**RELEASE IN PART B5**

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Completed

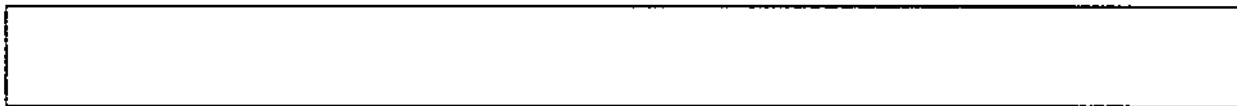
Will run it by him asap but that line looks perfect - will loop back

---

**From:** White, Emily B  
**Sent:** Friday, August 26, 2016 8:02 PM  
**To:** Toufanian, Melissa Turley  
**Cc:** Hallock, Catherine  
**Subject:** RE: For Kirby: H Tasker on Edited Video

How about if we add this:

•



B5

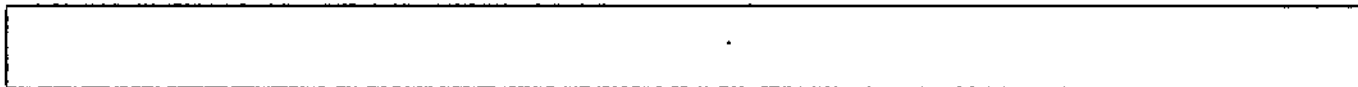
Let me know if he clears with this bullet included. Thanks!

SBU  
This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

---

**From:** Toufanian, Melissa Turley  
**Sent:** Friday, August 26, 2016 1:50 PM  
**To:** White, Emily B  
**Subject:** FW: For Kirby: H Tasker on Edited Video

Hi Emily,



B5

This email is UNCLASSIFIED

---

**From:** Kirby, John  
**Sent:** Friday, August 26, 2016 7:46 PM

**To:** Toufanian, Melissa Turley

**Subject:** Re: For Kirby: H Tasker on Edited Video

[REDACTED]

Sent from my iPhone

On Aug 26, 2016, at 19:38, Toufanian, Melissa Turley <TurleyMK@state.gov> wrote:

Flagging for your review -

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

---

**From:** White, Emily B

**Sent:** Friday, August 26, 2016 3:03 PM

**To:** Kirby, John

**Cc:** Stevenson, Susan N; Trudeau, Elizabeth K; PA Special Assistants

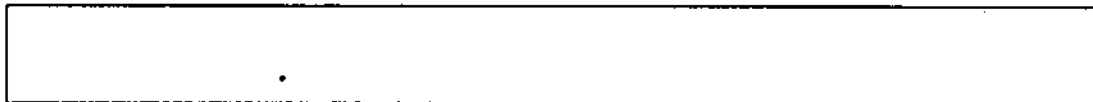
**Subject:** H Tasker on Edited Video

Sir,

H has asked PA for materials to prepare for the Secretary's testimony before the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform on the question of "Why Did the State Department Doctor Tapes on JCPOA Negotiations?". [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

B5



SBU

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

**White, Emily B**

---

**From:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K  
**Sent:** Thursday, August 25, 2016 3:56 PM  
**To:** White, Emily B; Deaner, Nicole; Starr, Katherine L  
**Cc:** Hallock, Catherine  
**Subject:** RE: Press points on video edits

RELEASE IN PART B5

Kirby will have view

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

---

**From:** White, Emily B  
**Sent:** Thursday, August 25, 2016 3:21 PM  
**To:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K; Deaner, Nicole; Starr, Katherine L  
**Cc:** Hallock, Catherine  
**Subject:** RE: Press points on video edits

Thanks for the quick turnaround.

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

---

**From:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K  
**Sent:** Thursday, August 25, 2016 3:20 PM  
**To:** White, Emily B; Deaner, Nicole; Starr, Katherine L  
**Cc:** Hallock, Catherine  
**Subject:** RE: Press points on video edits

B5

B5

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

---

**From:** White, Emily B  
**Sent:** Thursday, August 25, 2016 2:54 PM  
**To:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K; Deaner, Nicole; Starr, Katherine L  
**Cc:** Hallock, Catherine  
**Subject:** Press points on video edits

PRS Colleagues -

We're working on responding to an H tasker for S testimony to the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. In particular, H wanted language to respond to the question of "Why Did State Department Doctor Tapes on JCPOA Negotiations?"

B5

Thanks,  
Emily

SBU

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

**White, Emily B**

---

**From:** White, Emily B  
**Sent:** Wednesday, August 31, 2016 7:48 AM  
**To:** Lawrence, Elizabeth; Lorman, Amanda L  
**Cc:** PA Special Assistants  
**Subject:** RE: Preparation for Secretary Kerry's Testimony before the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform  
**Attachments:** 160829 HQ9 PA Final.docx

**RELEASE IN PART B5**

Elizabeth,

Attached please find the final version. Thanks for your patience.

Best,  
Emily

SBU  
This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

---

**From:** Lawrence, Elizabeth  
**Sent:** Tuesday, August 30, 2016 4:18 PM  
**To:** White, Emily B; Lorman, Amanda L  
**Cc:** PA Special Assistants  
**Subject:** RE: Preparation for Secretary Kerry's Testimony before the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

Sounds good- thanks for the update Emily!

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

---

**From:** White, Emily B  
**Sent:** Tuesday, August 30, 2016 4:13 PM  
**To:** Lawrence, Elizabeth; Lorman, Amanda L  
**Cc:** PA Special Assistants  
**Subject:** RE: Preparation for Secretary Kerry's Testimony before the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

Elizabeth,

Attached is the response as it currently stands.

B5

Best,

Emily

SBU

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

---

**From:** Lawrence, Elizabeth  
**Sent:** Monday, August 29, 2016 9:16 AM  
**To:** White, Emily B; Lorman, Amanda L  
**Cc:** PA Special Assistants  
**Subject:** RE: Preparation for Secretary Kerry's Testimony before the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

Ok- thanks for the head's up

This email is UNCLASSIFIED

---

**From:** White, Emily B  
**Sent:** Monday, August 29, 2016 9:08 AM  
**To:** Lorman, Amanda L; Lawrence, Elizabeth  
**Cc:** PA Special Assistants  
**Subject:** RE: Preparation for Secretary Kerry's Testimony before the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

Elizabeth and Amanda,

[REDACTED]

B5

Best,  
Emily

This email is UNCLASSIFIED

---

**From:** White, Emily B  
**Sent:** Thursday, August 25, 2016 4:04 PM  
**To:** Lorman, Amanda L; Lawrence, Elizabeth  
**Cc:** PA Special Assistants  
**Subject:** RE: Preparation for Secretary Kerry's Testimony before the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

We understand and are working on a response.

Thanks,

Emily

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

**From:** Lorman, Amanda L  
**Sent:** Thursday, August 25, 2016 2:30 PM  
**To:** White, Emily B; Lawrence, Elizabeth  
**Cc:** PA Special Assistants  
**Subject:** RE: Preparation for Secretary Kerry's Testimony before the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

Emily,

These are points I basically picked out of what has already been said during press briefings (vs. the official press guidance).

B5

Amanda

Amanda Lorman  
Senior Congressional Advisor, Bureau of Legislative Affairs (H)  
U.S. Department of State  
[LormanAL@state.gov](mailto:LormanAL@state.gov)  
Phone: 202-647-9037

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

**From:** White, Emily B  
**Sent:** Thursday, August 25, 2016 2:29 PM  
**To:** Lawrence, Elizabeth  
**Cc:** PA Special Assistants; Lorman, Amanda L  
**Subject:** RE: Preparation for Secretary Kerry's Testimony before the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

[REDACTED] will get back to you.

B5

Thanks,  
Emily

SBU

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

**From:** Lawrence, Elizabeth  
**Sent:** Thursday, August 25, 2016 2:26 PM  
**To:** White, Emily B  
**Cc:** PA Special Assistants; Lorman, Amanda L  
**Subject:** RE: Preparation for Secretary Kerry's Testimony before the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

Emily,

Thanks again for reaching out on this.

B5

Let us know if you have any further questions.

Thanks,  
Elizabeth

Elizabeth Lawrence  
Special Assistant  
Bureau of Legislative Affairs (H)  
U.S. Department of State  
Office: (202) 647-1890

SBU  
This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

**From:** White, Emily B  
**Sent:** Thursday, August 25, 2016 1:22 PM  
**To:** Lawrence, Elizabeth  
**Cc:** PA Special Assistants; Lorman, Amanda L  
**Subject:** RE: Preparation for Secretary Kerry's Testimony before the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

Elizabeth,

Pursuant to our phone discussion, I am sending the attached L report in response to this tasker for PA.

B5

HQ 9	Why Did State Department Doctor Tapes on JCPOA Negotiations?	PA	NEA, L, S/P, S/INI
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Let me know if you have any further questions.

Thanks,  
Emily

Emily White  
Special Assistant  
Bureau of Public Affairs  
[WhiteEB@state.gov](mailto:WhiteEB@state.gov)  
Office Phone: (202) 647-8926

SBU  
This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

---

**From:** SES-Line\_Tasker  
**Sent:** Wednesday, August 24, 2016 12:52 PM  
**To:** TTL-1A  
**Cc:** Lawrence, Elizabeth  
**Subject:** Preparation for Secretary Kerry's Testimony before the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

**UNCLASSIFIED**

Dear Colleagues,

The attached memo assigns responsibilities for the preparation of briefing materials for Secretary Kerry's potential testimony before the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

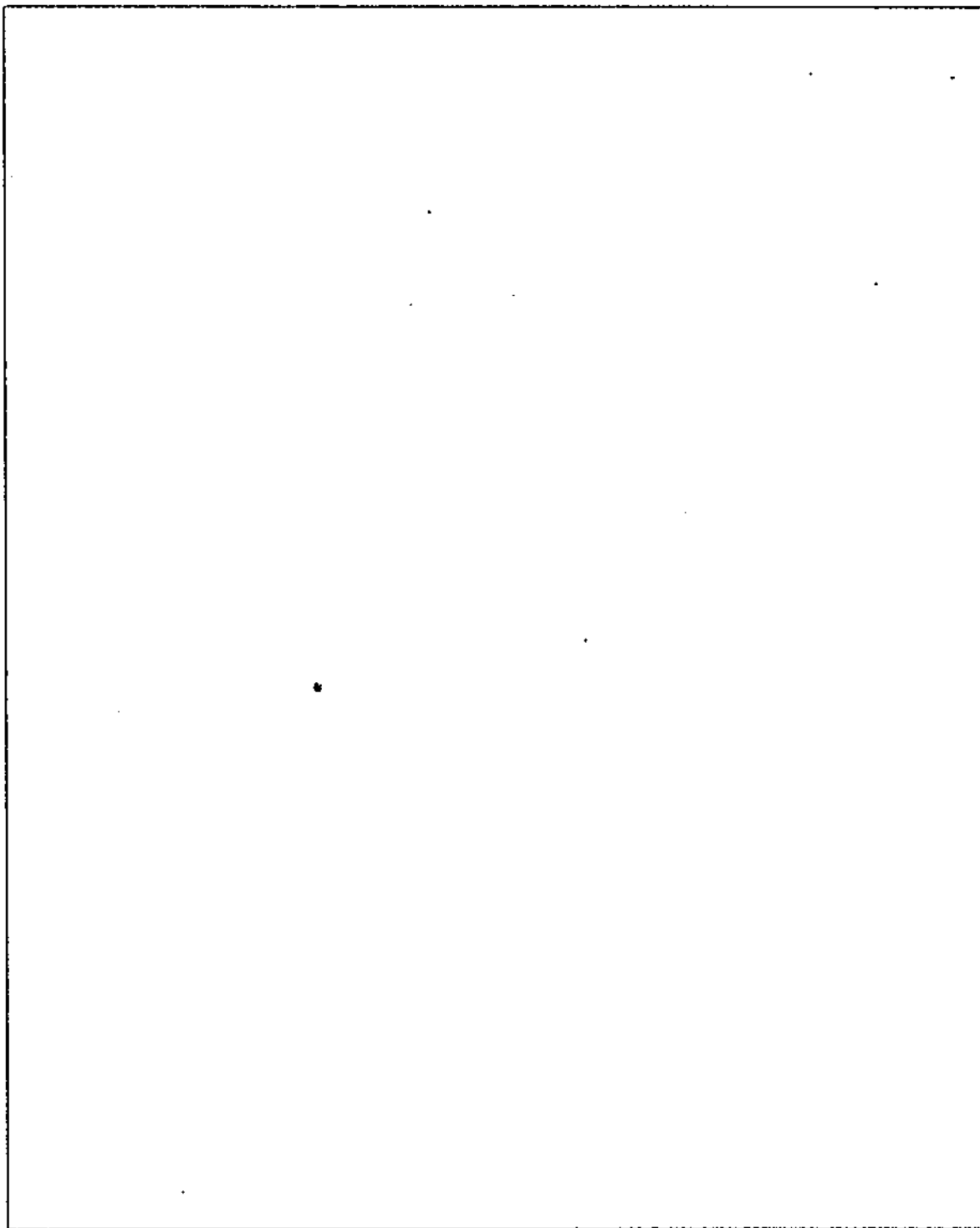
All papers are due to H by unclassified e-mail at LawrenceE@state.gov no later than noon on Monday, August 29, 2016.

Thank you,  
Executive Secretariat Staff, Room 7241  
202-647-8879

UNCLASSIFIED

RELEASE IN PART B5, B6

**HQ9 - Why Did the State Department Doctor Tapes on JCPOA Negotiations?  
Why Didn't You Refer the Investigation to the OIG?**



B5

**Page Denied**

Approved: PA- John Kirby (ok)

Drafted: PA - Emily White, ext. 7-8926 and mobile:

B6

Cleared: NEA - JReynolds (ok)  
L - JGardner (ok)  
S/P - AMalik (ok)  
S/INT - SMull (ok)  
PA/FO - SStevenson (ok)  
PA/PRS - ETrudeau (ok)  
PA/OSP - Jschaming (ok)

**Toufanian, Melissa Turley**

---

**From:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K  
**Sent:** Thursday, August 18, 2016 4:59 PM  
**To:** Toner, Mark C; Toufanian, Melissa Turley; Kirby, John  
**Subject:** RE: DRAFT -- Report: Department's review of the December 2, 2013 video footage from the Daily Press Briefing.

**RELEASE IN PART B5**

B5

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

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**From:** Toner, Mark C  
**Sent:** Thursday, August 18, 2016 4:58 PM  
**To:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K; Toufanian, Melissa Turley; Kirby, John  
**Subject:** RE: DRAFT -- Report: Department's review of the December 2, 2013 video footage from the Daily Press Briefing.

Yes.

---

**From:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K  
**Sent:** Thursday, August 18, 2016 4:57 PM  
**To:** Toner, Mark C; Toufanian, Melissa Turley; Kirby, John  
**Subject:** RE: DRAFT -- Report: Department's review of the December 2, 2013 video footage from the Daily Press Briefing.

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

---

**From:** Toner, Mark C  
**Sent:** Thursday, August 18, 2016 4:56 PM  
**To:** Toufanian, Melissa Turley; Trudeau, Elizabeth K; Kirby, John  
**Subject:** RE: DRAFT -- Report: Department's review of the December 2, 2013 video footage from the Daily Press Briefing.

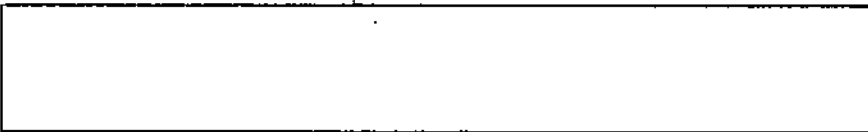
Elizabeth has it in her inbox.

Thanks, Mark

---

**From:** Toufanian, Melissa Turley  
**Sent:** Thursday, August 18, 2016 4:54 PM  
**To:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K; Kirby, John; Toner, Mark C  
**Subject:** RE: DRAFT -- Report: Department's review of the December 2, 2013 video footage from the Daily Press Briefing.

Edits from Kirby below



B5

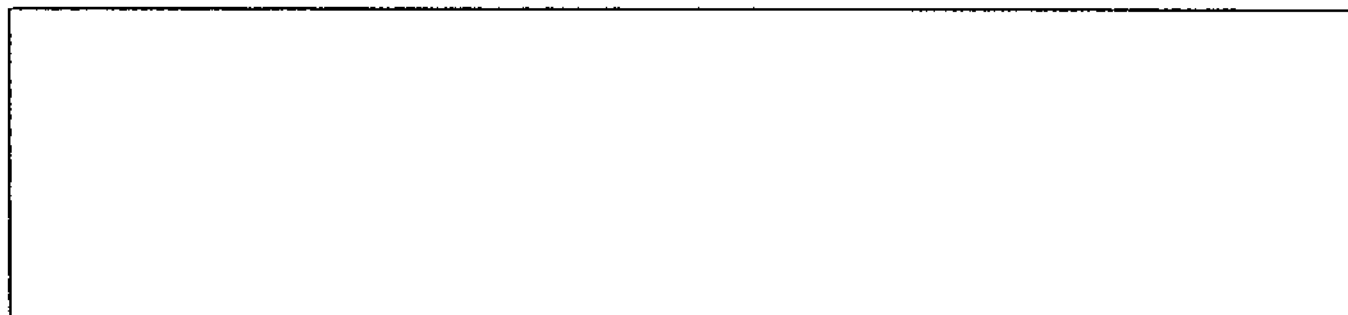
This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

---

**From:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K  
**Sent:** Thursday, August 18, 2016 4:24 PM  
**To:** Kirby, John; Toner, Mark C  
**Cc:** Toufanian, Melissa Turley  
**Subject:** DRAFT -- Report: Department's review of the December 2, 2013 video footage from the Daily Press Briefing.

DRAFT DRAFT DRAFT----

Questions:



John Kirby  
Assistant Secretary and Spokesperson

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

**Starr, Katherine L**

---

**From:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K  
**Sent:** Wednesday, June 08, 2016 9:45 AM  
**To:** Clay, Noel C; PA Press  
**Subject:** RE: Request for a written response: Video Info. release

**RELEASE IN FULL**

exactly

---

**From:** Clay, Noel C  
**Sent:** Wednesday, June 08, 2016 9:45 AM  
**To:** PA Press  
**Subject:** FW: Request for a written response: Video Info. release

Got it. But sure it'll be addressed at the briefing.

---

**From:** Pamela Dockins [<mailto:pdockins@VOANews.com>]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, June 08, 2016 9:44 AM  
**To:** PA Press Duty; Toner, Mark C  
**Subject:** Request for a written response: Video Info. release

Good morning,

Checking to see if State has sent the requested information on the 12/2/13 video to the House Oversight Committee. Referring to today's 5pm deadline to identify individual who did the edit, etc.

-Also, what has - or will - be sent to the committee today? Do you plan to provide details?

Best Wishes,

Pam Dockins  
State Department Correspondent  
Voice of America  
State Department: (202) 632-0312  
Newsroom: (202) 203-4302

**Starr, Katherine L**

---

**From:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K  
**Sent:** Wednesday, June 08, 2016 10:00 AM  
**To:** PA Press.Duty  
**Subject:** POs: Video queries, response to Hill

**RELEASE IN FULL**

Just please defer to DPB

**Starr, Katherine L**

---

**From:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K  
**Sent:** Friday, June 03, 2016 1:29 PM  
**To:** PA Press Duty  
**Subject:** FW: fyi - psaki on cnn talking about video now

RELEASE IN FULL

---

**From:** Beechem, Stephanie  
**Sent:** Friday, June 03, 2016 1:29 PM  
**To:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K  
**Subject:** fyi - psaki on cnn talking about video now

Pulling txpt and sending to k/t and you asap

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

**Starr, Katherine L**

---

**From:** Marshall, Leslie  
**Sent:** Friday, June 03, 2016 2:37 PM  
**To:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K  
**Cc:** Deaner, Nicole; Starr, Katherine L  
**Subject:** Psaki on CNN

**RELEASE IN FULL**

Not sending around the Free Beacon story but the Wolf/Psaki interview video is embedded in the story plus excerpts in the text:

<http://freebeacon.com/national-security/blitzer-hammers-psaki-lies-told-by-state-video-deletion/>

---

**Leslie Marshall • Bureau of Public Affairs • U.S. Department of State**

✉: [MarshallLS@state.gov](mailto:MarshallLS@state.gov)

Stay connected with State:



**Starr, Katherine L**

---

**From:** Kirby, John  
**Sent:** Friday, June 03, 2016 1:36 PM  
**To:** Pamela Dockins  
**Cc:** PA Press Duty  
**Subject:** Re: Question about S. Kerry

**RELEASE IN FULL**

Mark will be prepared to deal with this at podium.

Sent from my iPhone

On Jun 3, 2016, at 19:17, Pamela Dockins <[pdockins@VOANews.com](mailto:pdockins@VOANews.com)> wrote:

Hi John,

House Oversight and Government Reform committee chairman Jason Chaffetz has given S. Kerry until Wednesday to identify the the person who ordered that video segment from a 2013 State Department briefing to be edited out.

Other lawmakers say the incident shows the Obama administration was deliberately trying to mislead the public about Iran nuclear talks.

What is Secretary Kerry's response to these accusations and to the letter sent by Chaffetz?

Pam Dockins  
State Department Correspondent  
Voice of America  
State Department: (202) 632-0312  
Newsroom: (202) 203-4302

**Starr, Katherine L**

**From:** Welty, Douglas P. (OIG)  
**Sent:** Friday, June 03, 2016 2:36 PM  
**To:** PA Press Clips  
**Subject:** RE: The Hill: GOP asks watchdog to investigate State Dept. video edit

**RELEASE IN FULL**

Thanks!

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

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**From:** PA Press Clips  
**Sent:** Friday, June 03, 2016 2:30 PM  
**To:** PA Monitoring Group  
**Subject:** The Hill: GOP asks watchdog to investigate State Dept. video edit

GOP asks watchdog to investigate State Dept. video edit  
 By Kristina Wong - 06/03/16 02:13 PM EDT

House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Ed Royce (R-Calif.) on Friday called for the State Department's inspector general to investigate the deletion of a part of a 2013 press briefing that addressed the Iran nuclear deal.

State admitted Wednesday that someone in the agency's public affairs bureau had ordered a video technician to edit out an eight-minute portion of the Dec. 2, 2013, briefing where a Fox News reporter asked the press secretary whether her predecessor lied about when secret talks with Iran began.

Then-press secretary Jen Psaki did not confirm when the talks started, but said, "I think there are times when diplomacy needs privacy in order to progress."

State officials first asserted the deletion was a "glitch" before admitting it was a deliberate omission. They also say they don't know who made the request or why, and that the Department has hit a "dead end" in trying to figure out.

Republicans have seized on the deletion as evidence the administration had tried to bolster a false narrative that the talks had begun in 2013, when moderates were elected in Iran.

"In tampering with this video, the Bureau of Public Affairs has undermined its mission to 'communicate timely and accurate information with the goal of furthering U.S. foreign policy.' This is all the more troubling given that the video in question dealt with hugely consequential nuclear negotiations with the Islamic Republic of Iran," Royce said in the June 3 letter to Inspector General Steve Linick.

"It remains unclear why the exchange between Ms. Psaki and reporters was stricken from the video recording. How is it not possible to determine who in the Administration ordered that the video be altered, as the current spokesman has asserted? Will there be no accountability? Have there been other instances where the State Department has altered the public record?" he wrote.

Royce's letter follows a request to Secretary of State John Kerry for documents and communications related to the video scrubbing by House Oversight and Government Reform Committee Chairman Jason Chaffetz (R-Utah) on Thursday.

The omission has also upset journalists, who assert that State lied to them about when the talks started, why they were told the edit was a "glitch," and why the video was deleted.

CNN anchor Jake Tapper blasted the State Department on Thursday, saying, "Just as the public has a right to know the truth, we have a right to know who lied to us and why."

**Starr, Katherine L**

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**From:** Welty, Douglas P. (OIG) **RELEASE IN FULL**  
**Sent:** Friday, June 03, 2016 12:30 PM  
**To:** PA Press Clips  
**Subject:** RE: Politico: House GOP launching probe into State Dept. video editing

Thanks so much for these...

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

---

**From:** PA Press Clips  
**Sent:** Friday, June 03, 2016 11:48 AM  
**To:** PA Monitoring Group  
**Subject:** Politico: House GOP launching probe into State Dept. video editing

House GOP launching probe into State Dept. video editing  
By SEUNG MIN KIM 06/03/16 11:41 AM EDT

Among the details requested are any documents that identifies State officials who made and received the request to delete the exchange, show when the video was deleted and restored, and deal with any other requests to delete parts of press briefings from "publicly accessible portals" since Jan. 1, 2012.

The State Department admitted this week that the exchange between former department spokeswoman Jen Psaki and Fox News reporter James Rosen was intentionally deleted from the video posted on State's YouTube channel.

"This admisson proves once again that the White House intentionally misled the American people about the Iran deal," Speaker Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) said this week. "If they truly care about transparency, the administration should investigate who requested this selective editing and why."

But State officials said Thursday that the department has hit a "dead end" in its own probe.

"We believe we've carried out the necessary investigation," State spokesman Mark Toner said. "We have hit a dead end in terms of finding out more information. If more information does become available, if we are made aware of more information about who might have been behind this request, we'll, of course, investigate."

**Starr, Katherine L**

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**From:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 02, 2016 6:49 PM  
**To:** Starr, Katherine L  
**Subject:** Ouch

**RELEASE IN FULL**

STATE DEPARTMENT

# Obama adviser lashes out at Fox News amid questions over deleted footage

Published June 02, 2016

The department acknowledged Wednesday that several minutes of video from the 2013 briefing – at which then-State Department spokeswoman Psaki appeared to acknowledge misleading the press over the Iran nuclear deal – had been intentionally cut. The order apparently came from an official in the public affairs office, but that individual has not been identified.

Psaki, who is now White House communications director, issued a statement late Wednesday saying it wasn't her:

"I had no knowledge of nor would I have approved of any form of editing or cutting my briefing transcript on any subject while at the State Department. I believe deeply in providing the press as much information on important issues as possible."

Fox News' James Rosen, though, sent Psaki an email seeking clarification, noting that the issue was not edits to the "transcript" but the actual "video" of the briefing.

Psaki responded that her statement also "applies to the video" – but then went on to accuse Rosen of "vilifying" her without evidence.

The full email exchange is as follows:

## **ROSEN EMAIL**

*Jen,*

*Some have pointed to a certain aspect of your statement, highlighted below, as not removing yourself from consideration for having issued the order to edit the briefing video:*

*I had no knowledge of nor would I have approved of any form of editing or cutting my briefing transcript on any subject while at the State Department. I believe deeply in providing the press as much information on important issues as possible.*

*Of course, as Liz Trudeau and others have stressed, the briefing transcript remained unaltered the entire time. Do you want to issue a revised statement, asserting the same for the video, which was altered?*

*Forgive me if you have already put out something along these lines and I missed it.*

*Yours cordially,*

*James*

**PSAKI RESPONSE**

*James,*

*My statement applies to the video which is considered a form of the transcript and every aspect of this.*

*I understand it is inconvenient for you that I have nothing to do with this given you have spent the last three weeks vilifying me on television without any evidence of my knowledge or involvement and without once reaching out and asking me; but I would encourage you to also ask the State Department if there is any evidence. A shred or any information at all that suggests I had any knowledge of this or any connection to this on any level. Hopefully you will find the time to spend on the range of global events happening in the world in between attacking my character.*

*Consider that on the record from me as well*

*Thanks*

Rosen said Thursday he has never assailed Psaki's character, nor has he ever asserted or implied she was responsible for editing the footage.

Psaki isn't the only ex-spokeswoman denying involvement in the edits.

Former deputy State Department spokeswoman Marie Harf also told Fox News in a statement Thursday that she "had no knowledge of nor would I have approved of this editing."

"I have no idea who asked for the editing of the tape," said Harf, now a senior adviser to Secretary of State John Kerry.

The denials leave a mystery over which official indeed had the footage cut from the 2013 briefing.

At that briefing, Psaki was asked by Rosen about an earlier claim from another official that no direct, secret talks were underway between the U.S. and Iran – when, in fact, they were.

Psaki at the time seemed to admit the discrepancy, saying: "There are times where diplomacy needs privacy in order to progress. This is a good example of that."

However, Fox News later discovered the Psaki exchange was missing from the department's official website and its YouTube channel (though not from the transcript). Eight minutes from the briefing, including the comments on the Iran deal, were edited out and replaced with a white-flash effect.

While the department initially claimed this was the result of a glitch, officials looked into it and State Department spokesman John Kirby revealed Wednesday there was a "deliberate request" to cut the footage.

He said somebody in his public affairs office had a video editor "excise" part of that footage from the briefing in question.

Kirby told Fox News' "Fox & Friends" on Thursday he does not know who made the request, though he did not rule out pursuing the matter further if more information comes to light.

"There's no cover-up," Kirby said.

Kirby also said Psaki, in the 2013 briefing, was not trying to say anybody at the department lied about the Iran deal. "We don't lie," he said.

Kirby also thanked Rosen for "bringing this to my attention, because if he didn't a couple of weeks ago, I would never have known that this occurred. So first of all, kudos to him, he's a journalist who I have a great respect for."

*Fox News' Lucas Tomlinson and FoxNews.com's Judson Berger contributed to this report.*

**Starr, Katherine L**

**From:** Kirby, John **RELEASE IN FULL**  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 02, 2016 5:38 PM  
**To:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K  
**Cc:** Toner, Mark C; Stevenson, Susan N; Starr, Katherine L; Deaner, Nicole; Finer, Jonathan J; Frifield, Julia E; Stout, Jennifer P  
**Subject:** Re: Quick summary on video

Thanks. Looping in Finer, Frifield and Stout.

Sent from my iPhone

On Jun 2, 2016, at 17:29, Trudeau, Elizabeth K <[trudeauek@state.gov](mailto:trudeauek@state.gov)> wrote:

**FOX: Obama adviser lashes out at Fox News amid questions over deleted footage**

Top Obama press adviser Jen Psaki lashed out at Fox News on Thursday after being pressed for clarification over her statements on press briefing footage that the State Department admitted had been deliberately deleted from a public archive. The department acknowledged Wednesday that several minutes of video from the 2013 briefing – at which then-State Department spokeswoman Psaki appeared to acknowledge misleading the press over the Iran nuclear deal – had been intentionally cut. The order apparently came from an official in the public affairs office, but that individual has not been identified.

**Additional FOX links:**

- VIDEO: Jen Psaki claims Fox News is 'attacking my character'
- VIDEO: Fox News' James Rosen on State Dept.'s editing of briefing
- VIDEO: State Dept. admits to deleting parts of Iran deal briefing
- VIDEO: Rosen expands on State Dept. editing his questioning
- VIDEO: 'Deliberate' request to delete part of Rosen video

**CNN: State Department doctored video to hide Iran deal**

Part of a video of a State Department press briefing addressing secret talks between the U.S. and Iran was deliberately deleted before it was posted online, an investigation by the department's legal adviser found Wednesday. State Department spokesman John Kirby told reporters Wednesday that an unknown U.S. official made a request over the phone to delete several minutes of a December 2013 video of the exchange between reporters and a State Department spokeswoman. The State Department routinely posts on its site the briefing that it holds nearly every day with the diplomatic press corps.

**Washington Post: Republican fury builds over State Department manipulating press briefing video**

Republicans are expressing outrage at the State Department for cutting several minutes from a 2013 press briefing video during which a Fox News reporter asked if the Obama administration lied about its talks with Iran. After a State Department spokesman acknowledged the editing was done intentionally and did not result from a "glitch," GOP lawmakers took to Twitter to criticize the administration. Sen. Tom Cotton (R-Ark.) specifically called for the person who ordered the editing to be identified and disciplined.

**The Hill: GOP senator: State Dept. 'must start dealing in the truth' on Iran**

Sen. Tom Cotton (R-Ark.) called on the State Department on Thursday to identify the official who ordered part of a recording of a 2013 press briefing about the Iran nuclear deal to be deleted. "This

whole outrageous episode demonstrates how the Iran deal has been sold to Americans through a parade of misleading 'narratives,' echo chambers, and outright falsehoods," Cotton said in a statement. "The Administration must start dealing in the truth. One place to start is to identify the official who ordered the manipulation of the video and impose appropriate discipline." The State Department on Wednesday admitted that someone within the department's public affairs office asked an editor to delete a portion of the Dec. 2, 2013, video. The department had previously blamed the missing footage on a "glitch."

**POLITICO: Ryan calls for further investigation into State Dept. video editing**

House Speaker Paul Ryan on Thursday called on the White House to further investigate the editing of a December 2013 State Department briefing video that deleted a question pertaining to secret negotiations between the United States and Iran. The agency this week admitted to splicing out the clip on its YouTube channel. "This admission proves once again that the White House intentionally misled the American people about the Iran deal," Ryan (R-Wis.) said in a statement through his office. "If they truly care about transparency, the administration should investigate who requested this selective editing and why."

**Fortune: State Department Admits Editing Video to Remove Question About Iran**

Almost a month after questions were first raised about a chunk of missing video from a State Department press briefing, a spokesman for the department has finally admitted that a question from Fox News reporter James Rosen about the government's secret discussions with Iran was deliberately edited out of the video. The government had initially described the missing section as a "glitch." State Department spokesman John Kirby told reporters on Wednesday that a staffer erased part of the footage from a December 2013 briefing before it was posted on the Internet. This editor reportedly did so, Kirby said, after receiving a phone call from another department employee telling them to do so. "There was a deliberate request—this wasn't a technical glitch," he said.

**Town Hall: Of Course: State Department Denies Coverup, Isn't Investigating Whether Other Videos Were Edited**

Yesterday State Department spokesman John Kirby admitted that an exchange between Fox News Chief Washington Correspondent James Rosen and former spokeswoman Victoria Nullen about the Iran deal was deliberately deleted from an archived video. Previously, the State Department said the deletion was simply a technical glitch. The exchange, which Rosen and a producer noticed missing while working on a different story, proves the Obama administration lied about the Iran deal and details surrounding negotiations with the regime.

**No updates from yesterday:**

Reuters (yesterday): <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-statedepartment-video-idUSKCN0YNSR3>

AP (yesterday): <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/de29094321c84ca586bd607fb669ae69/state-dept-says-official-censored-2013-briefing-footage>

**Starr, Katherine L**

**From:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K **RELEASE IN FULL**  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 02, 2016 11:58 AM  
**To:** Starr, Katherine L; Thompson, Nicole A.; Deaner, Nicole  
**Subject:** Fw: The Hill: Second State Dept. aide denies pushing for editing of Iran video

---

**From:** Beechem, Stephanie <BeechemS@state.gov>  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 2, 2016 11:56 AM  
**To:** Kirby, John; Toner, Mark C; Trudeau, Elizabeth K  
**Subject:** The Hill: Second State Dept. aide denies pushing for editing of Iran video

Just fyi

<http://thehill.com/policy/national-security/281996-second-state-dept-aide-denies-pushing-for-editing-of-iran-video>

**Second State Dept. aide denies pushing for editing of Iran video**  
 By Jesse Byrnes - 06/02/16 11:43 AM EDT

A second State Department employee has denied pushing for the intentional edit of video from a 2013 department briefing dealing with the Iran nuclear agreement.

Marie Harf, a top aide to Secretary of State John Kerry who was the department's deputy spokeswoman at the time, joined former State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki in denying involvement.

"As Jen tweeted yesterday, I also had no knowledge of nor would I have approved of this editing," Harf told the Washington Examiner for a report published Thursday. "I have no idea who asked for the editing of the tape." The remarks from Harf, who now serves as Secretary of State John Kerry's senior advisor for strategist communications, echo those tweeted by Psaki, who is now the White House communications director:

Harf served as Psaki's deputy when both were at the State Department.

The State Department's current spokesman, John Kirby, admitted Wednesday that several minutes of the 2013 press briefing had been intentionally removed from a department video posted to YouTube. State previously attributed the missing video to a "glitch."

Kirby, who joined the department from the Pentagon in 2015, said the request to edit the tape came from in the department's Public Affairs Bureau, but the person who fielded the request couldn't remember who asked for the edit. "The call that came into her was actually a call from someone else passing on a request from another official, so it was two removed," Kirby said Thursday morning on "Fox and Friends."

The deleted segment included a suggestion from Psaki, then the State Department spokeswoman, that the negotiations for the Iran nuclear deal began earlier than previously disclosed.

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

**Starr, Katherine L**

**From:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 02, 2016 9:46 AM  
**To:** PA Press Duty  
**Subject:** Fw: 6/2 Fox News Fox & Friends -- A/S John Kirby

**RELEASE IN FULL**


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**From:** Beechem, Stephanie <BeechemS@state.gov>  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 2, 2016 9:24 AM  
**To:** PA SPOX; PA FO Group; Werberg, Samuel  
**Subject:** 6/2 Fox News Fox & Friends -- A/S John Kirby

<http://mms.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=9b8a837f-4ea6-47c3-8c05-8a9e8f755551>

**Fox News - Fox & Friends**  
**06/02/2016 08:02:20 AM**

**AINSLEY EARHARDT:** Let's get to a Fox News alert. Well, first it was a glitch, remember? Now in a stunning turn of events, the State Department is finally admitting that it lied to you.

**BRIAN KILMEADE:** The administration saying it intentionally deleted an exchange between chief Washington correspondent James Rosen and the Department's then spokeswoman Jen Psaki. But don't expect anyone to be held accountable. Garrett Tenney is live to explain.

**GARRETT TENNEY:** Well Brian and Tucker and Ainsley, now we know it was a State Department official who specifically ordered that video to be deleted from the State Department's official record. That missing video was from a State Department briefing with reporters in December of 2013. When in response to questions from our own James Rosen, Jen Psaki, who was the spokeswoman at the time, admitted that the U.S. government had previously lied to reporters about the secret negotiations with Iran over its nuclear program. Then at some point, a Department official tried to cover up that admission by ordering that eight minute exchange to be deleted from the State Department's website and YouTube channel. You can see how it was replaced with a white flash effect. Here's part of that exchange that an official didn't want you or anyone to see.

**CLIP - ROSEN:** Let me try it one last way, Jen, I appreciate your indulgence.

**CLIP - JEN PSAKI:** Sure.

**CLIP - ROSEN:** Is it the policy of the State Department where the preservation of the secrecy of secret negotiations are concerned to lie in order to achieve that goal?

**CLIP - JEN PSAKI:** James, I think there are times where diplomacy needs privacy in order to progress. This is a good example of that.

**TENNEY:** Yesterday spokesman John Kirby told reporters the order to delete was made over the phone, but because it was made two and a half years ago, the editor who cut that video out doesn't remember who made that specific request. And because there were no rules in effect at the time to prevent things like this from being done, Kirby said there will not be any further investigation. Back to you all.

KILMEADE: I find that surprising, but we're lucky to have with him himself, Rear Admiral John Kirby, spokesperson at the State Department now.

A/S KIRBY: Thanks for having me.

KILMEADE: I know it was a tough day for you and it doesn't reflect on you what happened in the past but I'm surprised there isn't going to be a further investigation about who made the call to the editor to edit out that section of the public record.

A/S KIRBY: Well, we took this seriously for one. And actually, before I answer your question, I want to thank James Rosen, your correspondent, for bringing this to my attention. Because if he hadn't a couple of weeks ago, I would have never known that this occurred. So first of all, kudos to him. He's a journalist I have great respect for, so I thank him for that. Number two, we take it seriously and we did talk to the technician on duty that day and who was asked to make this cut. The call that came into her was a call from somebody else passing on a request from another official. That's why -- it was too removed.

Now another thing, I didn't say yesterday that everything was over. I said that we looked at this. Now, if additional information comes into light that's going to compel me to go into more detail or to look at it further I'll do that. I'm not afraid to do that at all. What I said to my staff yesterday was this was inappropriate. And this isn't the way we're going to behave. What I'm focused on now as the spokesman is we're going to put in a policy -- did it yesterday -- a policy that will prevent this from happening again. Another thing I want to say, this video that was edited was a video we put on our YouTube channel. There was still a full video of it existing on another official website, the defense video information website, as well as the transcript -- written transcript was never edited. So the only one that was -- and I'm not mitigating or making excuses -- but the only one that was edited was the one that was on the YouTube channel.

TUCKER CARLSON: Admiral, it was still an attempt of course to eliminate history --

A/S KIRBY: Of course.

CARLSON: -- and James Rosen found this out by accident. He asked a producer to pull it off of the website and he found it out by accident. I mean, how many other videos have been edited under Jen Psaki's tenure. Have you looked into that?

A/S KIRBY: No there is not, Tucker. The short answer to your question, I don't know. I don't know that's any way I can know. I don't have the time or the resources or the man power to go back and look at every single press briefing over the last three or four years. I don't know that would be a useful use of taxpayer dollars. What I can tell you is I'm focused on going forward. And going forward we'll make sure that this kind of thing can never happen again.

CARLSON: But asked the editor who -- I mean, you know the person who erased this clip. Have you asked that person, did you erase anything else?

A/S KIRBY: I can't talk about the details of the discussion that was had with her. Because it was done through our Office of the Legal Adviser. Our focus was really on this particular instance. And making sure that we tried to go as far as we could knowing what happened in this particular case.

EARHARDT: In this particular case, did the editor remember who called her and directed her to do this?

A/S KIRBY: she did not. She did not know who called --

EARHARDT: Does that mean because she gets the calls all the time? They're too many for her to remember this one in particular?

A/S KIRBY: I don't think that's the case, no.

EARHARDT: Why couldn't she remember? If she remembered deleting it, why couldn't she remember who gave her the direction?

KILMEADE: Because there are only a few people who have the power to edit out the record.

A/S KIRBY: Look, I was as curious about this as you were and as James was. That's why I wanted the Office of the Legal Adviser to look at this. I took this seriously. I can't speak for the memory of this individual. This happened three years ago and I just can't speak for what she remembered or didn't wren. All she remembered was that it was a request passed on -- the caller was passing on the request from somebody else in my bureau, in the Public Affairs bureau. And again, we don't find that acceptable.

CARLSON: Since you're the spokesperson, what do you think of Jen Psaki's admission in the tape, yes, sometimes you have to lie from the podium. Do you agree with that? Do you lie from the podium?

A/S KIRBY: First of all, no, we don't lie. That's a key tenet of being a spokesman, you can't lie. The moment you do that, your credibility, your authenticity goes down the toilet. That's not what Jen said in that clip. She didn't say it was okay to lie, but she said that diplomacy needs privacy sometimes to be effective. And that's actually true. A lot of what our diplomats do around the world, believe me as a spokesman coming over from the Pentagon, one of the frustrating things is that I would love to talk about the great work our ambassadors are doing around the world, but sometimes that has to be remain private so that result can happen. She didn't say she lied or anybody lied.

KILMEADE: Rick Grenell told us -- he was a spokesperson at the State Department before. He told us this a half hour ago.

CLIP -- RICHARD GRENNELL: There's a cover-up going on right now. You don't get to just say that a violation of a Federal Records Act is a done deal, oh we're already done, forget it, we're not moving on. This not what happens. This is about credibility of government.

KILMEADE: Is there a cover-up?

A/S KIRBY: No, there's no cover-up. Not at all. I think you guys know me well enough to know that I would never abide by any such thing. As I said, we interviewed this individual. We tried to find out what happened. Where I am now is where I was yesterday. We just don't know who made the request and why. But if additional information were to come to light that would change our understanding of the events, I would look at it deeper.

KILMEADE: How firm were you when you said, I need a name, I imagine if someone said I forgot, I don't know that would suffice for you.

A/S KIRBY: Well, listen, I did not get involved in the particular line of questioning. I wanted somebody outside my bureau to look at this. I wanted an independent view of what happened. So it wouldn't be done by the chain of command, that's something I brought with me from the military days. You want somebody unbiased and outside your chain of command to look at it and that's why I asked our legal shop to do it for you.

KILMEADE: So good of you to get up and try to shed some more light on this story. Thanks so much.

A/S KIRBY: I'm happy to do it. Thanks, guys.

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

**Starr, Katherine L**

---

**From:** Starr, Katherine L  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 02, 2016 1:27 PM  
**To:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K  
**Subject:** FO-SPOX (Jan 2013)  
**Attachments:** Function Bureau Strategy - Short Fuse Request

**RELEASE IN FULL****Bureau Structure**

The Bureau of Public Affairs is made up of approximately 225 staff (205 civil servants and 20 Foreign Service Officers). They are divided into 12 offices, including two foreign press centers (DC, NY) the Rapid Response Unit, the Office of the Historian and the U.S. Diplomacy Center located outside of Main State and six media hubs located globally (Miami, Dubai, London, Brussels, Tokyo, and Johannesburg). State's Bureau of Public Affairs also maintains legislative ownership of the USAID Press Office, though day to day direction is provided by USAID leadership.

The Assistant Secretary and Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary are supported by 3 DASs who oversee various functions: Domestic Engagement, International Engagement, and Digital Engagement. In addition, Public Affairs supports the Office of the Spokesperson as well as the Office of the Historian. Historically, the Public Affairs structure has been fungible to meet the needs of the Secretary and the Department. In the past, the Assistant Secretary has at times also served as Spokesperson. Recently, the Office of Digital Engagement and Office of International Media Engagement have been created to elevate and streamline functions within the bureau.

NO DISCERNIBLE CLASSIFICATION

RELEASE IN PART B5

**Starr, Katherine L**

**From:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K  
**Sent:** Wednesday, June 08, 2016 7:59 PM  
**To:** Jhunjhunwala, Pooja; Starr, Katherine L  
**Subject:** Re: Updated -- RTQ if asked on that damn video

Everyone has an opinion. It's like the spelling of Daraya.

---

**From:** Jhunjhunwala, Pooja  
**Sent:** Wednesday, June 8, 2016 7:58 PM  
**To:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K; Starr, Katherine L  
**Subject:** Re: Updated -- RTQ if asked on that damn video

This is actually the worst. Colonel Mustard in the library with a candle!

---

**From:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K  
**Sent:** Wednesday, June 8, 2016 7:53 PM  
**To:** Jhunjhunwala, Pooja; Starr, Katherine L  
**Subject:** Re: Updated -- RTQ if asked on that damn video

Hahaha, hold this. More edits.

---

**From:** Jhunjhunwala, Pooja  
**Sent:** Wednesday, June 8, 2016 7:06 PM  
**To:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K; Starr, Katherine L  
**Subject:** Re: Updated -- RTQ if asked on that damn video

Thx!

---

**From:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K  
**Sent:** Wednesday, June 8, 2016 7:05 PM  
**To:** Jhunjhunwala, Pooja; Starr, Katherine L  
**Subject:** Updated -- RTQ if asked on that damn video

A/S Frifield doesn't expect any reaction until tomorrow, but just in case:

RTQ:

B5

If pressed on

B5

Starr, Katherine L

NO DISCERNIBLE CLASSIFICATION

1

B5

NO DISCERNIBLE CLASSIFICATION

RELEASE IN  
PART B5, B6**Starr, Katherine L**

**From:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K  
**Sent:** Wednesday, June 08, 2016 5:25 PM  
**To:** Kirby, John; Toner, Mark C; Stevenson, Susan N  
**Cc:** Starr, Katherine L; Deaner, Nicole  
**Subject:** End of day

Quick and dirty one today

Today's Daily Press Brief focused on Syria, including the hospital attacks and air drops, including Russian inaction; Haiti; South Sudan; the 2013 Daily Press Briefing video. Deputy Spokesperson Toner's statement on the attack in Tel Aviv also has received extensive coverage.

Highlights: Media engagements

- [REDACTED] on background with New York Times on Niger's security and humanitarian situation

B6

Highlights: Media queries:

- Scripps research Syrian refugee arrivals
- PolitiFact on collective/mutual defense treaties
- Media queries on DPRK and nuclear plutonium fuel production; Syria; Tel Aviv attack, Eritrea; S travel.

Flagging

- Washington Post piece on GTMO posted this evening; focused on AFGH
- Tonight: Anticipated [REDACTED]
- Tomorrow: Terrorist Designation of the Yarmouk Martyrs Brigade (Syria)

B5

Starr, Katherine L

NO DISCERNIBLE CLASSIFICATION

1

**Starr, Katherine L**

**From:** Tran, Michael J  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 09, 2016 12:26 PM  
**To:** PA Press Duty  
**Subject:** FW: RFE/RL Radio Farda Seeking Comment on Video editing issue

RELEASE IN PART  
B6

Got it.

---

**From:** Eyre, Alan E (London)  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 09, 2016 12:23 PM  
**To:** Nader Sadighi  
**Subject:** RFE/RL Radio Farda Seeking Comment on Video editing issue

Dear Nader,

I'm well and I hope you are too. Since the issue isn't one relating to Iran (it wasn't an Iran briefing but rather a daily press briefing), it would be better if you contacted our Public Affairs bureau for a comment – their email is [PAPressDuty@state.gov](mailto:PAPressDuty@state.gov)

All the best- alan

Alan Eyre  
State Department Persian Language Spokesman  
Director, Iran Media/Public Diplomacy Office  
U.S. Embassy London

Work Email: [EyreAE@state.gov](mailto:EyreAE@state.gov)  
Office Phone: 020-7894-0474  
Mobile:  

B6

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

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**From:** Nader Sadighi [<mailto:> ]  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 09, 2016 5:07 PM  
**To:** Eyre, Alan E (London)  
**Subject:** Top Urgent

B6

Dear Alan,

Hope you are well and happy.  
I wonder if you would be willing to have a short comment on State Department's investigation into the edited Iran briefing video.  
If so please reply by return and let me have a contact number.  
Wishing you all the best,  
Nader

Nader Sadighi  
Senior Correspondent  
Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty/Radio Farda  
1201 Connecticut Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20036

[Redacted]

[Redacted] Direct  
[Redacted] Cell

B6

**Starr, Katherine L**

**From:** Donna O'Neill Ferguson <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Friday, June 03, 2016 6:36 PM  
**To:** PA Press Duty; PA Press  
**Subject:** FLAGGING MISTAKE in Draft Transcript: On the Record Roundtable with Secretary Kerry

RELEASE IN PART B6

B6

Upon re-listening at 11:40 into the briefing, I believe the sentence should read thusly:

**QUESTION:** Sir, if I can ask a follow-up on the video questions. Do you want people working for you who tamper with the historical record --

As oppsed to what we had:

**QUESTION:** Sir, if I can ask a follow-up on the video questions. Do you want people working for you to tamper with the historical record?

Sincerest apologies and hopefully this is in time before release and/or the editor already caught it.

On Fri, Jun 3, 2016 at 6:24 PM, Donna O'Neill Ferguson <[REDACTED]> wrote:

B6

Flagging this possible error for duty / editor! I'm about to find it and relisten now.

----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** <arshad.mohammed[REDACTED]>  
**Date:** Jun 3, 2016 6:19 PM  
**Subject:** Fwd: Draft Transcript: On the Record Roundtable with Secretary Kerry  
**To:** <donna.oferguson[REDACTED]>  
**Cc:**

Your call, but June thinks she said 'who' not 'to' in her question. Maybe re-listen to check?  
 Love you and your fellow scribes

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** "Torbat, Yeganeh (Reuters News)" <[REDACTED]>  
**Date:** June 3, 2016 at 5:43:57 PM EDT  
**To:** "Mohammed, Arshad A. (Reuters News)" <[REDACTED]>  
**Subject:** Fwd: Draft Transcript: On the Record Roundtable with Secretary Kerry

Here's the transcript. They transcribed my question as "do you want people working for you TO tamper with the historical record" but what I said was "people working for you WHO tamper with the historical record"

Sent from my iPhone



B6

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** "Wyatt, Courtnei A" <[WyattCA@state.gov](mailto:WyattCA@state.gov)>

**Date:** June 3, 2016 at 23:37:17 GMT+2

**Cc:** "Norton, John (Ryan)" <[NortonJ@state.gov](mailto:NortonJ@state.gov)>

**Subject:** Draft Transcript: On the Record Roundtable with Secretary Kerry

**Starr, Katherine L**

---

**From:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 02, 2016 9:56 PM  
**To:** Starr, Katherine L  
**Subject:** Re:

RELEASE IN PART B5

Ugh, let this week be over. Tomorrow!

---

**From:** Starr, Katherine L  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 2, 2016 9:53 PM  
**To:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K  
**Subject:** Re:

True enough and good night! Wow. Thanks again for the huddle, that was important to do for a couple reasons.

Sent from my BlackBerry 10 smartphone.

---

**From:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 2, 2016 9:51 PM  
**To:** Starr, Katherine L  
**Subject:** Re:

In terms of video? Yeah.

[REDACTED]

B5

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**From:** Starr, Katherine L  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 2, 2016 9:49 PM  
**To:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K  
**Subject:**

[REDACTED]

B5

Sent from my BlackBerry 10 smartphone.

**Starr, Katherine L**

---

**From:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 02, 2016 8:38 PM  
**To:** Starr, Katherine L  
**Subject:** Re: Richard Grenell

RELEASE IN PART B5

Yeah. [REDACTED]

B5

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**From:** Starr, Katherine L  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 2, 2016 8:36 PM  
**To:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K  
**Subject:** Re: Richard Grenell

Ah yes. [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

B5

Sent from my BlackBerry 10 smartphone.

---

**From:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 2, 2016 7:09 PM  
**To:** Starr, Katherine L  
**Subject:** RE: Richard Grenell

Video below.

---

**From:** Starr, Katherine L  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 02, 2016 7:09 PM  
**To:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K  
**Subject:** Re: Richard Grenell

On his twitter account?

Sent from my BlackBerry 10 smartphone.

---

**From:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 2, 2016 6:53 PM  
**To:** Starr, Katherine L  
**Subject:** Richard Grenell

Saying people in "the Press Office" talking about it [REDACTED]

<http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2016/06/02/obama-adviser-lashes-out-at-fox-news-amid-questions-over-deleted-footage.html>

B5

**Starr, Katherine L**

**From:** Deaner, Nicole  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 02, 2016 4:34 PM  
**To:** Starr, Katherine L  
**Subject:** FW: Politico - Ryan calls for further investigation into State Dept. video editing

**RELEASE IN PART B6**

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

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**From:** PA Press Clips  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 02, 2016 4:33 PM  
**To:** PA Monitoring Group  
**Subject:** Politico - Ryan calls for further investigation into State Dept. video editing

Ryan calls for further investigation into State Dept. video editing  
Politico  
By NICK GASS  
Thursday 03:08 PM EDT Updated 06/02/16 03:14 PM EDT

House Speaker Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) on Thursday called on the White House to further investigate the editing of a December 2013 State Department briefing video that deleted a question pertaining to secret negotiations between the United States and Iran.

The agency this week admitted to splicing out the clip on its YouTube channel.

"This admission proves once again that the White House intentionally misled the American people about the Iran deal," Ryan said in a statement through his office. "If they truly care about transparency, the administration should investigate who requested this selective editing and why."

Spokesman John Kirby said earlier Thursday that the agency would investigate the matter if more details come to light.

Deputy spokesman Mark Toner told reporters at the daily briefing later that the editing of the video was not a specific violation of agency policy "as far as we have checked in terms of our Foreign Affairs Manual" and other department guidance.

"This was not in violation of existing policies or regulations," Toner said. "We're correcting that going forward."

Toner said Kirby sent an email to the Bureau of Public Affairs on Thursday explaining the change in policy and what it is doing "to get to the bottom of this."

"Until we find reason to pursue that investigation further, we're at a dead end. But that in no way excuses the action that was taken. And I think Assistant Secretary Kirby has shown his commitment to the integrity of the bureau and the integrity of the State Department by taking the actions he's taken and being as transparent as possible in explaining why he's taking them."

The guidance, Toner said, "will make clear that all video and transcripts from daily press briefings need to be immediately and permanently archived in their entirety," with exceptions.

"In the event that narrow and compelling circumstances require edits be made, like the inadvertent release of privacy-protected information, that just as an example, that would only be made with the express permission of the assistant secretary," Toner said.

**Harry Edwards • Press Officer • U.S. Department of State**

2201 C St, NW Rm 2109, Washington, DC 20520 | 📠: BB:

<mailto:edwardsho2@state.gov> (OPENNET)

B6

**Starr, Katherine L**

From: Chuck Ross <[redacted]>  
 Sent: Thursday, June 02, 2016 11:28 AM  
 To: Trudeau, Elizabeth K  
 Cc: PA Press Duty  
 Subject: Re: Video edit question

B6

**RELEASE IN PART B6**

I have it. Thanks for getting back to me.

On Thu, Jun 2, 2016 at 10:27 AM, Trudeau, Elizabeth K <[trudeauek@state.gov](mailto:trudeauek@state.gov)> wrote:  
 Chuck, Stephanie and Lauren passed your query. At this stage, we don't have anything to add to John Kirby's briefing yesterday. We're happy to pass the transcript, if you don't have it.  
 Our thanks for the query, and best wishes.  
 Elizabeth

Elizabeth Trudeau  
 Director, Office of Press Relations

From: Hickey, Lauren A  
 Sent: Thursday, June 02, 2016 11:22 AM  
 To: 'Chuck Ross'; Beechem, Stephanie  
 Subject: RE: Video edit question

Hi Chuck --

I have not been working on this topic. I will pass it along to our press office and ask someone to get back to you.

Best,  
 Lauren

From: Chuck Ross [mailto:[redacted]]  
 Sent: Thursday, June 02, 2016 11:19 AM  
 To: Hickey, Lauren A; Beechem, Stephanie  
 Subject: Video edit question

Hi Lauren/Stephanie,

What's the name of the employee who received the Dec. 2013 call to edit the DPB video? I'm thinking of doing some FOIA work to find out more details about this. She says she doesn't remember who called her. Maybe I can find out by requesting her records.

I understand John Kirby's reluctance to not spend too much time and resources on an investigation. I think the press can fill in on that.

I won't be contacting the employee directly or anything.

Thanks,  
Chuck Ross  
The Daily Caller

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

**Starr, Katherine L**

B6

**From:** Bodinet, Philip <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 02, 2016 9:21 AM  
**To:** PA Press Duty  
**Subject:** NEIL CAVUTO - FOX NEWS CHANNEL

**RELEASE IN PART B6**

Good morning,

This is Philip with Neil Cavuto at Fox News Channel. Wanted to reach out and see if Mr. Kirby might be available for an interview today or tomorrow in the 4pm ET hour regarding the deletion of video footage from a press conference from 2013.

<http://redirect.state.sbu/?url=http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2016/06/02/state-department-admits-briefing-footage-on-iran-deal-intentionally-deleted.html>

Thank you,

Phillip Bodinet  
Producer  
"Your World with Neil Cavuto"  
Fox News Channel – New York  
Office: 212-601-2415  
Cell/text: [REDACTED]

This message and its attachments may contain legally privileged or confidential information. It is intended solely for the named addressee. If you are not the addressee indicated in this message (or responsible for delivery of the message to the addressee), you may not copy or deliver this message or its attachments to anyone. Rather, you should permanently delete this message and its attachments and kindly notify the sender by reply e-mail. Any content of this message and its attachments that does not relate to the official business of Fox News or Fox Business must not be taken to have been sent or endorsed by either of them. No representation is made that this email or its attachments are without defect.

**From:** Psaki, Jennifer R  
**Sent:** Monday, December 02, 2013 7:21 PM  
**To:** jpsak [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Fw: DRAFT TRANSCRIPT: DPB # 196

**RELEASE IN PART B6**

B6

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**From:** Schachter, Andrew N (PACE) [mailto:SchachterAN@state.gov]  
**Sent:** Monday, December 02, 2013 05:46 PM Eastern Standard Time  
**To:** PA FO Core; PA OBS\_BS&P; PA Press; PA SPOX; PA Stenos; PA-IME Staff  
**Subject:** DRAFT TRANSCRIPT: DPB # 196

Audio to use for proofing is called "12022013 dpb # 196 Psaki.WMA." Editor, please confirm receipt.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
DAILY PRESS BRIEFING

DPB # 196

MONDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2013  
(ON THE RECORD UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED)

**\*\*UNEDITED/DRAFT\*\***

1:54 p.m. EST

MS. PSAKI: Hi, everyone. Happy --

QUESTION: Happy belated birthday.

MS. PSAKI: Thank you. Thank you very much. Twenty-two. It's glorious. (Laughter.)

QUESTION: And you will be 22 for the next --

MS. PSAKI: I will be.

QUESTION: What, 10, 15 years?

MS. PSAKI: At least, at least. Well, I have nothing at the top, so Matt, let's go to what's on your mind.

QUESTION: Let's see. I have a lot --

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

QUESTION: -- but nothing is really worth starting with, so let's just start with the Secretary's trip.

**MS. PSAKI:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** Both – excluding the middle stop at Moldova, at the beginning, how much of the NAC do you expect is going to be concentrated on Afghanistan and then talking about the BSA? Will there be any Afghan officials there to talk with? And then – well, that'll be that one question for --

**MS. PSAKI:** Okay. Well, we'll clearly, as we typically do, be doing a briefing en route about the trip and about our visit to the NATO Ministerial tomorrow, where we will venture to have more specific details about who will be attending. Obviously, Afghanistan and the ongoing presence there post-2014 of the United States and of NATO will certainly be a big topic of discussion. But I will let our briefers outline more specifics en route to Brussels.

**QUESTION:** All right. Well, I was going to ask about the Middle East but – as well, the stop in Israel and the PA. But if you're just – are you going to give me the same answer, wait for the briefing on the plane?

**MS. PSAKI:** I likely will, yes.

**QUESTION:** Okay. Well, then never mind.

**MS. PSAKI:** Okay.

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

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure, Lesley.

**QUESTION:** Is – what further is happening as far as trying to resolve this issue with Afghanistan?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well --

**QUESTION:** As far as – is it true that --

**MS. PSAKI:** The BSA.

**QUESTION:** The – exactly.

**MS. PSAKI:** The signing, I assume.

**QUESTION:** Is it true that Special Envoy Dobbins has gone – is on his way to Afghanistan?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have any announcements at this point on travel for him or anyone else. Obviously, our team on the ground, Ambassador Cunningham and others, have been in close contact. At this point, we've made our position clear, and so have the Afghan people. Signing the BSA soon is the path forward, as we've said many times, to sustaining a partnership between the United States and Afghanistan to support Afghans in achieving lasting peace, security, and development. That's the message that we're conveying at every level. And as we've said before but important to reiterate here, given it's a week later now: We – deferring the signature of the agreement until after next year's election is not viable. It would not provide Afghans with the certainty that they deserve regarding their future in the critical months leading to the elections, nor would it provide the United States and NATO allies the clarity necessary for a potential post-2014 military presence.

So we're continuing to convey that. Our team on the ground is certainly hard at work. I don't have any travel announcements. If that changes, we'll certainly let all of you know.

**QUESTION:** Has Secretary spoken to President Karzai in the last couple of days on BSA?

**MS. PSAKI:** He has not spoken with him in the last couple of days.

**QUESTION:** And the Pentagon today said that this is not the end of it; after BSA is signed, the U.S. and Afghanistan have to negotiate and sign their agreement called SOFA, and that would be done by the State Department. Has any process started on SOFA, signing of SOFA with Afghanistan?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'd have to look more specifically at what they said. Maybe you're referring to the NATO SOFA that they may have to negotiate and sign, I believe, as a step? But for our purposes, there's the signing; it goes through parliament, then it would have to be signed again. Obviously, as you all are very familiar with, this doesn't outline a specific number for a troop presence, so there would be a great deal of planning in regards to that that DOD would certainly be very engaged with. But in terms of that, I'd have to look at specifically what they said. I'm not familiar with that --

**QUESTION:** Is December 21<sup>st</sup> the redline, the deadline for signing of BSA, after which you will begin preparing for all troops pull out from Afghanistan post 2014.

**MS. PSAKI:** I am not going to get into new redlines or deadlines today, I will say. But on the trip question, well, as you all know, a decision hasn't been made. You would know if it had been. It's not our preference, but no troops is certainly a potential outcome for Afghanistan if there is no BSA. So that is, again, not our preference, but natural that planning would have to take place for all different options.

**QUESTION:** Have you tried to understand why President Karzai is doing what he's doing or conducting himself the way he has? Do you have a clearer picture than we do, for instance?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't know that I have any further insight than you do. Obviously, the Secretary spoke with him last week, as you all well know. We continue to press our case for why this should be signed as quickly as possible, but I don't have any analysis of particular actions or comments in Afghanistan.

**QUESTION:** So you think that he's perhaps more concerned about his personal safety post the elections?

**MS. PSAKI:** I will let you, Said, do your own analysis. I don't have any other analysis on it.

Do we have any more on Afghanistan?

**QUESTION:** Just the trip?

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

**QUESTION:** For those of us who are interested in Moldova --

**MS. PSAKI:** Yes.

**QUESTION:** -- could you just tell us why stop in Moldova? What's the importance? We see the winery, et cetera.

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure. Moldova is a country that has taken a number of important reform steps in recent years. They have -- they're taking steps to help grow their economy, and wine is obviously a significant export. But they have a number of exports they also work with. And given the steps they've taken, the

Secretary felt it would be an important opportunity to pay a visit. You'd have to check my history and facts here, but I believe he may be if not the first, one of the first Secretaries to pay a bilateral visit to Moldova.

**QUESTION:** And also it comes, obviously, right after Ukraine decided not to sign the agreement with the EU.

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

**QUESTION:** Moldova did. So you could read into this that the Secretary wants to buck them up or give them something, a sign of support.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we had planned this trip – this trip was in the works before that decision was made. But certainly, they have put a number of reforms in place and they're working hard on their economy and the – if – the Secretary felt it was important to highlight that.

**QUESTION:** Following on that --

**QUESTION:** Okay. Can I go over just to Afghanistan for one very briefly?

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure. Okay, and then we'll go to Anne.

**QUESTION:** I was gone last week so I'm – most of last week, so what – did the Secretary speak with Karzai before or after Ambassador Rice was there?

**MS. PSAKI:** Let's see. He spoke with Karzai – President Karzai – I'd have to look back. I believe it was prior to her visit. Let me double check that for you to make sure.

**QUESTION:** So the last senior official to speak with Karzai, as far as you know, was Ambassador Rice.

**MS. PSAKI:** I believe that's correct, yes.

**QUESTION:** Just following on the Moldova for Ukraine substitution, in saying that Secretary Kerry would not, as had been widely expected, attend the OSCE – when you said that, I don't know, about 10 days ago or so --

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

**QUESTION:** -- we were just at the very beginning of this whole episode.

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

**QUESTION:** And at that point you said it was scheduling issues that had – it would force his cancellation. Are you sticking with that? Is that still the case? Or might there be some policy implications to his decision not to go to the OSCE?

**MS. PSAKI:** I am sticking with that. I'm just looking at Lesley here in my – corner of my eye. I am sticking with that. I don't have any new guidance for you on that front. Assistant Secretary Nuland is still planning to attend and travel there after joining us for the first part of the visit.

**QUESTION:** On Syria?

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

**QUESTION:** Is it --

**QUESTION:** Can you tell us the -- oh, sorry.

**QUESTION:** Sorry. Just on this charade -- charade, for Lesley -- of scheduling reasons, is it not the case that not going -- not going on this trip -- not going to Kyiv is a sign of displeasure?

**MS. PSAKI:** I will let you do your own reporting, Matt. I don't have any more analysis or comments on it from here.

**QUESTION:** But there was --

**QUESTION:** And one more quick one on Ukraine.

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

**QUESTION:** Obviously, we're seeing the demonstrations, violent crackdown.

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

**QUESTION:** What's the response from the State Department?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we're of course, naturally, closely monitoring the ongoing demonstrations, not only in Kyiv but in cities around Ukraine. As you know, since the demonstrations began on November 21<sup>st</sup>, there have been an increasing number of violent incidents, including against journalists. We stress there is no room, and we continue to stress there is no room for violence in a country that aspires to a democratic future. We continue to call on all sides to maintain calm, and on Ukrainian authorities to ensure that members of the public and the press are able to safely and peacefully exercise their rights of speech and assembly.

As I mentioned a little bit before, we still have -- Assistant Secretary Nuland is still planning to travel there. The Ukrainian foreign ministry announced that the ministerial is proceeding as planned.

**QUESTION:** But there was -- what's the reaction of --

**QUESTION:** Are you sure that Ukraine is a country that aspires to a democratic future?

**MS. PSAKI:** Any country that may aspire, certainly, these are important values to follow through on.

**QUESTION:** Right. But are you still convinced that Ukraine aspires to a westward-looking, democratic future?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we will see, Matt. Time will tell. Actions speak louder than words.

**QUESTION:** Do you -- does this --

**QUESTION:** Do you still stand by the comments made by Ambassador Nuland in her speech to the Atlantic Council a couple of weeks ago and also comments from this podium that it is your belief that Ukraine should be following the path towards joining some kind of association agreement with the EU?

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure. Our view has not changed on that. Obviously, there have been a lot of events that have happened since then, but --

**QUESTION:** And do you believe that the demonstrations on the streets are actually -- that's what they want? I mean, it seems to be that they're demonstrating because they're angry that the government hasn't taken this path that's laid been laid out for them.

**MS. PSAKI:** I would point you to the comments of the demonstrators, of which there have been many. I don't want to speak on their behalf, but our position hasn't changed on what steps they could take. Obviously, it's up to Ukraine to take those steps.

**QUESTION:** So -- but I mean the United States is -- if you don't want to give your backing to them -- at least sympathetic to what the demonstrators are asking for.

**MS. PSAKI:** Again, I mean, the demonstrators are saying a range of things, so I don't -- beyond what we've stated publicly many times, I don't have any other further public statements on our position, which has been stated by Assistant Secretary Nuland and by other officials in the past several weeks.

**QUESTION:** Given the estimates of some 300,000 people who were demonstrating across the country on Sunday, and given that they all seem, to a person, to be saying that the government is ignoring their wish to be more closely aligned with Europe, isn't it a bit disingenuous for this building to suggest that they need to show any restraint? They're not the ones who are bludgeoning people with battering rams and turning rubber bullets on the police. It seems they're taking the brunt of everything that's been happening.

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't think I took sides. I think I said that it's important for all sides to maintain calm, that there's no place for violence in a country that aspires to a democratic future. So I don't -- I would disagree with the premise of your claims.

**QUESTION:** What does this building think of the prime minister's -- called for his security forces to show restraint and seemingly to be missing in action when on Sunday there was more violence heaped upon the demonstrators, particularly in Kyiv?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I think I just expressed what our view is of violence against demonstrators, so that's what our view is.

**QUESTION:** Can I -- has the Secretary spoken to somebody in Ukraine, his counterpart?

**MS. PSAKI:** He has not in the last several days. I can check if there's been any other calls I'm not aware of.

**QUESTION:** Because one of the big issues for Ukraine is tearing itself away from Russia and looking towards Western Europe for economic support. And one of the big things is that the president of Ukraine is heading to China to look for that. And if -- I was wondering if the U.S. had offered them kind of -- some kind of assurance or reassurance economically that they could be better off by signing these deals and with the support -- and the U.S. would support any kind of reform through the International Monetary Fund.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, aside from public statements we've made, which, as Jo referenced, is -- that our belief is that European integration is the surest course to economic growth and strengthening Ukraine's democracy. That's still our belief. That's been consistently our belief. But beyond that, I'm not aware of any other discussions. Obviously, there's a lot of -- that's going on with the EU and with Russia, and beyond that we have made our position clear.

**QUESTION:** And what is the building's position on the detention of Yulia Tymoshenko?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we have consistently spoken about this in the past and expressed our concern about her detention. I know this was also a component that was potentially being worked through as an element of Ukraine getting into the EU. So we've consistently expressed concern, encouraged them to take steps forward. Obviously, there hasn't been progress on that on the ground.

**QUESTION:** I'm sorry, what did you say was the surest way to economic growth?

**MS. PSAKI:** I said European integration is the surest course to economic growth and strengthening --

**QUESTION:** Did you give the same advice to the Greeks?

(Laughter.)

**MS. PSAKI:** Matt. Behave.

Do we have any more on Ukraine or Afghanistan, since we touched on that too?

**QUESTION:** Still on Ukraine.

**MS. PSAKI:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** The Russians have proposed that the EU, Ukraine, and Russia get together to discuss some of these problems. Would the United States be in favor of that, some kind of a trilateral discussion to discuss the economic situation and political differences?

**MS. PSAKI:** It wouldn't involve the United States, so I don't have a particular position. I'm happy to talk to our team and see if we have a view on that.

Ukraine or Afghanistan? Okay, should we move on to Syria? Let's go to Margaret.

**QUESTION:** Thank you. Jen, the OPCW said over the past few days that the U.S. has stepped up, that they're going to give operational support, offering up financing. Can you give us some more detail on that?

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm. Well, I don't know if it will be satisfying, but let me try. (Laughter.) Well, as you know, the United States is committed to supporting the international community's efforts to destroy Syria's chemical weapons in the safest, most efficient and effective means possible. We have offered and are currently outfitting a U.S. vessel with field-deployable hydrolysis system technology to support the OPCW's efforts. We are in close contact with the OPCW and our international partners and remain confident that we can meet the milestones for destruction set out by the OPCW. Of course, the OPCW remains -- and the UN remain the lead coordinators on reaching out to countries and coordinating steps forward and any timeline, et cetera.

**QUESTION:** But on the financing, what is it exactly that we're offering? Is that a chunk of change? Is that financing and loans, or --

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we've offered -- we've offered in the -- prior to this, we have offered -- we have given 6 million to the OPCW and the UN Trust Fund, both in financial contributions and in kind, so I think we gave some materials as well. But this, of course, would be a DOD vessel. So I would point you to them on the specific costs. This, at this point, is an offer. So I think that's still being worked through.

**QUESTION:** So -- but beyond the vessel, the OPCW says the cost is going to be between 35 to 40 million euros for the private contractors who would actually be --

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

**QUESTION:** -- be doing the disposal themselves. So is any of that money coming through the State Department, or is the State Department topped out at \$6 million?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we've said we'd be open to exploring additional ways to provide assistance. I don't have any announcements today of additional assistance we're planning to provide, but that certainly is something we're in discussions with the OPCW about.

**QUESTION:** So we can understand correctly, it is a commercial vessel, correct, that they are trying --

**MS. PSAKI:** It is a --

**QUESTION:** -- (inaudible) --

**MS. PSAKI:** -- U.S. Government vessel, not a commercial vessel.

**QUESTION:** Right.

**MS. PSAKI:** But there is a part of this -- and this may be what you're asking about -- which is the OPCW reaching out to commercial companies about the destruction capabilities.

**QUESTION:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** So what -- so DOD is outfitting its own boat, which will be staffed with DOD personnel who will do this?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'd have to check on the specifics of that. I think some of it may still be work -- be going through the process of being worked out, Matt, because they've offered -- but obviously, how it would be staffed and the materials and the money -- I mean, all of those are pieces that are still being discussed.

**QUESTION:** Do you actually have a timeline and the location for where this would happen?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have a location. That's still being discussed. The timeline, as you know, is -- the next deadline is -- not deadline, it's a target -- is December 31<sup>st</sup>. And that is to get all of the chemical weapons out. But in terms of when the next step would be, I don't have a timeline of that.

Anne.

**QUESTION:** I realize part of this is kind of DOD-flavored, but you might know the answer.

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

**QUESTION:** So is it proper to call this a warship, or is it a military-owned, but not non-warship ship?

(Laughter.)

**MS. PSAKI:** That is a very specific ship question. I would hesitate to answer incorrectly. I'd have to check on specifically how we categorize it. I don't believe it is a warship, but let me see if we can get more specification on how we – what we call it exactly.

**QUESTION:** Okay. And on the policy side, I mean, is there any disappointment here that after casting about to – for a friend here, it ends up being the U.S. having to essentially do this on its own?

**MS. PSAKI:** I wouldn't categorize it that way. I mean, certainly this is a priority for the U.S., as it is for the international community, to destroy and eliminate the chemical weapons. The OPCW is still talking to countries. There are countries that have made public comments about their willingness to help, so we'll see how that all shakes out. And certainly, we'd welcome the support or contribution of other countries.

**QUESTION:** Well, I'd imagine from your perspective, it should be a shared priority among many nations who would also share the same goal of the ultimate destruction, right? I mean, everybody was waving a flag when that – when the thing was signed.

**MS. PSAKI:** Certainly, and there are countries, as you know, throughout that have been open to contributing that couldn't for a variety of reasons, whether it's regulations or capacity or resources. But they're still talking to countries about contributing and being a part of this, and certainly we're hopeful of that as well.

**QUESTION:** So if the question is: "Are you surprised that you've been left holding the bag on this once again," --

**MS. PSAKI:** We're not holding the bag yet, Matt.

**QUESTION:** -- the answer would be no, you're not surprised. You expected your friends in Europe to wimp out.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we made clear we were open to contributing from the beginning, Matt. There are other countries that have expressed an openness to contributing in some capacity. They're all going to make their decisions about what that will – what will – that will entail, and we'll let the OPCW decide how all of it will work together.

**QUESTION:** What about Russia, who you made this deal with and has been instrumental, as you say, in helping move this towards a resolution? Why can't Russia contribute in a significant way like you can?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not familiar with what they have contributed or what they've committed to contribute or what they have not. Obviously, there are financial ways – there are a number of ways to contribute. We certainly welcome any country's contribution. There are different ways that each country can do that.

**QUESTION:** Are you in touch with the Russians specifically about making an – a contribution?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not sure. I'd have to check on that and see if it's a discussion that's been a part of the regular discussions with Foreign Minister Lavrov.

**QUESTION:** Jen, still on Syria.

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

**QUESTION:** Yesterday, Mike Rogers, the chair of the Intelligence Committee, warned that there are many jihadis that are Americans and Europeans and Westerners and so on, that they go back and forth and so on. Are

you concerned about these jihadis being trained in Syria and now they come back to the United States and perhaps organize terrorist acts?

**MS. PSAKI:** I haven't seen his comments specifically. I know -- I believe he may have been on a Sunday show yesterday. I haven't read them fully. We've -- we're naturally concerned, as you know, about extremists whether they're going in and certainly and if they're coming out. I talked a little bit, I think it was a week or two ago, about ways that we coordinate with our international partners in the region to kind of track this and efforts we undertake to make sure we're watching, but of course we're concerned. I don't have any other specifics for you.

**QUESTION:** Are you pressing your partners in this case, like the Saudis and the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, that have been supplying arms and money in the past for these extremist groups -- are you pressing them not to do so?

**MS. PSAKI:** We have consistently, and all the countries, as you know, have agreed repeatedly to contribute to assistance through the SMC.

**QUESTION:** Finally, yesterday there was a report in the *Telegraph*, *The London Telegraph*, that says basically the Free Syrian Army now is becoming a group of warlords and accumulating money and gangs and so on and have no interest, really, in reaching a settlement. Is that your assessment, or are you still working very closely with General Idris?

**MS. PSAKI:** We are still working very closely with General Idris, we're still working towards a Geneva conference in January, and we still believe there's no military solution, as you know.

More on Syria?

**QUESTION:** Still on Syria.

**MS. PSAKI:** Or -- go ahead, Roz.

**QUESTION:** Still on Syria, the Iranian Foreign Minister Zarif did an interview with Al Jazeera this morning. And when it came to Geneva II, he said that while Iran is, quote, not begging to attend the talks in January, it would attend if invited. My first question: Would the U.S. be willing to invite Iran to take part in these talks? And if so, what does the U.S. believe that Iran could bring to this situation to try to end the civil war?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, no decisions have been made about participation yet. There's another trilateral meeting on December 20<sup>th</sup> coming up that we'll be participating in with the UN and the Russians. Our position hasn't changed on Iran's participation or whether we believe they should be invited. They have not endorsed the Geneva communique. That's a condition we feel is necessary, but obviously this will continue to be discussed at the next trilateral meeting.

**QUESTION:** But given the -- that the UN is now estimating that upwards of 120-25,000 people may have been killed in the civil war to date --

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

**QUESTION:** -- is there some sort of leverage that Tehran could bring to the table to try to induce the Assad regime to, if nothing else, stop the killing and try to at least put in some sort of ceasefire?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, this goes back to the premise that attendees should be endorsing the Geneva communique, because that is what the purpose and the goal of the conference is. So, I don't have any speculation on what leverage they may or may not have, but the conversations we have had with them in recent weeks have been about their nuclear program and moving towards a first-step agreement on that. They've not been focused on Syria. And our position on whether or not they should attend the Geneva conference in January hasn't changed.

**QUESTION:** But you do feel that if they do endorse Geneva I, there's a great deal of value for Iran's participation --

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we'd have to --

**QUESTION:** -- considering that it is --

**MS. PSAKI:** We'd have to evaluate it, Said. I don't want to get ahead of --

**QUESTION:** But it's a very ally of the regime. It supports other elements that help the regime in its fight, like Hezbollah so on.

**MS. PSAKI:** If that is a step they take, we can have a robust discussion in here about it.

**QUESTION:** Jen, are there any contacts currently between the United States Government and the Syrian regime? I mean, I know Secretary Kerry spoke months and months ago --

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** -- to Foreign Minister Muallem. Is there anything going on at the moment?

**MS. PSAKI:** And we have for some time, as you know, have had different channels, but I don't have anything specific for you. I can check if there have been any recent contacts on any level.

**QUESTION:** So there were reports over the weekend that some European countries are quietly beginning to --

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

**QUESTION:** -- reopen diplomatic conversations or channels with the Syrian regime because, I think, the fear is that this is just so blocked at the moment that they're --

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

**QUESTION:** -- it's not going anywhere.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, let me see if there have been any contacts at any level of the regime. We've -- they have happened in the past, as you mentioned, so I will see if there's more to report on that.

**QUESTION:** Can I go back to the Iranians and taking part in Geneva? I mean, I think over the last week or so, when there's been, like, various bouts of violence in Syria, that the Iranian Government has said that there needs to be a political solution to the situation in Syria. So don't you think that Iran is making more positive comments? I mean, I don't think the Russians have gone far beyond saying that there needs to be a political solution. They haven't said anything about President Assad leaving (inaudible).

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, the whole premise – I mean the whole goal is to create a transitional governing body. That's the goal of a Geneva conference. So, certainly, they haven't embraced that as the focus of the Geneva communique, and --

**QUESTION:** Well, even though the Russians have agreed to a political transition, your definition of a transition is far different from the – than the Russians' definition of a transition. So if the Iranians were to say, like, okay, we accept a political transition, I mean, does that really mean that they --

**MS. PSAKI:** It's not just about a political transition. It's about embracing the Geneva communique, which they have not done. If they do that, we will evaluate whether or not we'd support their – an invitation to them to attend the conference.

**QUESTION:** Zarif also told us that his country is not interested in aggravating any sectarian tensions between Shiite and Sunni, between Alawite and other major Islamic communities; that they're trying to, in their efforts, promote more harmony, more peace. Does that add any – does that change the complexion at all, particularly in Syria?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't want to speak too specifically to an interview I haven't yet seen yet, and neither has anyone on our team. Broadly speaking, obviously we took a significant step forward with the first-step agreement on their nuclear program, but there are remaining concerns that we have, as you all are familiar with, whether it's their involvement in support of the regime in Syria or humanitarian issues, and so that has not changed that. I can take a closer look once we see the transcript of the interview and see if we have more comments on Foreign Minister Zarif's comments.

**QUESTION:** You're saying your team does not watch Al Jazeera?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, that is not true; we do. However, I believe there's only been a very short clip that has played of this interview that I'm sure will get lots of attention once it all plays.

**QUESTION:** Beyond the interview, he's freely reaching out. He visited Kuwait. He's reaching out to the other Gulf countries. He wants to visit Saudi Arabia. I mean, there is an effort underway to alleviate their fears and actually encourage them towards participating in Geneva II to make it a success. You must have some sort of a reading of this effort.

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have any particular reading of it for you, Said. Our position, I think, has been pretty clear on whether or not they attend the Geneva conference.

**QUESTION:** I have another really quick logistics thing. On the December 20<sup>th</sup> meeting, that's Wendy Sherman and that – it's the same iteration?

**MS. PSAKI:** It is that level. Exactly, yes. Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** Is that new or was that announced last week or something --

**MS. PSAKI:** I believe we talked about it last week as being the next meeting.

**QUESTION:** On China – (inaudible).

**QUESTION:** Please, Jen, can we stay on Iran, please?

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure. Let's stay on Iran and then we can go to China.

**QUESTION:** On the 6<sup>th</sup> of February in this room, I had a very brief exchange with your predecessor, Victoria Nuland --

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

**QUESTION:** -- about Iran. And with your indulgence, I will read it in its entirety for the purpose of the record and so you can respond to it.

*"Rosen: There have been reports that intermittently, and outside of the formal P5+1 mechanisms, the Obama Administration, or members of it, have conducted direct secret bilateral talks with Iran. Is that true or false?"*

*"Nuland: We have made clear, as the Vice President did at Munich, that in the context of the larger P5+1 framework, we would be prepared to talk to Iran bilaterally. But with regard to the kind of thing that you're talking about on a government-to-government level, no."*

That's the entirety of the exchange.

As we now know, senior state department officials had, in fact, been conducting direct, secret bilateral talks with senior officials of the Iranian Government in Oman, perhaps dating back to 2011 by that point.

So the question today is a simple one: When the briefer was asked about those talks and flatly denied them from the podium, that was untrue, correct?

**MS. PSAKI:** I mean, James, I -- that -- you're talking about a February briefing, so 10 months ago. I don't think we've outlined or confirmed contacts or specifics beyond a March meeting. I'm not going to confirm others beyond that at this point. So I don't know that I have any more for you.

**QUESTION:** Do you stand by the accuracy of what Ms. Nuland told me, that there had been no government-to-government contacts, no secret direct bilateral talks with Iran as of the date of that briefing, February 6<sup>th</sup>? Do you stand by the accuracy of that?

**MS. PSAKI:** James, I have no new information for you today on the timing of when there were any discussions with any Iranian officials.

**QUESTION:** Let me try it one last way, Jen --

**MS. PSAKI:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** -- and I appreciate your indulgence.

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** Is it the policy of the State Department, where the preservation or the secrecy of secret negotiations is concerned, to lie in order to achieve that goal?

**MS. PSAKI:** James, I think there are times where diplomacy needs privacy in order to progress. This is a good example of that. Obviously, we have made clear and laid out a number of details in recent weeks about discussions and about a bilateral channel that fed into the P5+1 negotiations, and we've answered questions on it, we've confirmed details. We're happy to continue to do that, but clearly, this was an important component leading up to the agreement that was reached a week ago.

**QUESTION:** Since you, standing at that podium last week, did confirm that there were such talks, at least as far back as March of this year, I don't see what would prohibit you from addressing directly this question: Were there secret direct bilateral talks between the United States and Iranian officials in 2011?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have anything more for you today. We've long had ways to speak with the Iranians through a range of channels, some of which you talked – you mentioned, but I don't have any other specifics for you today.

**QUESTION:** One more on Iran?

**QUESTION:** *The Los Angeles Times* and *Politico* have reported that those talks were held as far back as 2011. Were those reports inaccurate?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not sure which reports you're talking about. Are you talking about visits that the Secretary and others made to Oman, or are you talking about other reports?

**QUESTION:** I'm talking about U.S. officials meeting directly and secretly with Iranian officials in Oman as far back as 2011. *The Los Angeles Times* and *Politico* have reported those meetings. Were those reports inaccurate?

**MS. PSAKI:** I have nothing more for you on it, James, today.

**QUESTION:** One more on Iran?

**MS. PSAKI:** On Iran? Let's just finish Iran and then we can go to China. Go ahead, Roz.

**QUESTION:** One of – one more on Iran. Foreign Minister Zarif said, directly contradicting the Obama Administration's contention that sanctions worked, he told our interviewer that when the sanctions were first imposed, Iran had 200 working centrifuges. Today, they have more than 19,000. What is this building's reaction to his comment that sanctions did not work and did not bring Iran to the negotiating table?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, again, I would like to look more closely at the context of the comments. But, just as reminder, President Rouhani and others have talked about how the impact – how growing the economy and putting an end – doing – bringing an end to the sanctions is something that was a priority for them in order to help the economy and the Iranian people. There's no question, if you look just at the facts of the impact of oil revenues, the impact on their economic growth was large that there was a huge impact of – that there – the sanctions had an enormous impact, and that that was a driving factor in bringing the Iranians back to the negotiating table.

In terms of progress made on their efforts to develop a nuclear weapon, whether through centrifuges or at their various facilities, that to me sounds like a separate question. Obviously, there was concerns about steps they were taking and progress they were making, which was why it was so important to come to an acceptable agreement that would halt and roll back the progress of their program.

**QUESTION:** Just to follow up on that, though --

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

**QUESTION:** -- Secretary Kerry, when he did his round robin of interviews after the announcement of the deal in Geneva, more than once stated that when Iran had reached out to the Bush-Cheney Administration in 2003,

Iran was only in possession of 164 centrifuges. Now, he would go on to say, they have 19,000, and this therefore represents the best possible deal that could be secured.

Isn't it a fact that since the Obama-Biden Administration took office, 70 percent of Iran's centrifuges have been installed?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I'd have to look at the statistics, James, but we have not questioned the fact that Iran has made progress on enrichment and on developing a nuclear weapon. We have not questioned that. That's one of the reasons why we stepped up sanctions over the past couple of years. The President and Secretary Kerry were big proponents of that. We worked with the international community to do just that to put that necessary pressure in place.

The point I was trying to make to Roz is that -- what she's asking sounds to me like two separate questions, so that was --

**QUESTION:** Right. I'm pursuing the separate one part that she carved out, and that is to say -- and if this is untrue, I'd be grateful to be disabused of the notion -- but the great bulk of Iran's progress in the development of its enrichment program has taken place under President Obama's watch, correct?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'd have to check on the specific numbers. The --

**QUESTION:** You're not prepared to dispute that statement, as --

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, James, I think what we're focused on at this point is the fact that we're now at a point where we are halting and rolling back the progress of their program and we're working towards a comprehensive agreement to bring an end to it. I can't speculate for you what would happen without -- what would have happened without sanctions. I would venture to guess --

**QUESTION:** (Inaudible) sanctions.

**MS. PSAKI:** But they were being paired together, so that's why I'm bringing it into the conversation.

**QUESTION:** But the context of the question was exactly: "The Obama Administration says we showed up because our economy is falling apart. I'm here to tell you that's not the case. We have our own reasons for coming."

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we will take a close look at his comments and we'll have more to say about them once we do.

**QUESTION:** Can I just go back to the Geneva meeting and --

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** -- December 20<sup>th</sup> with Wendy Sherman?

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

**QUESTION:** This is --

**MS. PSAKI:** It's that level -- in terms of specific attendance, I'll have to just double-check that for you.

QUESTION: Oh, okay.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

QUESTION: This is going to be the first of the political meetings towards the next -- the comprehensive agreement --

MS. PSAKI: Well, they also --

QUESTION: -- or this is the technical discussions?

MS. PSAKI: No, no, no.

QUESTION: No, this is Syria.

MS. PSAKI: This is -- sorry, this is Syria.

QUESTION: Oh, I'm sorry.

MS. PSAKI: This is Syria.

QUESTION: Excuse me. I'm sorry.

MS. PSAKI: So this is the pre-Geneva. No, it's okay. It's confusing. Lots of Genevas.

QUESTION: Okay. But I did have an Iran question, actually.

QUESTION: But is there any new -- I mean --

QUESTION: Yeah.

QUESTION: -- when is it that you're going to start to negotiate the comprehensive deal with Iran?

MS. PSAKI: Well, right now, what we're focused on is the technical discussions leading up to the start of the six-month --

QUESTION: Right.

QUESTION: So do you have a date for those?

MS. PSAKI: I don't yet have a date on those.

QUESTION: Or a place?

MS. PSAKI: I don't yet have a place. It's being worked through. Hopefully we'll have an update for you all in the coming days.

QUESTION: And can I ask -- I don't know if you had seen the reports that the new British envoy to Iran is actually going to visit Tehran tomorrow. I wondered what the --

MS. PSAKI: I haven't seen that.

**QUESTION:** Well, I wanted a U.S. reaction to this following on to the question I asked last week about how far along the line you are prepared to go with your new diplomatic relations or not with Iran.

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm. I still don't have any prediction of any step beyond what step we've already taken, which is being a part of the P5+1 agreement on the first step here with Iran. Obviously, different countries are going to make their own decisions, and as with most issues, we certainly support that.

**QUESTION:** Would it be helpful, though? Do you believe it's helpful that the British envoy could be going to Tehran?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't know that I have that level of analysis on it. I don't have all the details on what the purpose of the trip is or what they hope to accomplish. And obviously, every country will make their own decisions about diplomatic relationships.

**QUESTION:** Jen, one more on the --

**QUESTION:** East China Sea?

**QUESTION:** -- secret negotiations with Iran.

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

**QUESTION:** I apologize if you've already addressed this, but there have been reports that the secret negotiations that the U.S. was engaging in with Iran created a feeling of resentment among P5+1 allies such as France, and then that contributed to a rift among the P5+1 and made it difficult to reach consensus within that group. Do you have a reaction to that or a comment on that?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't want to speak to anonymous reports about what may or may not be the feelings by other countries, but I will reiterate for you that this was -- these discussions were fed into the P5+1 process. That is the process that we ultimately all worked through to achieve a first-step agreement here. The P5+1 members, as well as our friends in Israel, were briefed early this fall.

As to the discussions, we have always been clear we've been open to bilateral discussions with Iran; that there are a range of channels to do that through; that if anything got serious, that we would certainly be briefing our important partners on that; and that's exactly what we did in this case.

**QUESTION:** Jen --

**QUESTION:** And when did the talks begin?

**MS. PSAKI:** James, you're so tricky over there. (Laughter.)

**QUESTION:** Can I ask (inaudible) about China?

**MS. PSAKI:** Let me just say one thing, though, for James. It's important here too -- and then I promise we'll go to China -- it's important here also to note, though, that these really picked up after President Rouhani's election, that in terms of the discussion of specific pieces about how to move forward, what kind of -- what an agreement could look like, that's when it picked up. So I understand that's not answering your question, but I felt it was important to --

**QUESTION:** But just on the basis of methodology and removing the specifics of Iran and who's president or who's Secretary of State, if you were able to stand there at the podium last week and say, "Yes, I'm confirming a certain set of talks that occurred in March," explain to me what is it that prohibits you from saying, yes or no, that a certain set of talks occurred two years ago?

**MS. PSAKI:** If I have more details for you, James, I will – happy to share them.

**QUESTION:** I didn't ask you – I'm asking for your thinking about why you're not addressing the question, not the specifics of the meetings. What is it that prohibits you from addressing a question about meetings that are two years old?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not going to do a psychiatrist chair today.

Go ahead. On China?

**QUESTION:** What about the couch? (Laughter.)

**QUESTION:** Thank you, Jen. So as we know, the U.S. Government has already told U.S. carriers to comply with China's requirements before any flights pass through the new air defense zone established by the Chinese Government. So does that mean the U.S. Government has recognized this new air defense zone established by the Chinese Government?

**MS. PSAKI:** So let me be absolutely as clear as I can be here because I know there's been a range of reporting. It has been – some of it has been inaccurate, to no fault of – perhaps it's our fault for not explaining it well enough. So we are not – the State Department is not the point of contact with airlines. The FAA is the point of contact with airlines. There has not been any information that has been put out or confirmed that I am aware of that has conveyed what has or has not been communicated in that capacity to airlines.

There is – for safety and security of passengers, U.S. carriers operate internationally – operate consistently as a process with the notices to airmen issued by foreign countries, as is the case in this case. Their concerns are about the safety and security of passengers. That is different from what the U.S. Government policy is. It is not – this is in no way indicates U.S. Government acceptance of China's requirements in the newly declared ADIZ and has absolutely no bearing on the firm and consistent U.S. Government position that we do not accept the legitimacy of China's requirements.

This is a case where China announced this in an uncoordinated fashion. It's inconsistent with standard practice. And their\* requirements for operating exceed internationally accepted practice in this capacity. So I don't know how much more clear that it is, but it does contradict a bit your question, so I wanted –

**QUESTION:** It looks like we received the statement or the Q&A from the State Department, so it looks like it's from the U.S. Government. And also, you are saying --

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, in that statement, which I certainly was well aware of, what was conveyed in there is that for safety and – for the safety and security of passengers, U.S. carriers operate consistently internationally with the notices to airmen issued by foreign governments. It did not convey that – anything specific about what had been communicated to airlines. It did not convey that the U.S. Government supported this effort. So I'm very familiar with the statement you're referring to, and there were a lot of – there were some assumptions made.

**QUESTION:** So (inaudible) --

**QUESTION:** Okay. It looks like --

**QUESTION:** -- that the FAA did not instruct airlines to comply with the Chinese regulations?

**MS. PSAKI:** I would point you to the FAA for what they did or did not communicate to commercial airlines.

**QUESTION:** Okay. Well, the FAA is part of the U.S. Government, is it not?

**MS. PSAKI:** They are. They --

**QUESTION:** Yes.

**MS. PSAKI:** Certainly, they are not housed in the State Department, however. (Laughter.)

**QUESTION:** So -- I understand that, but the State Department does have a representative -- you're familiar with the ICAO?

**MS. PSAKI:** I am not.

**QUESTION:** Okay. It's in Montreal.

**MS. PSAKI:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** It's a good excuse to get to Montreal --

**MS. PSAKI:** Good.

**QUESTION:** -- if you ever want to go up there.

**MS. PSAKI:** I will take that advice.

**QUESTION:** It's the International Civilian -- it's the civilian airline -- the UN agency for airlines. Do you know if the United States is going to use its membership in the ICAO to oppose this Chinese decision?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't.

**QUESTION:** And if you don't know, could you ask?

**MS. PSAKI:** Yeah, I'm happy to check on that for you, Matt. Absolutely.

**QUESTION:** And when you say that the U.S. Government does not accept the legitimacy of the Chinese requirements --

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, it doesn't accept -- yeah, the Chinese requirements, right.

**QUESTION:** Right. That's what you said.

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

**QUESTION:** Doesn't that -- if the FAA has been telling airlines that they have to comply with this, or that they should comply with it, how is that not accepting -- the government accepting the legitimacy?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, there's a whole field of regulations and regulatory policy that I am certainly far from an aviation expert, as it evidenced by your Montreal question. So I would point you to them on that.

Evidence of the fact that the U.S. Government does not accept China's requirement is by the fact that the announcement will not change how the United States conducts military operations in the region, which is something DOD announced last week. And that is certainly a U.S. Government decision to make.

**QUESTION:** So does that mean that U.S. Government planes will not obey the -- or will not follow the Chinese requirements if they're flying through this airspace?

**MS. PSAKI:** Military planes?

**QUESTION:** Say the Secretary of State flying on an Air Force plane to Seoul or to Tokyo will not notify the --

**MS. PSAKI:** I am not aware of any upcoming Seoul trip coming up.

**QUESTION:** Well, the Vice President is there right now, or in Tokyo, at least. Are you saying that his plane, an Air Force plane, will not follow the requirements of the Chinese?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I am saying military planes would not, and that level of specificity I'd certainly have to check and see where that falls in.

**QUESTION:** What is this episode -- what impact is this episode having on U.S.-Sino relations?

**MS. PSAKI:** There are times when we agree and there are times when we disagree, as you know. We've made clear our concerns about not only what was announced but how this was announced, the fact that there was no prior notice. As you also know, Vice President Biden is in the region now on a prior planned trip. He will, of course, be meeting with key leaders to discuss a range of issues. Certainly, this could be a topic of discussion, but there are a number of other issues that we discuss both with China and other partners in the region.

**QUESTION:** And has the pivot to Asia worked? Is this evidence of the pivot working?

**MS. PSAKI:** I wouldn't categorize this into -- I wouldn't put this in the evaluation category of whether or not it worked. Our pivot to Asia, or rebalance to Asia, means focusing on Asia and the important partnership we have with Asia, with countries in the region, the economic and strategic partners. And nothing is further evidence of that than the Vice President's trip there, the fact that, as you know, the Secretary will be going back to Asia soon, that he was just there a couple of months ago with Secretary Hagel. So that is evidence of our commitment to the region. And we work with them on a -- countries in the region on a broad range of issues.

**QUESTION:** But as we survey the last five years of this Administration, would you say that China is less aggressive in its serial commission of human rights abuses, currency manipulation, cyber warfare against U.S. businesses and government, territorial aggression, or is it better than it used to be?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not going to do an evaluation of that. Obviously, we work with them on economic issues, we work with them on strategic issues. There are still issues, including human rights, including this issue we're talking about now, that we express concerns about when warranted, and we'll continue to do that. But we know that the relationship is a vital one and one that we need to keep plugging away at even when we disagree.

**QUESTION:** Jen, could I (inaudible) for a second?

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

**QUESTION:** Is it fair to characterize the U.S. position as being that aside from the official policy, for the purposes of safety and avoiding some kind of unfortunate incident, that commercial carriers should abide by the Chinese ADIZ requirements?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have -- I'd point you again to the FAA on more specifics than what I just conveyed. There are a range of regulations and policies that, of course, they oversee or are in place, but our general position as a U.S. Government is that we don't accept China's requirements. And obviously, the military -- actions of military exercises is evidence of that.

**QUESTION:** Jen, this comes from --

**QUESTION:** Sorry, sorry. Just a quick follow-up on that.

**MS. PSAKI:** Go ahead.

**QUESTION:** It looks like the two main U.S. airlines are complying with -- are taking steps to comply. Delta and United are the two that have flight routes through the area, which seems to have kind of created a little bit of confusion/consternation in Japan over a perceived rift with Japanese policy, which is to not allow U.S. commercial airliners to file their flight plans with China. Do you have a -- do you have any kind of reassurance or any kind of response to that?

**MS. PSAKI:** We coordinate closely with Japan and with South Korea and all of the countries in the region about a range of issues. And certainly on this issue, we have been in touch with Japan and will continue to be. This is -- for specific actions of individual commercial airliners, I would point you to them or the FAA on any regulations.

**QUESTION:** But -- so you're not -- but you're not afraid for the safety or concerned about the safety of U.S. citizens on flights that are flying through the area?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, certainly safety and security of citizens should be of concern to everyone. Obviously, there are policies in place and regulations in place because of that. But we don't oversee airline regulations. The FAA does, so I would point you to them.

**QUESTION:** (Inaudible.) Did the United States Government -- the position has changed toward this ADIZ, or not changed? What is the position to ADIZ now?

**MS. PSAKI:** It has not changed. We -- China announced the ADIZ without prior consultations even though the newly-announced ADIZ overlaps with parts of longstanding ADIZs of Japan, the Republic of Korea, and Taiwan, and includes territory administered by Japan. As I mentioned, we -- the fact that China's announcement has caused confusion and increased the risk of accidents only further underscores the validity of concerns and the need for China to rescind the procedures. It's consistently been our position and one we have communicated both publicly and privately. I know there was some confusion over the weekend about airlines and specifically.

**QUESTION:** Jen, you said that you are not still -- not accepting China's new air defense zone. But I wonder, like, Japan has its own air defense zone, and also part of it covers Taiwan. But it looks like the U.S. doesn't say anything about it. So do you think there is sort of a double standard? Why do you react so strongly to China's air defense zone?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, one of the reasons is that they announced this without prior consultations. It was inconsistent with longstanding procedure and process. And obviously, it overlaps with a number of other longstanding air defense zones of some other neighboring countries.

**QUESTION:** Jen --

**QUESTION:** Jen, you do not contest the ability of China to declare such a identification zone; it's just the manner in which they did it, or the extent?

**MS. PSAKI:** No. I think I have -- I've just consistently said that we believe they should rescind the procedures. I've just -- I've also stated a couple of times that we don't accept China's requirements. So I think I've made that pretty clear.

**QUESTION:** (Inaudible.)

**QUESTION:** Is the first --

**QUESTION:** In response to the -- China's declaration of its own ADIZ, the South Korean Government is poised to expand its own ADIZ, so-called KADIZ, to the South China Sea. What is the position of the United States? Would you encourage it or discourage it?

**MS. PSAKI:** I haven't seen those reports, or I don't even know if they're reports or if there's been an announcement. I haven't seen any announcement, I guess I should say. So let me check into that, and --

**QUESTION:** They say they have already started consultations with the United States.

**MS. PSAKI:** I'd have to check into it and see if we have more to say on that.

**QUESTION:** Is this the first time the U.S. has called --

**QUESTION:** Jennifer, you talk about safety --

**QUESTION:** -- for the zone to be rescinded?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'd have to check on that for you, Roz.

**QUESTION:** Can we change topic?

**QUESTION:** No.

**QUESTION:** You talk about safety. Are you really concerned that the Chinese may down an airliner or something?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not predicting that, but certainly there is -- they created these Air Defense Identification Zones, they've asked for prior flight plans. So of course, the security and safety is part of the regulatory process, and -- but I don't have any predictions. It's just the question of abiding by it.

**QUESTION:** Is it a real concern, downing an airliner?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't think I have any more for you on that question.

**QUESTION:** Jen, when you're taking that question that Roz had --

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** -- could you also check whether the United States actually is directly asking the Chinese to rescind it?

**MS. PSAKI:** Happy to. Sure.

**QUESTION:** Thank you.

**QUESTION:** Well, at least --

**QUESTION:** Apart from the specific concerns about how this was announced without any prior notice, its excessiveness, at least in terms of other regulations, and the safety risks that you say it cause, do you have any -- are there broader concerns about this area being identified as essentially the entire East China Sea? Is the U.S. concerned that the Chinese are looking at anything on a map that has the word "China" in it as all their own?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, part of the concern is certainly that it overlaps with parts of other --

**QUESTION:** Right. But in terms of territorial claims --

**MS. PSAKI:** As well as territory administered by Japan, sure.

**QUESTION:** Right, right. But in terms of China's territorial claims, are you concerned that this is the first step or could be a first step towards actually moving in some kind of forceful way to take control of areas of territory and ocean maritime space that it says that it owns?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I don't want to make a prediction of that.

**QUESTION:** No, but I'm asking if you were concerned --

**MS. PSAKI:** But --

**QUESTION:** -- that this is a step in that direction, apart from the specific problems with the no prior notice and all that other -- the safety concerns.

**MS. PSAKI:** But one of the specific problems is also that this includes area -- territory administered by Japan, it includes overlapping area with other countries in the region. So certainly, that does touch on what your question is here. In terms of a prediction of what it will mean in the future, I certainly wouldn't venture to make that at this point.

**QUESTION:** Right. Well, the Chinese say that they would be well within their rights also to declare one of these zones over the entire -- over the South China Sea. Are you concerned about the possibility of that?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, you're familiar with what our position is on that, and we've long --

**QUESTION:** Well, that's over the territorial disputes over the -- it's a question of sovereignty for these little atolls and bits of rock.

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

**QUESTION:** Would you be as opposed as you are to this if the Chinese did it for the South China Sea, or is that a hypothetical question that you will wait to bash the Chinese over the head for once they – if and when they do it?

**MS. PSAKI:** It is a hypothetical question at this stage in time.

**QUESTION:** All right.

**QUESTION:** One more thing. Just one more thing on that. China at the same time has announced they sent a fighter jet against United States and Japanese aircraft last week. Did you comment on that?

**MS. PSAKI:** I am not familiar with that specific report. In – where, exactly?

**QUESTION:** If it's true, are you concerned about these Chinese announcement?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'd have to look at the specific report, and that may be a DOD question.

James.

**QUESTION:** Given that China makes this declaration --

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

**QUESTION:** -- and we regard it as thoroughly problematic, if not illegal, and therefore we have on our hands a dispute with the Chinese --

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

**QUESTION:** -- which is to be adjudicated somehow in a nonviolent way, wasn't it a kind of a provocative act for the United States to fly B-52s through that very zone in a short time thereafter?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I would point you to DOD on that, but I would reiterate the fact that we have made clear that this action, this announcement, is not going to change our military exercises. And that is an example of that.

**QUESTION:** So other than taking -- other than the Vice President, are you aware -- or has there been at this point any conversations that you're aware of in this -- from this building with the Chinese directly? It's kind of on Jill's question. And if not, do you expect them or is this going to be left up to the Vice President when he goes to --

**MS. PSAKI:** Let me check. I know we have expressed concerns. I mentioned this last week, Matt, so let me just make sure you have it.

**QUESTION:** Jen, the -- Secretary Kerry did meet on Wednesday with a senior Chinese official?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'd have to --

**QUESTION:** On Wednesday, the vice premier.

**QUESTION:** Lu.

**QUESTION:** Yeah.

**MS. PSAKI:** I'd have to look back at that. It seems like a long time ago.

**QUESTION:** I know it does. And it was happening on Wednesday.

**MS. PSAKI:** Deputy Secretary Burns met last week with a Chinese official where this was a topic of discussion. Also, Assistant Secretary Russel spoke with the ambassador about a week ago, and Ambassador Locke has also been in touch, of course, on the ground. In terms of specific contacts over the last couple of days, I'm happy to check and see what else we can read out for all of you.

**QUESTION:** Are you taking this to the UN in any forum there?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have any prediction of that, James, at this point in time.

**QUESTION:** New topic?

**QUESTION:** So it's strictly a bilateral or a multilateral thing, but outside the auspices of the UN is how you're going to seek to resolve it?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I don't have anything for you on it at this point. We're taking this day by day. I conveyed for you what we've done and what we've communicated. But obviously, we're taking steps day by day.

**QUESTION:** But is that a kind of – is that a consideration?

**MS. PSAKI:** Not that I'm aware of, Elise. But obviously, we're taking this day by day.

**QUESTION:** Can we change --

**QUESTION:** New subject?

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure, Jill. Go ahead.

**QUESTION:** I'm still on China. Can you actually clarify this? China's argument is that we institute the ADIZ that other countries have already instituted. If you're saying that China does not have a right to do that, they can say, well, what's good for the goose is good for the gander. And it doesn't seem like you have a legal foot to stand on. If you're opposed to the way in which they did it or the extent of it, these can be a subject of debate. And China has said we can get rid of our ADIZ if the Japanese get rid of theirs. I mean, something like that could happen. But somehow – are you really saying that you do not accept – you do not give China the right to declare a defense identification zone?

**MS. PSAKI:** I think I've thoroughly outlined what our concerns are, so I'm not sure I have much more to add to your question.

**QUESTION:** Just on another topic, Jen – sorry.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we were going to go to Jill next, and then I'm happy to go to you.

**QUESTION:** North Korea?

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

QUESTION: Merrill Newman.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: You've seen probably, or read at least, his so-called confession. Do you have any comments about that, any reaction? And what is the latest on his status?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the latest is – and let me do this first and then I'll do the second part. On November 30<sup>th</sup>, North Korea permitted the Embassy of Sweden, our protecting power, to consular access to Merrill Newman. It – and given his advanced age and health conditions, we continue to urge North Korea to release him so he may return home and reunite with his family.

We, of course, have seen the Korean Central News Agency report regarding Mr. Newman's detention. According to the report, he apologized for the misunderstanding that led him – led to his detention. We don't have any other further information regarding the reason for his detention. But again, given his age and health, we continue to call for North Korea to release him as quickly as possible.

QUESTION: Do you believe that the North Korean – that that apology was – that he wrote and that was released by the North Koreans – do you believe that he wrote that of his own volition and that he – and do you have reason to believe that all of those things in that apology are true?

MS. PSAKI: We just don't have any other further analysis. We've seen the same reports all of you have seen, of course, about his interview and the publication of that, but I don't have any other further analysis on it.

QUESTION: Are you aware if that – the subject of his quote, unquote "confession" came up in the meeting with the Swedes?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything more on it, but I'm happy to check and see if there's more detail we can outline for all of you.

QUESTION: Did the Swedes as for and did Mr. Newman sign a PAW?

MS. PSAKI: A Privacy Act waiver?

QUESTION: Correct.

MS. PSAKI: Yes, he did. That is why I am able to talk about him now.

QUESTION: Okay. So then if – since he has signed the waiver, would you take it back to your – whoever it is that liaises with the Swedes on this --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: I assume it's EAP, but I guess it could also be EUR – and find out if Mr. Newman, in his discussions with the Swedes, talked at all about or said that he had freely made this alleged confession and when it was that he recorded this or when it --

MS. PSAKI: I am happy to take that and see if there's more we can share.

Go ahead, Lesley.

**QUESTION:** Also, did the Swedes report back in what condition he is in? Has he been tortured? Anything today? And how long did they meet with him, and was it in a jail? Was it in a --

**QUESTION:** Guest house.

**QUESTION:** -- government -- a guest house?

**QUESTION:** A jailhouse\* guest house.

**MS. PSAKI:** A guest house. I don't have many specifics on that. I'm happy to also check with Matt's questions and to see if there's more we can share on that as well.

**QUESTION:** But didn't it include a --

**QUESTION:** But they did say -- the Swedes did say that he --

**QUESTION:** -- physical examination of him?

**QUESTION:** The Swedes did, I think, say that he was --

**MS. PSAKI:** I believe they've spoken publicly about it.

**QUESTION:** -- that he was treated -- that's he's being treated (inaudible), right?

**MS. PSAKI:** Right. I've seen those comments as well. So I don't have any other specifics on it, but if there's more we share beyond what they've said publicly, I'm happy --

**QUESTION:** Including whether or not there was a physical examination of him during this consular access?

**QUESTION:** I just want to get back to his confession. I mean, it is kind of written in language that kind of fits the narrative that North Korea has been saying, and I'm just wondering if you think that he wrote this. Are you -- I mean, there's often times that you would say, like, oh this person seemed under duress --

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

**QUESTION:** -- or something like that. So I mean, I'm just -- about this particular confession, do you have any reason to believe that he did not confess to all of those things?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't -- I certainly understand why you're asking. I don't have any particular analysis on it at this stage. I will see if this is something that our team is looking into, and if there's more we can say about it specifically.

**QUESTION:** And what is this building doing to secure his release beyond calling for his release from imprisonment? I mean, Ambassador King had tried months ago to go --

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

**QUESTION:** -- for the other American under detention, Kenneth Bae. What's actually being done to get them out?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, our Swedish protecting power just visited with him two days ago, and obviously that's an important component of reaching out to citizens who are detained in North Korea. We certainly do continue to call for his release. I don't have any other predictions or announcements on travel or visits of other officials at this point to tell you about.

**QUESTION:** But beyond those consular visits, I mean, is there any outreach to the Chinese specially on behalf of Mr. Newman?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have more I can outline for all of you, but I can check and see if there is any more to tell.

**QUESTION:** Have they been helpful the past with Kenneth Bae or with others? The Chinese (inaudible)?

**MS. PSAKI:** They have been helpful, but there's not more specifics I can outline.

**QUESTION:** Through the Swedes are elsewhere, has North Korea communicated any demands or requests of the United States that have to do with Newman or -- as a prelude to his possible release?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have any more specifics on the contact with the Swedes and kind of what the discussion entailed beyond confirming --

**QUESTION:** Well, any -- in any forum, have they asked for anything from the United States?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have any details on it. I am happy to check if there's any more to share with all of you.

**QUESTION:** But you guys are in touch with the North Koreans directly, just to confirm?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we -- as you know, we've long had a channel, but we've been working in this case through our Swedish protective -- protecting power.

**QUESTION:** But you have been in touch with the North Koreans specifically on his matter?

**MS. PSAKI:** On this specific case, not that I'm aware of, but I'm happy to check if there's anything more on that.

**QUESTION:** Are you in touch with Mr. Newman's family?

**MS. PSAKI:** We are. We have been. Let me see if I have the detail of when we last spoke with him -- with his family. I don't have that detail for you. I'm happy to put that in the pocket of things I'm going to check on.

**QUESTION:** And have they asked for you to help facilitate any kind of visit by them to North Korea, given that this gentleman's actually -- I mean, he's quite elderly --

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

**QUESTION:** -- so you would imagine that if -- there would be concern enough to try and travel to visit him.

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm. I'm not aware of a request that they've made about that specifically, but we can see.

**QUESTION:** So all the attention, really, is on this Mr. Newman. But as we've said, Kenneth Bae has been held for quite a long time.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm. You're right.

QUESTION: So in your efforts working with the Swedes or working to try and get the release, I mean, are you emphasizing because of Mr. Newman's age and health that you need to get him out right away, or are they part of a package that you think that they --

MS. PSAKI: I mean, we'd certainly like to see them both released as quickly as possible. In terms of that level of detail, I just don't have that.

QUESTION: These American citizens being held against their will in a rogue state, they're hostages, right?

MS. PSAKI: I mean, they're being held by the governments. The governments have confirmed that, so I don't know that I need to categorize it further, James.

QUESTION: You don't regard them as hostages?

MS. PSAKI: Do we have another topic?

QUESTION: Yes. Could I move onto the --

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

QUESTION: -- the Secretary's trip.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Okay. The portion to the West Bank and to Israel.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

QUESTION: Yes. If you have more to share with us -- today or yesterday, President Abbas, the president of the Palestinian Authority, was so impressed with the Geneva success, now he's suggesting a format, perhaps another Geneva, where the Palestinian-Israeli issue could be resolved. Would you look kindly at this suggestion?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I haven't seen those comments from him specifically. I know this has been an idea floated out there. Our focus remains on the direct negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians. We're a facilitator in that effort. There are certainly a number of countries who have a great investment and great interest in the success -- in a successful outcome here, including the Arab League, including many other countries that want to contribute to growing the Palestinian economy. But that's our focus, not on planning yet another conference.

QUESTION: And a Palestinian member of the Israeli Knesset, Mr. Ahmed Tibi, claims that the 20,000 housing that the Israelis announced and they put on hold were actually not put on hold, that there is -- construction is ongoing. Do you have any information on that?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything new on that. I'd have to look into that for you.

Scott?

**QUESTION:** (Inaudible.)

**MS. PSAKI:** Oh.

**QUESTION:** Can we stay on stay on that?

**MS. PSAKI:** Yeah.

**QUESTION:** Just on this idea of not necessarily a Geneva-type conference for the peace process, but just the idea of internationalizing the process, would the United States – would the Administration object to an internationalization of the peace process?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, it's hard to know exactly what that means. Obviously, as you all are well aware, there's direct negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians now. That's what our focus is on, so certainly that's not a path we're pursuing.

**QUESTION:** Well, I think that the point that – right, it's not a path that you're pursuing --

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

**QUESTION:** -- but the point that people who are suggesting that this might be a way to go, the point that they make is that the United States has been the sole and unique arbiter, mediator, facilitator, whatever you want to call it, of Israeli-Palestinian peace talks going back decades.

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

**QUESTION:** And you haven't gotten anything out of it. There's been no success. It's been one failure after another. Is it perhaps not time to try something new, is the argument that these people would make.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, Matt, obviously, many people are going to make different arguments about how it should proceed. We're less than halfway through the nine-month timeline here. There are a number of countries that are engaged and invested, including, of course, the Arab League, who, as you know, are in very close contact with the Palestinians and engaged in this effort. There are many who are engaged with the Israelis in this effort. So our focus remains on the direct negotiations, and I don't think we're at this point speculating on a different alternative forum.

**QUESTION:** Well, let me – okay. Well, let me put it this way: Is it still the position of the Administration that the United States has unique leverage and influence with both sides that makes it the only logical or capable, competent, credible mediator for peace between Israel and the Palestinians?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't know that we've ever stated it exactly like that. We're playing a facilitator role which both sides are comfortable with. There are other countries engaged with this effort and certainly in touch with the Israelis and the Palestinians. I expect that will continue. But in the meantime, we'll continue to play the facilitator role as long as it's productive.

**QUESTION:** Do you believe, does the Administration believe that the United States still has leverage and influence with Israel or the Palestinians? I mean, you say, in reference to other questions about, say, Mr. Newman or Mr. Bae in North Korea --

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

**QUESTION:** -- that the Chinese have influence with the North Koreans and you would like to go through them, maybe after you're done yelling at them about their air defense zone. But do you still think that the United States -- does the Administration believe that it has influence and leverage with either Israel or the Palestinians?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I think we have a close relationship with both. And obviously, we're at this point because both sides decided to come to the table. I don't think it's about leverage. There's -- it's in the interest of both sides to come to an agreement on the final status issues, and that's what they're working to do at this point.

**QUESTION:** Jen, could I just ask -- there was an agreement --

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** -- reached last week between the EU and Israel which will allow Israel to actually touch some funding for scientific research. There have been some problems because the EU wanted to bar all research in areas of -- in the West Bank --

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

**QUESTION:** -- settlement areas in the West Bank. Is there an -- I mean, does the American -- do America -- does America believe that this is a good agreement for the EU and Israel, given that Secretary Kerry has always mentioned that he fears an increasing isolation of Israel on the international stage?

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm. I haven't talked to our team about it, so I'd have to talk to them and see if we have any particular view on the agreement last week.

**QUESTION:** And is -- what is the message that Secretary Kerry's going to be bringing with him when he visits Israel later on this week?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I think he'll be talking to both sides about the importance of staying firm with the timeline and working through the tough and difficult issues that they're doing at the negotiating table, and reiterating the importance of coming to a peaceful end to the final negotiations. And of course, when he's meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu, they'll certainly be discussing the recent P5+1 agreement with Iran and having an ongoing dialogue about that as well.

**QUESTION:** And have there been any meetings, direct talks between the Israelis and Palestinians, since the resignation of the Palestinian team?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have any updates on meetings at this point. I'll see if there's any more we want to provide to all of you in terms of specific meetings and timing of that.

**QUESTION:** But I mean, since the last time the Secretary's been there, there's been another announcement of new settlement construction.

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

**QUESTION:** There's been the resignation of the Palestinian -- it just seems that without him actually physically there holding their hand for hours at a time, that they're not able to sustain it on their own.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, they've had many meetings when he has not been there. So obviously, we didn't expect this to be easy. We certainly are aware of some bumps in the road of late, but both sides have also reaffirmed their commitment to seeing this through.

**QUESTION:** Would you really call those bumps in the road, though? I mean, particularly on the -- actually, on either side, whether it's the Israelis continuing to announce settlement construction or the Palestinians' full negotiating team just giving up, it just doesn't seem as if --

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, when the negotiating -- and that's a good example. The negotiating team -- President Abbas reaffirmed his own commitment to seeing this through --

**QUESTION:** But it just --

**MS. PSAKI:** -- whether it was them or whether it was other officials in their place. So they're continuing to move forward.

**QUESTION:** It just doesn't seem like they have the -- while they may have the desire and the dream that there'll be a peace deal. The motivation to actually do the hard work day in and day out doesn't seem to be there. And so it does seem as if Secretary Kerry is the one holding this together personally, and isn't there, like, a limit to how much he can do?

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure. That's why he has a team to help work through it every day.

**QUESTION:** Well, I meant more the parties themselves.

**MS. PSAKI:** You're right, but there also is a long timeframe we still have left. One of the reasons committing to the nine-month timeframe was so important is because we knew there would be challenging periods throughout the process. But both sides remain committed to that, and so we'll continue to work through it.

**QUESTION:** But it doesn't sound like -- unless you could disabuse us of the notion, it doesn't sound like since Secretary Kerry's last trip in early November that there have actually been any direct talks.

**MS. PSAKI:** I wouldn't jump to that conclusion. We just have always said we wouldn't confirm every meeting.

**QUESTION:** Sure.

**MS. PSAKI:** So let me see if I can confirm any meetings since that point for all of you.

**QUESTION:** Jen, could you tell us if Ambassador Indyk is there now? Is he there? Is he in the region? Is he -- Ambassador Indyk, where --

**MS. PSAKI:** He's here. I saw him this morning.

**QUESTION:** He's here. Okay.

**MS. PSAKI:** Okay. Let's just do one or two more here.

Scott.

**QUESTION:** What is the U.S. view of what's going on in Thailand right now?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we certainly deeply regret the loss of life in Bangkok due to politically motivated violence. We condemn violence as a means to achieve political objectives and urge all sides to exercise restraint and respect the rule of law. We are concerned about the continuing political tension in Thailand, and we are following the situation closely.

Peaceful protest and freedom of expression are important aspects of democracy, of course. Violence and seizure of public or private property, however, are not acceptable means of resolving political differences. We firmly believe all parties should work together to resolve differences through peaceful dialogue in ways that strengthen democracy and rule of law.

Ambassador Kenney spoke with the prime minister and – has spoken with the prime minister and opposition leaders to also encourage restraint and peaceful dialogue. You may have also seen that the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok issued a security message for U.S. citizens in Thailand explaining that large political demonstrations may continue in coming day – in the coming days, including at government facilities, in and outside of central Bangkok, and is advising them to avoid areas of demonstration and to exercise caution.

**QUESTION:** Following his talk with the prime minister, one of the main opposition leaders said that he would accept nothing short of her resignation. Is that a responsible position in the eyes of the United States?

**MS. PSAKI:** We just continue to encourage all parties to work together to resolve their differences. We, of course, have seen his comments, but I don't think we're going to weigh in further at this point, aside from encouraging restraint on the ground.

**QUESTION:** Would you weigh in on the general amnesty bill that the ruling party failed to get through parliament, which was one of the instigations for this?

**MS. PSAKI:** I know – I don't know if I've spoken to that in the past, Scott. I'd have to – I don't have anything for you on it at this particular moment, but I'm happy to follow up post-briefing.

Okay, let's do two more here. In the back, you've been very patient.

**QUESTION:** Thank you. Michael Vincent from the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. What's the U.S. response to the Australian Government's rejection of the U.S. company Archer Daniels Midland's bid for GrainCorp?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we are disappointed by the Government of Australia's decision to reject Archer Daniels Midland's proposed acquisition of GrainCorp. We do not – we do note that the Australian Treasurer Joe Hockey has expressed openness to approving an increase in ADM's current share in GrainCorp. The United States is the largest foreign investor – foreign direct investor in Australia, with 132 billion in investment projects to date, and we look forward to working closely with Australia's government to build stronger ties and investment – stronger trade and investment ties.

**QUESTION:** Just a quick follow-up.

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

**QUESTION:** Did – unrelated matter, but has the U.S. Government accepted private medical, legal, or religious information on Australian citizens as offered by Australian intelligence agencies?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have anything further or anything for you on a range of reports. I'm certainly not going to comment on any of them. As you know, we're undergoing our own review of these processes, which we expect to conclude by the end of the year.

**QUESTION:** Jen, back to ADM for a second.

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

**QUESTION:** Did – was this issue, this proposed sale, bid by ADM raised at the AUSMIN ministerial meetings?

**MS. PSAKI:** It's a good question, Matt. I'd have to check. It wasn't one raised while I was there, but let me check and see if it was.

**QUESTION:** And if it was, did – was – were you given any indication that this is the way your closest antipodal ally was going to go?

**MS. PSAKI:** I will check and see if it was even raised.

Okay, let's do one more. Go ahead, Samir.

**QUESTION:** Do you have a reaction to the draft constitution in Egypt today?

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** Can I throw a Bahrain question at the end of that?

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure. Why not?

Well, we continue to track the constitutional process with interest, and we'll examine the document carefully once it is finalized and sent to President Mansour, which we understand will occur tomorrow. The Egyptian people, of course, will decide the fate of the draft constitution in a referendum. We will continue to support a transition process that leads to an inclusive civilian government selected through free, fair, and transparent elections, and civilian government based on the rule of law, fundamental freedoms, accountability, and an open and competitive economy. So we will see when it is transferred, and we will take a close look at it.

Bahrain.

**QUESTION:** Yeah. Do you have any view on the government --

**QUESTION:** A quick one on Egypt. Hold on. I'm sorry, Matt. You don't have any comment on the prohibition of religious parties in Egypt?

**MS. PSAKI:** Again, we'll wait to comment on it until it's been officially transferred. Obviously, there are steps in there we may be complimentary of and others we may not be.

**QUESTION:** Yes, please.

**QUESTION:** Does the decision of the – not to release this human rights campaigner when he was eligible to be released? It was yesterday or today.

**MS. PSAKI:** Let me see. I think I have something on this. One moment, Matt.

**QUESTION:** Mm-hmm. You can get it – if you just want to make it a TQ, that's fine.

**MS. PSAKI:** Yeah, that's fine. I believe I have something on it for you. Let's see. We continue to encourage Bahrain to take the necessary steps to promote reconciliation among Bahrainis, including permitting all sectors of society to voice their political views in a peaceful manner. We have seen reports that the head of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights Nabeel Rajab – is that who you're talking about – okay --

**QUESTION:** (Inaudible.)

**MS. PSAKI:** -- was denied early release today in Bahrain. We understand that he has served 18 months of his two-year prison sentence and is scheduled to be released in May of next year. We remain deeply concerned about the three-year prison sentence for leading illegal gatherings. We urge the Government of Bahrain to protect the universal rights of freedom of expression and assembly, just as we urge all elements of Bahraini society to engage in peaceful expressions of political opinion.

**QUESTION:** Do you think that he should've been released as was – as he could've been today?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I believe we are concerned about his – we were concerned about his three-year prison sentence, I believe. Let me check and see, but I believe that's what we're implying here.

**QUESTION:** I mean, this is not the first. I mean, there have been several other opposition activists and so forth that have been detained. I mean, does this cast doubt on your encouraging words earlier in the year about Bahrain's commitment to political reforms?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we certainly are encouraging them to take some step – to take necessary steps to promote reconciliation. And obviously, each time that there is a case like this, we have expressed concern. So I don't have any analysis as to what that will mean longer-term or about the overall relationship, but each time there has been an incident, we have certainly expressed our concern.

**QUESTION:** Well, but each time – you say each time that there's been an incident. I mean, there's a pattern of incidents. I mean, does that say something about their actual commitment to reforms?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I don't have any more analysis on it for you.

Thanks, everyone.

**QUESTION:** Thank you.

(The briefing was concluded at 3:18 p.m.)

###

**Andy Schachter**  
**PA/PRS Transcription Unit, Room 1119A**

**Diversified Reporting Services, Inc., Supervisory Contractor**

**Fischer, Kyle G**

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**From:** Forgerson, Luke A <ForgersonLA@state.gov>  
**Sent:** Friday, July 29, 2016 1:54 PM  
**To:** Hahs, Ona M; Gardner, Joshua B  
**Subject:** Inquiry Regarding DPB Dec 2 -- Annotated Video on YouTube

Ona,

B5

Thanks,  
Luke

---

**From:** Forgerson, Luke A  
**Sent:** Monday, May 09, 2016 9:32 PM  
**To:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K  
**Cc:** Brown, Cynthia A  
**Subject:** DPB -- December 2

Elizabeth,

The full video of the December 2, 2013, daily press briefing has been uploaded:  
<http://video.state.gov/en/video/2886914568001>

We will annotate the video on the Department's YouTube Channel to link to this video.

Thanks,  
Luke

7/29/2016

Fox reporter confronts State Department on Iran denial - POLITICO

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## CONVENTION

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## Fox reporter confronts State Department on Iran denial

By JOSH GERSTEIN | 12/02/13 05:41 PM EST

Fox News Chief Washington Correspondent James Rosen visited the State Department briefing room Monday to challenge what he suggested were false denials the department issued about high-level talks between Iran and the United States.

With current State Department spokesperson Jen Psaki at the podium, Rosen read from a

7/29/2018

Fox reporter confronts State Department on Iran denial - POLITICO

question he asked then-spokesperson Victoria Nuland in February about reports of "direct, secret bilateral talks with Iran."

"With regard to the kind of thing you're talking about on a government-to-government level: no," Nuland replied.

Rosen pointed Monday to reports that senior U.S. officials, including Deputy Secretary of State Bill Burns and then-Director of Policy Planning Jake Sullivan, held a series of meetings in Oman in recent years with top Iranian officials.

"The question today is a simply one: when the briefer was asked about those talks and flatly denied them, that was untrue, correct?" Rosen asked.

In response, Psaki noted that the State Department recently confirmed such a meeting took place in March of this year—after the denial in question. However, she did not deny reports that the meetings stretched back to 2011.

"You're talking about a February briefing, so ten months ago. I don't think we've outlined or confirmed contacts or specifics beyond a March meeting. I'm not going to confirm or outline others beyond that at this point," Psaki said.

Rosen then asked Psaki if she would "stand by the accuracy" of Nuland's denial.

"James, I have no new information for you today," Psaki replied.

Rosen followed up further by asking if it is "the policy of the State Department to lie in order" to maintain the secrecy of negotiations.

"There are times when diplomacy needs privacy in order to progress. This is a good example of that," Psaki said.

Psaki also said the U.S.-Iran talks "really picked up after [Iranian] President Rouhani's election" in June of this year, but she acknowledged she was not answering the question about when those talks began. U.S. officials have said the high-level back-channel was important to the interim nuclear deal reached in Geneva last month. However, the discussions have been controversial, in part because Israel was reportedly kept in the dark about the talks until September of this year.

Rosen pressed Psaki on the thinking of State Department briefers on whether it would be appropriate to mislead reporters about matters such as sensitive diplomatic negotiations.

7/29/2016

Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.  
Fox reporter confronts State Department on Iran denial - POLITICO

"I'm not going to do a psychiatrists' chair today," Psaki declared.

"What about a couch?" Rosen shot back.

RELEASE IN PART B6

**Fischer, Kyle G**

**From:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K  
**Sent:** Monday, May 09, 2016 5:26 PM  
**To:** Rosen, James; Kirby, John  
**Cc:** Toner, Mark C; Beechem, Stephanie; Hickey, Lauren A  
**Subject:** RE: Urgent

Thanks, James. Noting that the transcript is fully up here:

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/dpb/2013/12/218178.htm#IRAN> let us look into the video – I wasn't hear at the time, so checking with our team. Thanks for the heads up. Looking at it now.

**From:** Rosen, James [mailto: ]  
**Sent:** Monday, May 09, 2016 5:21 PM  
**To:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K; Kirby, John  
**Cc:** Toner, Mark C; Beechem, Stephanie; Hickey, Lauren A  
**Subject:** RE: Urgent

B6

At the 12/2/13 briefing, I confronted Jen Psaki with the false statement made to me by Toria Nuland at the 2/6/13 briefing. That earlier exchange went like this:

**ROSEN:** There have been reports that intermittently, and outside of the formal P-5+1 mechanisms the Obama Administration, or members of it, have conducted direct, secret, bilateral talks with Iran. Is that true or false?

**NULAND:** We have made clear, as the Vice President did at Munich, that in the context of the larger P-5+1 framework, we would be prepared to talk to Iran bilaterally. *But with regard to the kind of thing that you're talking about on a government-to-government level, no.*

Of course, the secret Iran talks had begun eight months before that exchange.

The transcript for the 12/2/13 briefing is below, with the yellow part signifying the part that has been edited out of DOS's video of the briefing on its website and YT channel.

We want to know why and when DOS inserted a white-flash into the 12/2/13 video to censor the part where I asked Jen Psaki about Toria Nuland's false statement on the Iran talks (and Psaki in essence said the administration needed "privacy").

All of this is obviously relevant in light of the NYTM questions about whether Rhodes/DOS et al misled the people, and the press, about the origins and timing of the Iran talks.

If we don't hear back by 5:45p – we just discovered this act of censorship – we are going to report it as such in our 6p show.

-----  
 James Rosen  
 Chief Washington Correspondent

Host, "The Foxhole"

Twitter: @JamesRosenFNC

[redacted] (office)  
[redacted] (mobile)

B6

Author, Cheney One on One


---

**From:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K [<http://redirect.state.sbu/?url=mailto:trudeauek@state.gov>]  
**Sent:** Monday, May 09, 2016 5:13 PM  
**To:** Rosen, James; Kirby, John  
**Cc:** Toner, Mark C; Beechem, Stephanie; Hickey, Lauren A  
**Subject:** RE: Urgent

James, I am solo in town today – Kirby and Toner on road. Adding Beechem and Hickey on this.  
 Not sure I understand Q.

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**From:** Rosen, James [<http://redirect.state.sbu/?url=mailto:James.Rosen@FOXNEWS.COM>]  
**Sent:** Monday, May 09, 2016 5:10 PM  
**To:** Kirby, John  
**Cc:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K; Toner, Mark C  
**Subject:** Urgent

Need a call from one of you in the next thirty minutes or so. We are going to go to air with the information below, in the context of the whole Ben Rhodes controversy, at 6p, and we'd like to give DOS a chance to clear it up. My contact info is below. The relevant info is also below, courtesy of one of our video librarians in the Fox News Washington bureau. The basic question is why – and when – DOS censored its video of the highlighted portion of the 12/2/13 briefing (26:58 into the clip) with a white flash, on both the DOS web page and the DOS YT channel. Yours cordially, James

-----  
 James Rosen  
 Chief Washington Correspondent  
 Host, "The Foxhole"  
 Twitter: @JamesRosenFNC

[redacted] (office)  
[redacted] (mobile)

Author, Cheney One on One

Highlighted below. The video posted online here  
<http://redirect.state.sbu/?url=http://redirect.state.sbu/?url=http://video.state.gov/en/video/2886914568001> ends with Psaki responding to Roz's question saying "....and so that has not changed that."  
 White flash on screen at 26:58 and then it picks up with Roz talking again.

**TRANSCRIPT:**

1:54 p.m. EST

MS. PSAKI: Hi, everyone. Happy --

QUESTION: Happy belated birthday.

MS. PSAKI: Thank you. Thank you very much. Twenty-two. It's glorious. (Laughter.)

QUESTION: And you will be 22 for the next --

MS. PSAKI: I will be.

**QUESTION:** What, 10, 15 years?

**MS. PSAKI:** At least, at least. Well, I have nothing at the top, so Matt, let's go to what's on your mind.

**QUESTION:** Let's see. I have a lot --

**MS. PSAKI:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** -- but nothing is really worth starting with, so let's just start with the Secretary's trip.

**MS. PSAKI:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** Both -- excluding the middle stop in Moldova, at the beginning, how much of the NAC do you expect is going to be concentrated on Afghanistan and then talking about the BSA? Will there be any Afghan officials there to talk with? And then -- well, that'll be that one question for --

**MS. PSAKI:** Okay. Well, we'll clearly, as we typically do, be doing a briefing en route about the trip and about our visit to the NATO Ministerial tomorrow, where we will venture to have more specific details about who will be attending.

Obviously, Afghanistan and the ongoing presence there post-2014 of the United States and of NATO will certainly be a big topic of discussion. But I will let our briefers outline more specifics en route to Brussels.

**QUESTION:** All right. Well, I was going to ask about the Middle East but -- as well, the stop in Israel and the PA. But if you're just -- are you going to give me the same answer, wait for the briefing on the plane?

**MS. PSAKI:** I likely will, yes.

**QUESTION:** Okay. Well, then never mind.

**MS. PSAKI:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** And then quickly on Afghanistan --

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure, Lesley.

**QUESTION:** Is -- what further is happening as far as trying to resolve this issue with Afghanistan?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well --

**QUESTION:** As far as -- is it true that --

**MS. PSAKI:** The BSA.

**QUESTION:** The -- exactly.

**MS. PSAKI:** The signing, I assume.

**QUESTION:** Is it true that Special Envoy Dobbins has gone -- is on his way to Afghanistan?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have any announcements at this point on travel for him or anyone else. Obviously, our team on the ground, Ambassador Cunningham and others, have been in close contact. At this point, we've made our position clear, and so have the Afghan people. Signing the BSA soon is the path forward, as we've said many times, to sustaining a partnership between the United States and Afghanistan to support Afghans in achieving lasting peace, security, and development. That's the message that we're conveying at every level. And as we've said before but important to reiterate here, given it's a week later now: We -- deferring the signature of the agreement until after next year's election is not viable. It would not provide Afghans with the certainty that they deserve regarding their future in the critical months leading to the elections, nor would it provide the United States and NATO allies the clarity necessary for a potential post-2014 military presence.

So we're continuing to convey that. Our team on the ground is certainly hard at work. I don't have any travel announcements. If that changes, we'll certainly let all of you know.

**QUESTION:** Has Secretary spoken to President Karzai in the last couple of days on BSA?

**MS. PSAKI:** He has not spoken with him in the last couple of days.

**QUESTION:** And the Pentagon today said that this is not the end of it; after BSA is signed, the U.S. and Afghanistan have to negotiate and sign their agreement called SOFA, and that would be done by the State Department. Has any process started on SOFA, signing of SOFA with Afghanistan?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'd have to look more specifically at what they said. Maybe you're referring to the NATO SOFA that they may have to negotiate and sign, I believe, as a step? But for our purposes, there's the signing; it goes through parliament, then it would have to be signed again. Obviously, as you all are very familiar with, this doesn't outline a specific number for a troop presence, so there would be a great deal of planning in regards to that that DOD would certainly be very engaged with. But in terms of that, I'd have to look at specifically what they said. I'm not familiar with that --

**QUESTION:** Is December 21<sup>st</sup> the redline, the deadline for signing of BSA, after which you will begin preparing for all troops pull out from Afghanistan post 2014.

**MS. PSAKI:** I am not going to get into new redlines or deadlines today, I will say. But on the trip question, well, as you all know, a decision hasn't been made. You would know if it had been. It's not our preference, but no troops is certainly a

potential outcome for Afghanistan if there is no BSA. So that is, again, not our preference, but natural that planning would have to take place for all different options.

**QUESTION:** Have you tried to understand why President Karzai is doing what he's doing or conducting himself the way he has? Do you have a clearer picture than we do, for instance?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't know that I have any further insight than you do. Obviously, the Secretary spoke with him last week, as you all well know. We continue to press our case for why this should be signed as quickly as possible, but I don't have any analysis of particular actions or comments in Afghanistan.

**QUESTION:** So you think that he's perhaps more concerned about his personal safety post the elections?

**MS. PSAKI:** I will let you, Said, do your own analysis. I don't have any other analysis on it.

Do we have any more on Afghanistan?

**QUESTION:** Just the trip?

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

**QUESTION:** For those of us who are interested in Moldova --

**MS. PSAKI:** Yes.

**QUESTION:** -- could you just tell us why stop in Moldova? What's the importance? We see the winery, et cetera.

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure. Moldova is a country that has taken a number of important reform steps in recent years. They have -- they're taking steps to help grow their economy, and wine is obviously a significant export. But they have a number of exports they also work with. And given the steps they've taken, the Secretary felt it would be an important opportunity to pay a visit. You'd have to check my history and facts here, but I believe he may be, if not the first, one of the first Secretaries to pay a bilateral visit to Moldova.

**QUESTION:** And also it comes, obviously, right after Ukraine decided not to sign the agreement with the EU.

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

**QUESTION:** Moldova did. So you could read into this that the Secretary wants to buck them up or give them something, a sign of support.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we had planned this trip -- this trip was in the works before that decision was made. But certainly, they have put a number of reforms in place and they're working hard on their economy and the -- if -- the Secretary felt it was important to highlight that.

**QUESTION:** Following on that --

**QUESTION:** Okay. Can I go over just to Afghanistan for one very briefly?

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure. Okay, and then we'll go to Anne.

**QUESTION:** I was gone last week so I'm -- most of last week, so what -- did the Secretary speak with Karzai before or after Ambassador Rice was there?

**MS. PSAKI:** Let's see. He spoke with Karzai -- President Karzai -- I'd have to look back. I believe it was prior to her visit. Let me double check that for you to make sure.

**QUESTION:** So the last senior official to speak with Karzai, as far as you know, was Ambassador Rice.

**MS. PSAKI:** I believe that's correct, yes.

**QUESTION:** Just following on the Moldova for Ukraine substitution, in saying that Secretary Kerry would not, as had been widely expected, attend the OSCE -- when you said that, I don't know, about 10 days ago or so --

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

**QUESTION:** -- we were just at the very beginning of this whole episode.

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

**QUESTION:** And at that point you said it was scheduling issues that had -- it would force his cancellation. Are you sticking with that? Is that still the case? Or might there be some policy implications to his decision not to go to the OSCE?

**MS. PSAKI:** I am sticking with that. I'm just looking at Lesley here in my -- corner of my eye. I am sticking with that. I don't have any new guidance for you on that front. Assistant Secretary Nuland is still planning to attend and travel there after joining us for the first part of the visit.

**QUESTION:** On Syria?

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

**QUESTION:** Is it --

**QUESTION:** Can you tell us the -- oh, sorry.

**QUESTION:** Sorry. Just on this charade -- charade, for Lesley -- of scheduling reasons, is it not the case that not doing -- not going on this trip -- not going to Kyiv is a sign of displeasure?

**MS. PSAKI:** I will let you do your own reporting, Matt. I don't have any more analysis or comments on it from here.

**QUESTION:** But there was --

**QUESTION:** And one more quick one on Ukraine.

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

**QUESTION:** Obviously, we're seeing the demonstrations, violent crackdown.

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

**QUESTION:** What's the response from the State Department?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we're of course, naturally, closely monitoring the ongoing demonstrations, not only in Kyiv but in cities around Ukraine. As you know, since the demonstrations began on November 21<sup>st</sup>, there have been an increasing number of violent incidents, including against journalists. We stress there is no room, and we continue to stress there is no room for violence in a country that aspires to a democratic future. We continue to call on all sides to maintain calm, and on Ukrainian authorities to ensure that members of the public and the press are able to safely and peacefully exercise their rights of speech and assembly.

As I mentioned a little bit before, we still have -- Assistant Secretary Nuland is still planning to travel there. The Ukrainian foreign ministry announced that the ministerial is proceeding as planned.

**QUESTION:** But there was --

**QUESTION:** Are you sure that Ukraine is a country that aspires to a democratic future?

**MS. PSAKI:** Any country that may aspire, certainly, these are important values to follow through on.

**QUESTION:** Right. But are you still convinced that Ukraine aspires to a westward-looking, democratic future?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we will see, Matt. Time will tell. Actions speak louder than words.

**QUESTION:** Do you -- does this --

**QUESTION:** Do you still stand by the comments made by Ambassador Nuland in her speech to the Atlantic Council a couple of weeks ago and also comments from this podium that it is your belief that Ukraine should be following the path towards joining some kind of association agreement with the EU?

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure. Our view has not changed on that. Obviously, there have been a lot of events that have happened since then, but --

**QUESTION:** And do you believe that the demonstrations on the streets are actually -- that's what they want? I mean, it seems to be that they're demonstrating because they're angry that the government hasn't taken this path that's been laid out for them.

**MS. PSAKI:** I would point you to the comments of the demonstrators, of which there have been many. I don't want to speak on their behalf, but our position hasn't changed on what steps they could take. Obviously, it's up to Ukraine to take those steps.

**QUESTION:** So -- but, I mean, the United States is -- if you don't want to give your backing to them -- at least sympathetic to what the demonstrators are asking for.

**MS. PSAKI:** Again, the demonstrators are saying a range of things, so I don't -- beyond what we've stated publicly many times, I don't have any other further public statements on our position, which has been stated by Assistant Secretary Nuland and by other officials in the past several weeks.

**QUESTION:** Given the estimates of some 300,000 people who were demonstrating across the country on Sunday, and given that they all seem, to a person, to be saying that the government is ignoring their wish to be more closely aligned with Europe, isn't it a bit disingenuous for this building to suggest that they need to show any restraint? They're not the ones who are bludgeoning people with battering rams and turning rubber bullets on the police. It seems they're taking the brunt of everything that's been happening.

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't think I took sides. I think I said that it's important for all sides to maintain calm, that there's no place for violence in a country that aspires to a democratic future. So I don't -- I would disagree with the premise of your claims.

**QUESTION:** What does this building think of the prime minister's -- call for his security forces to show restraint and seemingly to be missing in action when on Sunday there was more violence heaped upon the demonstrators, particularly in Kyiv?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I think I just expressed what our view is of violence against demonstrators, so that's what our view is.

**QUESTION:** Can I -- has the Secretary spoken to somebody in Ukraine, his counterpart?

**MS. PSAKI:** He has not in the last several days. I can check if there's been any other calls I'm not aware of.

**QUESTION:** Because one of the big issues for Ukraine is tearing itself away from Russia and looking towards Western Europe for economic support. And one of the big things is that the president of Ukraine is heading to China to look for that. And if – I was wondering if the U.S. had offered them kind of – some kind of assurance or reassurance economically that they could be better off by signing these deals and with the support – and the U.S. would support any kind of reform through the International Monetary Fund.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, aside from public statements we've made, which, as Jo referenced, is – that our belief is that European integration is the surest course to economic growth and strengthening Ukraine's democracy. That's still our belief. That's been consistently our belief. But beyond that, I'm not aware of any other discussions. Obviously, there's a lot of – that's going on with the EU and with Russia, and beyond that we have made our position clear.

**QUESTION:** And what is the building's position on the detention of Yulia Tymoshenko?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we have consistently spoken about this in the past and expressed our concern about her detention. I know this was also a component that was potentially being worked through as an element of Ukraine getting into the EU. So we've consistently expressed concern, encouraged them to take steps forward. Obviously, there hasn't been progress on that on the ground.

**QUESTION:** I'm sorry, what did you say was the surest way to economic growth?

**MS. PSAKI:** I said European integration is the surest course to economic growth and strengthening --

**QUESTION:** Did you give the same advice to the Greeks?

(Laughter.)

**MS. PSAKI:** Matt. Behave.

Do we have any more on Ukraine or Afghanistan, since we touched on that too?

**QUESTION:** Still on Ukraine.

**MS. PSAKI:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** The Russians have proposed that the EU, Ukraine, and Russia get together to discuss some of these problems. Would the United States be in favor of that, some kind of a trilateral discussion to discuss the economic situation and political differences?

**MS. PSAKI:** It wouldn't involve the United States, so I don't have a particular position. I'm happy to talk to our team and see if we have a view on that.

Ukraine or Afghanistan? Okay, should we move on to Syria? Let's go to Margaret.

**QUESTION:** Thank you. Jen, the OPCW said over the past few days that the U.S. has stepped up, that they're going to give operational support, offering up financing. Can you give us some more detail on that?

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm. Well, I don't know if it will be satisfying, but let me try. (Laughter.) Well, as you know, the United States is committed to supporting the international community's efforts to destroy Syria's chemical weapons in the safest, most efficient and effective means possible. We have offered and are currently outfitting a U.S. vessel with field-deployable hydrolysis system technology to support the OPCW's efforts. We are in close contact with the OPCW and our international partners and remain confident that we can meet the milestones for destruction set out by the OPCW. Of course, the OPCW remains – and the UN – remain the lead coordinators on reaching out to countries and coordinating steps forward and any timeline, et cetera.

**QUESTION:** But on the financing, what is it exactly that we're offering? Is that a chunk of change? Is that financing and loans, or --

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we've offered – we've offered in the – prior to this, we have offered – we have given 6 million to the OPCW and the UN Trust Fund, both in financial contributions and in kind, so I think we gave some materials as well. But this, of course, would be a DOD vessel. So I would point you to them on the specific costs. This, at this point, is an offer. So I think that's still being worked through.

**QUESTION:** So – but beyond the vessel, the OPCW says the cost is going to be between 35 to 40 million euros for the private contractors who would actually be --

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

**QUESTION:** -- be doing the disposal themselves. So is any of that money coming through the State Department, or is the State Department topped out at \$6 million?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we've said we'd be open to exploring additional ways to provide assistance. I don't have any announcements today of additional assistance we're planning to provide, but that certainly is something we're in discussions with the OPCW about.

**QUESTION:** So we can understand correctly, it is a commercial vessel, correct, that they are trying --

MS. PSAKI: It is a --

QUESTION: -- (inaudible) --

MS. PSAKI: -- U.S. Government vessel, not a commercial vessel.

QUESTION: Right.

MS. PSAKI: But there is a part of this -- and this may be what you're asking about -- which is the OPCW reaching out to commercial companies about the destruction capabilities.

QUESTION: Okay.

QUESTION: So what -- so DOD is outfitting its own boat, which will be staffed with DOD personnel who will do this?

MS. PSAKI: I'd have to check on the specifics of that. I think some of it may still be work -- be going through the process of being worked out, Matt, because they've offered -- but obviously, how it would be staffed and the materials and the money -- I mean, all of those are pieces that are still being discussed.

QUESTION: Do you actually have a timeline and the location for where this would happen?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have a location. That's still being discussed. The timeline, as you know, is -- the next deadline is -- not deadline, it's a target -- is December 31<sup>st</sup>. And that is to get all of the chemical weapons out. But in terms of when the next step would be, I don't have a timeline of that.

Anne.

QUESTION: I realize part of this is kind of DOD-flavored, but you might know the answer.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: So is it proper to call this a warship, or is it a military-owned, but not non-warship ship?

(Laughter.)

MS. PSAKI: That is a very specific ship question. I would hesitate to answer incorrectly. I'd have to check on specifically how we categorize it. I don't believe it is a warship, but let me see if we can get more specification on how we -- what we call it exactly.

QUESTION: Okay. And on the policy side, I mean, is there any disappointment here that after casting about to -- for a friend here, it ends up being the U.S. having to essentially do this on its own?

MS. PSAKI: I wouldn't categorize it that way. I mean, certainly this is a priority for the U.S., as it is for the international community, to destroy and eliminate the chemical weapons. The OPCW is still talking to countries. There are countries that have made public comments about their willingness to help, so we'll see how that all shakes out. And certainly, we'd welcome the support or contribution of other countries.

QUESTION: Well, I'd imagine from your perspective, it should be a shared priority among many nations who would also share the same goal of the ultimate destruction, right? I mean, everybody was waving a flag when that -- when the thing was signed.

MS. PSAKI: Certainly, and there are countries, as you know, throughout that have been open to contributing that couldn't for a variety of reasons, whether it's regulations or capacity or resources. But they're still talking to countries about contributing and being a part of this, and certainly we're hopeful of that as well.

QUESTION: So if the question is: "Are you surprised that you've been left holding the bag on this, once again," --

MS. PSAKI: We're not holding the bag yet, Matt.

QUESTION: -- the answer would be no, you're not surprised. You expected your friends in Europe to wimp out.

MS. PSAKI: Well, we made clear we were open to contributing from the beginning, Matt. There are other countries that have expressed an openness to contributing in some capacity. They're all going to make their decisions about what that will -- what will -- that will entail, and we'll let the OPCW decide how all of it will work together.

QUESTION: What about Russia, who you made this deal with and has been instrumental, as you say, in helping move this towards a resolution? Why can't Russia contribute in a significant way like you can?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not familiar with what they have contributed or what they've committed to contribute or what they have not. Obviously, there are financial ways -- there are a number of ways to contribute. We certainly welcome any country's contribution. There are different ways that each country can do that.

QUESTION: Are you in touch with the Russians specifically about making an -- a contribution?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not sure. I'd have to check on that and see if it's a discussion that's been a part of the regular discussions with Foreign Minister Lavrov.

QUESTION: Jen, still on Syria.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** Yesterday, Mike Rogers, the chair of the Intelligence Committee, warned that there are many jihadis that are Americans and Europeans and Westerners and so on, that they go back and forth and so on. Are you concerned about these jihadis being trained in Syria and now they come back to the United States and perhaps organize terrorist acts?

**MS. PSAKI:** I haven't seen his comments specifically. I know -- I believe he may have been on a Sunday show yesterday. I haven't read them fully. We've -- we're naturally concerned, as you know, about extremists whether they're going in and certainly and if they're coming out. I talked a little bit, I think it was a week or two ago, about ways that we coordinate with our international partners in the region to kind of track this and efforts we undertake to make sure we're watching, but of course we're concerned. I don't have any other specifics for you.

**QUESTION:** Are you pressing your partners in this case, like the Saudis and the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, that have been supplying arms and money in the past for these extremist groups -- are you pressing them not to do so?

**MS. PSAKI:** We have consistently, and all the countries, as you know, have agreed repeatedly to contribute assistance through the SMC.

**QUESTION:** Finally, yesterday there was a report in the *Telegraph*, *The London Telegraph*, that says basically the Free Syrian Army now is becoming a group of warlords and accumulating money and gangs and so on and have no interest, really, in reaching a settlement. Is that your assessment, or are you still working very closely with General Idris?

**MS. PSAKI:** We are still working very closely with General Idris, we're still working towards a Geneva conference in January, and we still believe there's no military solution, as you know.

More on Syria?

**QUESTION:** Still on Syria.

**MS. PSAKI:** Or -- go ahead, Roz.

**QUESTION:** Still on Syria, the Iranian Foreign Minister Zarif did an interview with Al Jazeera this morning. And when it came to Geneva II, he said that while Iran is, quote: not begging to attend the talks in January, it would attend if invited. My first question: Would the U.S. be willing to invite Iran to take part in these talks? And if so, what does the U.S. believe that Iran could bring to this situation to try to end the civil war?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, no decisions have been made about participation yet. There's another trilateral meeting on December 20<sup>th</sup> coming up that we'll be participating in with the UN and the Russians. Our position hasn't changed on Iran's participation or whether we believe they should be invited. They have not endorsed the Geneva communique. That's a condition we feel is necessary, but obviously this will continue to be discussed at the next trilateral meeting.

**QUESTION:** But given the -- that the UN is now estimating that upwards of 120-25,000 people may have been killed in the civil war to date --

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

**QUESTION:** -- is there some sort of leverage that Tehran could bring to the table to try to induce the Assad regime to, if nothing else, stop the killing and try to at least put in some sort of ceasefire?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, this goes back to the premise that attendees should be endorsing the Geneva communique, because that is what the purpose and the goal of the conference is. So, I don't have any speculation on what leverage they may or may not have, but the conversations we have had with them in recent weeks have been about their nuclear program and moving towards a first-step agreement on that. They've not been focused on Syria. And our position on whether or not they should attend the Geneva conference in January hasn't changed.

**QUESTION:** But you do feel that if they do endorse Geneva I, there's a great deal of value for Iran's participation --

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we'd have to --

**QUESTION:** -- considering that it is --

**MS. PSAKI:** We'd have to evaluate it, Said. I don't want to get ahead of --

**QUESTION:** But it's a very ally of the regime. It supports other elements that help the regime in its fight, like Hezbollah so on.

**MS. PSAKI:** If that is a step they take, we can have a robust discussion in here about it.

**QUESTION:** Jen, are there any contacts currently between the United States Government and the Syrian regime? I mean, I know Secretary Kerry spoke months and months ago --

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** -- to Foreign Minister Muallem. Is there anything going on at the moment?

**MS. PSAKI:** And we have for some time, as you know, have had different channels, but I don't have anything specific for you. I can check if there have been any recent contacts on any level.

**QUESTION:** So there were reports over the weekend that some European countries are quietly beginning to --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- reopen diplomatic conversations or channels with the Syrian regime because, I think, the fear is that this is just so blocked at the moment that they're --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- it's not going anywhere.

MS. PSAKI: Well, let me see if there have been any contacts at any level of the regime. We've -- they have happened in the past, as you mentioned, so I will see if there's more to report on that.

QUESTION: Can I go back to the Iranians and taking part in Geneva? I mean, I think over the last week or so, when there's been, like, various bouts of violence in Syria, that the Iranian Government has said that there needs to be a political solution to the situation in Syria. So don't you think that Iran is making more positive comments? I mean, I don't think the Russians have gone far beyond saying that there needs to be a political solution. They haven't said anything about President Assad leaving (inaudible).

MS. PSAKI: Well, the whole premise -- I mean the whole goal is to create a transitional governing body. That's the goal of a Geneva conference. So, certainly, they haven't embraced that as the focus of the Geneva communique, and --

QUESTION: Well, even though the Russians have agreed to a political transition, your definition of a transition is far different from the -- than the Russians' definition of a transition. So if the Iranians were to say, like, okay, we accept a political transition, I mean, does that really mean that they --

MS. PSAKI: It's not just about a political transition. It's about embracing the Geneva communique, which they have not done. If they do that, we will evaluate whether or not we'd support their -- an invitation to them to attend the conference.

QUESTION: Zarif also told us that his country is not interested in aggravating any sectarian tensions between Shiite and Sunni, between Alawite and other major Islamic communities; that they're trying to, in their efforts, promote more harmony, more peace. Does that add any -- does that change the complexion at all, particularly in Syria?

MS. PSAKI: I don't want to speak too specifically to an interview I haven't yet seen yet, and neither has anyone on our team. Broadly speaking, obviously we took a significant step forward with the first-step agreement on their nuclear program, but there are remaining concerns that we have, as you all are familiar with, whether it's their involvement in support of the regime in Syria or humanitarian issues, and so that has not changed that. I can take a closer look once we see the transcript of the interview and see if we have more comments on Foreign Minister Zarif's comments.

QUESTION: You're saying your team does not watch Al Jazeera?

MS. PSAKI: Well, that is not true; we do. However, I believe there's only been a very short clip that has played of this interview that I'm sure will get lots of attention once it all plays.

QUESTION: Beyond the interview, he's freely reaching out. He visited Kuwait. He's reaching out to the other Gulf countries. He wants to visit Saudi Arabia. I mean, there is an effort underway to alleviate their fears and actually encourage them towards participating in Geneva II to make it a success. You must have some sort of a reading of this effort.

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any particular reading of it for you, Said. Our position, I think, has been pretty clear on whether or not they attend the Geneva conference.

QUESTION: I have another really quick logistics thing. On the December 20<sup>th</sup> meeting, that's Wendy Sherman and that -- It's the same iteration?

MS. PSAKI: It is that level. Exactly, yes. Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Is that new or was that announced last week or something --

MS. PSAKI: I believe we talked about it last week as being the next meeting.

QUESTION: On China -- (inaudible).

QUESTION: Please, Jen, can we stay on Iran, please?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Let's stay on Iran and then we can go to China.

QUESTION: On the 6<sup>th</sup> of February in this room, I had a very brief exchange with your predecessor, Victoria Nuland --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- about Iran. And with your indulgence, I will read it in its entirety for the purpose of the record and so you can respond to it.

"Rosen: There have been reports that intermittently, and outside of the formal P5+1 mechanisms, the Obama Administration, or members of it, have conducted direct secret bilateral talks with Iran. Is that true or false?"

"Nuland: We have made clear, as the Vice President did at Munich, that in the context of the larger P5+1 framework, we would be prepared to talk to Iran bilaterally. But with regard to the kind of thing that you're talking about on a government-to-government level, no."

That's the entirety of the exchange.

As we now know, senior state department officials had, in fact, been conducting direct, secret bilateral talks with senior officials of the Iranian Government in Oman, perhaps dating back to 2011 by that point.

So the question today is a simple one: When the briefer was asked about those talks and flatly denied them from the podium, that was untrue, correct?

MS. PSAKI: I mean, James, I – that – you're talking about a February briefing, so 10 months ago. I don't think we've outlined or confirmed contacts or specifics beyond a March meeting. I'm not going to confirm others beyond that at this point. So I don't know that I have any more for you.

QUESTION: Do you stand by the accuracy of what Ms. Nuland told me, that there had been no government-to-government contacts, no secret direct bilateral talks with Iran as of the date of that briefing, February 6<sup>th</sup>? Do you stand by the accuracy of that?

MS. PSAKI: James, I have no new information for you today on the timing of when there were any discussions with any Iranian officials.

QUESTION: Let me try it one last way, Jen --

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

QUESTION: -- and I appreciate your indulgence.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

QUESTION: Is it the policy of the State Department, where the preservation or the secrecy of secret negotiations is concerned, to lie in order to achieve that goal?

MS. PSAKI: James, I think there are times where diplomacy needs privacy in order to progress. This is a good example of that. Obviously, we have made clear and laid out a number of details in recent weeks about discussions and about a bilateral channel that fed into the P5+1 negotiations, and we've answered questions on it, we've confirmed details. We're happy to continue to do that, but clearly, this was an important component leading up to the agreement that was reached a week ago.

QUESTION: Since you, standing at that podium last week, did confirm that there were such talks, at least as far back as March of this year, I don't see what would prohibit you from addressing directly this question: Were there secret direct bilateral talks between the United States and Iranian officials in 2011?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything more for you today. We've long had ways to speak with the Iranians through a range of channels, some of which you talked – you mentioned, but I don't have any other specifics for you today.

QUESTION: One more on Iran?

QUESTION: The Los Angeles Times and Politico have reported that those talks were held as far back as 2011. Were those reports inaccurate?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not sure which reports you're talking about. Are you talking about visits that the Secretary and others made to Oman, or are you talking about other reports?

QUESTION: I'm talking about U.S. officials meeting directly and secretly with Iranian officials in Oman as far back as 2011. The Los Angeles Times and Politico have reported those meetings. Were those reports inaccurate?

MS. PSAKI: I have nothing more for you on it, James, today.

QUESTION: One more on Iran?

MS. PSAKI: On Iran? Let's just finish Iran and then we can go to China. Go ahead, Roz.

QUESTION: One of – one more on Iran. Foreign Minister Zarif said, directly contradicting the Obama Administration's contention that sanctions worked, he told our interviewer that when the sanctions were first imposed, Iran had 200 working centrifuges. Today, they have more than 19,000. What is this building's reaction to his comment that sanctions did not work and did not bring Iran to the negotiating table?

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, I would like to look more closely at the context of the comments. But, just as reminder, President Rouhani and others have talked about how the impact – how growing the economy and putting an end – doing – bringing an end to the sanctions is something that was a priority for them in order to help the economy and the Iranian people. There's no question, if you look just at the facts of the impact of oil revenues, the impact on their economic growth was large that there was a huge impact of – that there – the sanctions had an enormous impact, and that that was a driving factor in bringing the Iranians back to the negotiating table.

In terms of progress made on their efforts to develop a nuclear weapon, whether through centrifuges or at their various facilities, that to me sounds like a separate question. Obviously, there was concerns about steps they were taking and progress they were making, which was why it was so important to come to an acceptable agreement that would halt and roll back the progress of their program.

QUESTION: Just to follow up on that, though --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- Secretary Kerry, when he did his round robin of interviews after the announcement of the deal in Geneva, more than once stated that when Iran had reached out to the Bush-Cheney Administration in 2003, Iran was only in possession of 164 centrifuges. Now, he would go on to say, they have 19,000, and this therefore represents the best possible deal that could be secured.

Isn't it a fact that since the Obama-Biden Administration took office, 70 percent of Iran's centrifuges have been installed?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I'd have to look at the statistics, James, but we have not questioned the fact that Iran has made progress on enrichment and on developing a nuclear weapon. We have not questioned that. That's one of the reasons why we stepped up sanctions over the past couple of years. The President and Secretary Kerry were big proponents of that. We worked with the international community to do just that to put that necessary pressure in place. The point I was trying to make to Roz is that -- what she's asking sounds to me like two separate questions, so that was --

QUESTION: Right. I'm pursuing the separate one part that she carved out, and that is to say -- and if this is untrue, I'd be grateful to be disabused of the notion -- but the great bulk of Iran's progress in the development of its enrichment program has taken place under President Obama's watch, correct?

MS. PSAKI: I'd have to check on the specific numbers. The --

QUESTION: You're not prepared to dispute that statement, as --

MS. PSAKI: Well, James, I think what we're focused on at this point is the fact that we're now at a point where we are halting and rolling back the progress of their program and we're working towards a comprehensive agreement to bring an end to it. I can't speculate for you what would happen without -- what would have happened without sanctions. I would venture to guess --

QUESTION: (Inaudible) sanctions.

MS. PSAKI: But they were being paired together, so that's why I'm bringing it into the conversation.

QUESTION: But the context of the question was exactly: "The Obama Administration says we showed up because our economy is falling apart. I'm here to tell you that's not the case. We have our own reasons for coming."

MS. PSAKI: Well, we will take a close look at his comments and we'll have more to say about them once we do.

QUESTION: Can I just go back to the Geneva meeting and --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

QUESTION: -- December 20<sup>th</sup> with Wendy Sherman?

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: This is --

MS. PSAKI: It's that level -- in terms of specific attendance, I'll have to just double-check that for you.

QUESTION: Oh, okay.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

QUESTION: This is going to be the first of the political meetings towards the next -- the comprehensive agreement --

MS. PSAKI: Well, they also --

QUESTION: -- or this is the technical discussions?

MS. PSAKI: No, no, no.

QUESTION: No, this is Syria.

MS. PSAKI: This is -- sorry, this is Syria.

QUESTION: Oh, I'm sorry.

MS. PSAKI: This is Syria.

QUESTION: Excuse me. I'm sorry.

MS. PSAKI: So this is the pre-Geneva. No, it's okay. It's confusing. Lots of Genevas.

QUESTION: Okay. But I did have an Iran question, actually.

QUESTION: But is there any new -- I mean --

QUESTION: Yeah.

QUESTION: -- when is it that you're going to start to negotiate the comprehensive deal with Iran?

MS. PSAKI: Well, right now, what we're focused on is the technical discussions leading up to the start of the six-month --

QUESTION: Right.

QUESTION: So do you have a date for those?

MS. PSAKI: I don't yet have a date on those.

QUESTION: Or a place?

MS. PSAKI: I don't yet have a place. It's being worked through. Hopefully we'll have an update for you all in the coming days.

QUESTION: And can I ask -- I don't know if you had seen the reports that the new British envoy to Iran is actually going to visit Tehran tomorrow. I wondered what the --

MS. PSAKI: I haven't seen that.

QUESTION: Well, I wanted a U.S. reaction to this following on to the question I asked last week about how far along the line you are prepared to go with your new diplomatic relations or not with Iran.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm. I still don't have any prediction of any step beyond what step we've already taken, which is being a part of the P5+1 agreement on the first step here with Iran. Obviously, different countries are going to make their own decisions, and as with most issues, we certainly support that.

QUESTION: Would it be helpful, though? Do you believe it's helpful that the British envoy could be going to Tehran?

MS. PSAKI: I don't know that I have that level of analysis on it. I don't have all the details on what the purpose of the trip is or what they hope to accomplish. And obviously, every country will make their own decisions about diplomatic relationships.

QUESTION: Jen, one more on the --

QUESTION: East China Sea?

QUESTION: -- secret negotiations with Iran.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: I apologize if you've already addressed this, but there have been reports that the secret negotiations that the U.S. was engaging in with Iran created a feeling of resentment among P5+1 allies such as France, and then that contributed to a rift among the P5+1 and made it difficult to reach consensus within that group. Do you have a reaction to that or a comment on that?

MS. PSAKI: I don't want to speak to anonymous reports about what may or may not be the feelings by other countries, but I will reiterate for you that this was -- these discussions were fed into the P5+1 process. That is the process that we ultimately all worked through to achieve a first-step agreement here. The P5+1 members, as well as our friends in Israel, were briefed early this fall.

As to the discussions, we have always been clear we've been open to bilateral discussions with Iran; that there are a range of channels to do that through; that if anything got serious, that we would certainly be briefing our important partners on that; and that's exactly what we did in this case.

QUESTION: Jen --

QUESTION: And when did the talks begin?

MS. PSAKI: James, you're so tricky over there. (Laughter.)

QUESTION: Can I ask about China?

MS. PSAKI: Let me just say one thing, though, for James. It's important here too -- and then I promise we'll go to China -- it's important here also to note, though, that these really picked up after President Rouhani's election, that in terms of the discussion of specific pieces about how to move forward, what kind of -- what an agreement could look like, that's when it picked up. So I understand that's not answering your question, but I felt it was important to --

QUESTION: But just on the basis of methodology and removing the specifics of Iran and who's president or who's Secretary of State, if you were able to stand there at the podium last week and say, "Yes, I'm confirming a certain set of talks that occurred in March," explain to me what is it that prohibits you from saying, yes or no, that a certain set of talks occurred two years ago?

MS. PSAKI: If I have more details for you, James, I will -- happy to share them.

QUESTION: I didn't ask you -- I'm asking for your thinking about why you're not addressing the question, not the specifics of the meetings. What is it that prohibits you from addressing a question about meetings that are two years old?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to do a psychiatrist chair today.

Go ahead. On China?

QUESTION: What about the couch? (Laughter.)

QUESTION: Thank you, Jen. So as we know, the U.S. Government has already told U.S. carriers to comply with China's requirements before any flights pass through the new air defense zone established by the Chinese Government. So does that mean the U.S. Government has recognized this new air defense zone established by the Chinese Government?

MS. PSAKI: So let me be absolutely as clear as I can be here because I know there's been a range of reporting. It has been -- some of it has been inaccurate, to no fault of -- perhaps it's our fault for not explaining it well enough. So we are not -- the State Department is not the point of contact with airlines. The FAA is the point of contact with airlines. There has not been any information that has been put out or confirmed that I am aware of that has conveyed what has or has not been communicated in that capacity to airlines.

There is -- for safety and security of passengers, U.S. carriers operate internationally -- operate consistently as a process with the notices to airmen issued by foreign countries, as is the case in this case. Their concerns are about the safety and security of passengers. That is different from what the U.S. Government policy is. It is not -- this in no way indicates U.S. Government acceptance of China's requirements in the newly declared ADIZ and has absolutely no bearing on the firm and consistent U.S. Government position that we do not accept the legitimacy of China's requirements.

This is a case where China announced this in an uncoordinated fashion. It's inconsistent with standard practice. And their requirements for operating exceed internationally accepted practice in this capacity. So I don't know how much more clear that it is, but it does contradict a bit your question, so I wanted --

QUESTION: It looks like we received the statement or the Q&A from the State Department, so it looks like it's from the U.S. Government. And also, you are saying --

MS. PSAKI: Well, in that statement, which I certainly was well aware of, what was conveyed in there is that for safety and -- for the safety and security of passengers, U.S. carriers operate consistently internationally with the notices to airmen issued by foreign governments. It did not convey that -- anything specific about what had been communicated to airlines. It did not convey that the U.S. Government supported this effort. So I'm very familiar with the statement you're referring to, and there were a lot of -- there were some assumptions made.

QUESTION: So (inaudible) --

QUESTION: Okay. It looks like --

QUESTION: -- that the FAA did not instruct airlines to comply with the Chinese regulations?

MS. PSAKI: I would point you to the FAA for what they did or did not communicate to commercial airlines.

QUESTION: Okay. Well, the FAA is part of the U.S. Government, is it not?

MS. PSAKI: They are. They --

QUESTION: Yes.

MS. PSAKI: Certainly, they are not housed in the State Department, however. (Laughter.)

QUESTION: So -- I understand that, but the State Department does have a representative -- you're familiar with the ICAO?

MS. PSAKI: I am not.

QUESTION: Okay. It's in Montreal.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

QUESTION: It's a good excuse to get to Montreal --

MS. PSAKI: Good.

QUESTION: -- if you ever want to go up there. .

MS. PSAKI: I will take that advice.

QUESTION: It's the International Civilian -- it's the civilian airline -- the UN agency for airlines. Do you know if the United States is going to use its membership in the ICAO to oppose this Chinese decision?

MS. PSAKI: I don't.

QUESTION: And if you don't know, could you ask?

MS. PSAKI: Yeah, I'm happy to check on that for you, Matt. Absolutely.

QUESTION: And when you say that the U.S. Government does not accept the legitimacy of the Chinese requirements --

MS. PSAKI: Well, it doesn't accept -- yeah, the Chinese requirements, right.

QUESTION: Right. That's what you said.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** Doesn't that – if the FAA has been telling airlines that they have to comply with this, or that they should comply with it, how is that not accepting – the government accepting the legitimacy?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, there's a whole field of regulations and regulatory policy that I am certainly far from an aviation expert, as it evidenced by your Montreal question. So I would point you to them on that.

Evidence of the fact that the U.S. Government does not accept China's requirement is by the fact that the announcement will not change how the United States conducts military operations in the region, which is something DOD announced last week. And that is certainly a U.S. Government decision to make.

**QUESTION:** So does that mean that U.S. Government planes will not obey the – or will not follow the Chinese requirements if they're flying through this airspace?

**MS. PSAKI:** Military planes?

**QUESTION:** Say the Secretary of State flying on an Air Force plane to Seoul or to Tokyo will not notify the --

**MS. PSAKI:** I am not aware of any upcoming Seoul trip coming up.

**QUESTION:** Well, the Vice President is there right now, or in Tokyo, at least. Are you saying that his plane, an Air Force plane, will not follow the requirements of the Chinese?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I am saying military planes would not, and that level of specificity I'd certainly have to check and see where that falls in.

**QUESTION:** What is this episode – what impact is this episode having on U.S.-Sino relations?

**MS. PSAKI:** There are times when we agree and there are times when we disagree, as you know. We've made clear our concerns about not only what was announced but how this was announced, the fact that there was no prior notice. As you also know, Vice President Biden is in the region now on a prior planned trip. He will, of course, be meeting with key leaders to discuss a range of issues. Certainly, this could be a topic of discussion, but there are a number of other issues that we discuss both with China and other partners in the region.

**QUESTION:** And has the pivot to Asia worked? Is this evidence of the pivot working?

**MS. PSAKI:** I wouldn't categorize this into – I wouldn't put this in the evaluation category of whether or not it worked. Our pivot to Asia, or rebalance to Asia, means focusing on Asia and the important partnership we have with Asia, with countries in the region, the economic and strategic partners. And nothing is further evidence of that than the Vice President's trip there, the fact that, as you know, the Secretary will be going back to Asia soon, that he was just there a couple of months ago with Secretary Hagel. So that is evidence of our commitment to the region. And we work with them on a – countries in the region on a broad range of issues.

**QUESTION:** But as we survey the last five years of this Administration, would you say that China is less aggressive in its serial commission of human rights abuses, currency manipulation, cyber warfare against U.S. businesses and government, territorial aggression, or is it better than it used to be?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not going to do an evaluation of that. Obviously, we work with them on economic issues, we work with them on strategic issues. There are still issues, including human rights, including this issue we're talking about now, that we express concerns about when warranted, and we'll continue to do that. But we know that the relationship is a vital one and one that we need to keep plugging away at even when we disagree.

**QUESTION:** Jen, could I (inaudible) for a second?

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

**QUESTION:** Is it fair to characterize the U.S. position as being that aside from the official policy, for the purposes of safety and avoiding some kind of unfortunate incident, that commercial carriers should abide by the Chinese ADIZ requirements?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have – I'd point you again to the FAA on more specifics than what I just conveyed. There are a range of regulations and policies that, of course, they oversee or are in place, but our general position as a U.S. Government is that we don't accept China's requirements. And obviously, the military – actions of military exercises is evidence of that.

**QUESTION:** Jen, this comes from --

**QUESTION:** Sorry, sorry. Just a quick follow-up on that.

**MS. PSAKI:** Go ahead.

**QUESTION:** It looks like the two main U.S. airlines are complying with – are taking steps to comply. Delta and United are the two that have flight routes through the area, which seems to have kind of created a little bit of confusion/consternation in Japan over a perceived rift with Japanese policy, which is to not allow U.S. commercial airliners to file their flight plans with China. Do you have a – do you have any kind of reassurance or any kind of response to that?

**MS. PSAKI:** We coordinate closely with Japan and with South Korea and all of the countries in the region about a range of issues. And certainly on this issue, we have been in touch with Japan and will continue to be. This is – for specific actions of individual commercial airliners, I would point you to them or the FAA on any regulations.

**QUESTION:** But – so you're not – but you're not afraid for the safety or concerned about the safety of U.S. citizens on flights that are flying through the area?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, certainly safety and security of citizens should be of concern to everyone. Obviously, there are policies in place and regulations in place because of that. But we don't oversee airline regulations. The FAA does, so I would point you to them.

**QUESTION:** (Inaudible.) Did the United States Government – the position has changed toward this ADIZ, or not changed? What is the position to ADIZ now?

**MS. PSAKI:** It has not changed. We – China announced the ADIZ without prior consultations even though the newly-announced ADIZ overlaps with parts of longstanding ADIZs of Japan, the Republic of Korea, and Taiwan, and includes territory administered by Japan. As I mentioned, we – the fact that China's announcement has caused confusion and increased the risk of accidents only further underscores the validity of concerns and the need for China to rescind the procedures. It's consistently been our position and one we have communicated both publicly and privately. I know there was some confusion over the weekend about airlines and specifically.

**QUESTION:** Jen, you said that you are not still – not accepting China's new air defense zone. But I wonder, like, Japan has its own air defense zone, and also part of it covers Taiwan. But it looks like the U.S. doesn't say anything about it. So do you think there is sort of a double standard? Why do you react so strongly to China's air defense zone?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, one of the reasons is that they announced this without prior consultations. It was inconsistent with longstanding procedure and process. And obviously, it overlaps with a number of other longstanding air defense zones of some other neighboring countries.

**QUESTION:** Jen --

**QUESTION:** Jen, you do not contest the ability of China to declare such a identification zone; it's just the manner in which they did it, or the extent?

**MS. PSAKI:** No. I think I have – I've just consistently said that we believe they should rescind the procedures. I've just – I've also stated a couple of times that we don't accept China's requirements. So I think I've made that pretty clear.

**QUESTION:** (Inaudible.)

**QUESTION:** Is the first --

**QUESTION:** In response to the – China's declaration of its own ADIZ, the South Korean Government is poised to expand its own ADIZ, so-called KADIZ, to the South China Sea. What is the position of the United States? Would you encourage it or discourage it?

**MS. PSAKI:** I haven't seen those reports, or I don't even know if they're reports or if there's been an announcement. I haven't seen any announcement, I guess I should say. So let me check into that, and --

**QUESTION:** They say they have already started consultations with the United States.

**MS. PSAKI:** I'd have to check into it and see if we have more to say on that.

**QUESTION:** Is this the first time the U.S. has called --

**QUESTION:** Jennifer, you talk about safety --

**QUESTION:** -- for the zone to be rescinded?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'd have to check on that for you, Roz.

**QUESTION:** Can we change topic?

**QUESTION:** No.

**QUESTION:** You talk about safety. Are you really concerned that the Chinese may down an airliner or something?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not predicting that, but certainly there is – they created these Air Defense Identification Zones, they've asked for prior flight plans. So of course, the security and safety is part of the regulatory process, and – but I don't have any predictions. It's just the question of abiding by it.

**QUESTION:** Is it a real concern, downing an airliner?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't think I have any more for you on that question.

**QUESTION:** Jen, when you're taking that question that Roz had --

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** -- could you also check whether the United States actually is directly asking the Chinese to rescind it?

**MS. PSAKI:** Happy to. Sure.

QUESTION: Thank you.

QUESTION: Well, at least --

QUESTION: Apart from the specific concerns about how this was announced without any prior notice, its excessiveness, at least in terms of other regulations, and the safety risks that you say it cause, do you have any -- are there broader concerns about this area being identified as essentially the entire East China Sea? Is the U.S. concerned that the Chinese are looking at anything on a map that has the word "China" in it as all their own?

MS. PSAKI: Well, part of the concern is certainly that it overlaps with parts of other --

QUESTION: Right. But in terms of territorial claims --

MS. PSAKI: As well as territory administered by Japan, sure.

QUESTION: Right, right. But in terms of China's territorial claims, are you concerned that this is the first step or could be a first step towards actually moving in some kind of forceful way to take control of areas of territory and ocean maritime space that it says that it owns?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I don't want to make a prediction of that.

QUESTION: No, but I'm asking if you were concerned --

MS. PSAKI: But --

QUESTION: -- that this is a step in that direction, apart from the specific problems with the no prior notice and all that other -- the safety concerns.

MS. PSAKI: But one of the specific problems is also that this includes area -- territory administered by Japan, it includes overlapping area with other countries in the region. So certainly, that does touch on what your question is here. In terms of a prediction of what it will mean in the future, I certainly wouldn't venture to make that at this point.

QUESTION: Right. Well, the Chinese say that they would be well within their rights also to declare one of these zones over the entire -- over the South China Sea. Are you concerned about the possibility of that?

MS. PSAKI: Well, you're familiar with what our position is on that, and we've long --

QUESTION: Well, that's over the territorial disputes over the -- it's a question of sovereignty for these little atolls and bits of rock.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Would you be as opposed as you are to this if the Chinese did it for the South China Sea, or is that a hypothetical question that you will wait to bash the Chinese over the head for once they -- if and when they do it?

MS. PSAKI: It is a hypothetical question at this stage in time.

QUESTION: All right.

QUESTION: One more thing. Just one more thing on that. China at the same time has announced they sent a fighter jet against United States and Japanese aircraft last week. Did you comment on that?

MS. PSAKI: I am not familiar with that specific report. In -- where, exactly?

QUESTION: If it's true, are you concerned about these Chinese announcement?

MS. PSAKI: I'd have to look at the specific report, and that may be a DOD question.

James.

QUESTION: Given that China makes this declaration --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- and we regard it as thoroughly problematic, if not illegal, and therefore we have on our hands a dispute with the Chinese --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- which is to be adjudicated somehow in a nonviolent way, wasn't it a kind of a provocative act for the United States to fly B-52s through that very zone in a short time thereafter?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would point you to DOD on that, but I would reiterate the fact that we have made clear that this action, this announcement, is not going to change our military exercises. And that is an example of that.

QUESTION: So other than taking -- other than the Vice President, are you aware -- or has there been at this point any conversations that you're aware of in this -- from this building with the Chinese directly? It's kind of on Jill's question. And if not, do you expect them or is this going to be left up to the Vice President when he goes to --

MS. PSAKI: Let me check. I know we have expressed concerns. I mentioned this last week, Matt, so let me just make sure you have it.

QUESTION: Jen, the -- Secretary Kerry did meet on Wednesday with a senior Chinese official?

MS. PSAKI: I'd have to --

**QUESTION:** On Wednesday, the vice premier.

**QUESTION:** Lu.

**QUESTION:** Yeah.

**MS. PSAKI:** I'd have to look back at that. It seems like a long time ago.

**QUESTION:** I know it does. And it was happening on Wednesday.

**MS. PSAKI:** Deputy Secretary Burns met last week with a Chinese official where this was a topic of discussion. Also, Assistant Secretary Russel spoke with the ambassador about a week ago, and Ambassador Locke has also been in touch, of course, on the ground. In terms of specific contacts over the last couple of days, I'm happy to check and see what else we can read out for all of you.

**QUESTION:** Are you taking this to the UN in any forum there?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have any prediction of that, James, at this point in time.

**QUESTION:** New topic?

**QUESTION:** So it's strictly a bilateral or a multilateral thing, but outside the auspices of the UN is how you're going to seek to resolve it?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I don't have anything for you on it at this point. We're taking this day by day. I conveyed for you what we've done and what we've communicated. But obviously, we're taking steps day by day.

**QUESTION:** But is that a kind of -- is that a consideration?

**MS. PSAKI:** Not that I'm aware of, Elise. But obviously, we're taking this day by day.

**QUESTION:** Can we change --

**QUESTION:** New subject?

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure, Jill. Go ahead.

**QUESTION:** I'm still on China. Can you actually clarify this? China's argument is that we institute the ADIZ that other countries have already instituted. If you're saying that China does not have a right to do that, they can say, well, what's good for the goose is good for the gander. And it doesn't seem like you have a legal foot to stand on. If you're opposed to the way in which they did it or the extent of it, these can be a subject of debate. And China has said we can get rid of our ADIZ if the Japanese get rid of theirs. I mean, something like that could happen. But somehow -- are you really saying that you do not accept -- you do not give China the right to declare a defense identification zone?

**MS. PSAKI:** I think I've thoroughly outlined what our concerns are, so I'm not sure I have much more to add to your question.

**QUESTION:** Just on another topic, Jen -- sorry.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we were going to go to Jill next, and then I'm happy to go to you.

**QUESTION:** North Korea?

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** Merrill Newman.

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

**QUESTION:** You've seen probably, or read at least, his so-called confession. Do you have any comments about that, any reaction? And what is the latest on his status?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, the latest is -- and let me do this first and then I'll do the second part. On November 30<sup>th</sup>, North Korea permitted the Embassy of Sweden, our protecting power, to consular access to Merrill Newman. It -- and given his advanced age and health conditions, we continue to urge North Korea to release him so he may return home and reunite with his family.

We, of course, have seen the Korean Central News Agency report regarding Mr. Newman's detention. According to the report, he apologized for the misunderstanding that led him -- led to his detention. We don't have any other further information regarding the reason for his detention. But again, given his age and health, we continue to call for North Korea to release him as quickly as possible.

**QUESTION:** Do you believe that the North Korean -- that that apology was -- that he wrote and that was released by the North Koreans -- do you believe that he wrote that of his own volition and that he -- and do you have reason to believe that all of those things in that apology are true?

**MS. PSAKI:** We just don't have any other further analysis. We've seen the same reports all of you have seen, of course, about his interview and the publication of that, but I don't have any other further analysis on it.

**QUESTION:** Are you aware if that -- the subject of his quote, unquote "confession" came up in the meeting with the Swedes?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything more on it, but I'm happy to check and see if there's more detail we can outline for all of you.

QUESTION: Did the Swedes as for and did Mr. Newman sign a PAW?

MS. PSAKI: A Privacy Act waiver?

QUESTION: Correct.

MS. PSAKI: Yes, he did. That is why I am able to talk about him now.

QUESTION: Okay. So then if -- since he has signed the waiver, would you take it back to your -- whoever it is that liaises with the Swedes on this --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: I assume it's EAP, but I guess it could also be EUR -- and find out if Mr. Newman, in his discussions with the Swedes, talked at all about or said that he had freely made this alleged confession and when it was that he recorded this or when it --

MS. PSAKI: I am happy to take that and see if there's more we can share.

Go ahead, Lesley.

QUESTION: Also, did the Swedes report back in what condition he is in? Has he been tortured? Anything today? And how long did they meet with him, and was it in a jail? Was it in a --

QUESTION: Guest house.

QUESTION: -- government -- a guest house?

QUESTION: A jailhouse guest house.

MS. PSAKI: A guest house. I don't have many specifics on that. I'm happy to also check with Matt's questions and to see if there's more we can share on that as well.

QUESTION: But didn't it include a --

QUESTION: But they did say -- the Swedes did say that he --

QUESTION: -- physical examination of him?

QUESTION: The Swedes did, I think, say that he was --

MS. PSAKI: I believe they've spoken publicly about it.

QUESTION: -- that he was treated -- that's he's being treated (inaudible), right?

MS. PSAKI: Right. I've seen those comments as well. So I don't have any other specifics on it, but if there's more we share beyond what they've said publicly, I'm happy --

QUESTION: Including whether or not there was a physical examination of him during this consular access?

QUESTION: I just want to get back to his confession. I mean, it is kind of written in language that kind of fits the narrative that North Korea has been saying, and I'm just wondering if you think that he wrote this. Are you -- I mean, there's often times that you would say, like, oh this person seemed under duress --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- or something like that. So I mean, I'm just -- about this particular confession, do you have any reason to believe that he did not confess to all of those things?

MS. PSAKI: I don't -- I certainly understand why you're asking. I don't have any particular analysis on it at this stage. I will see if this is something that our team is looking into, and if there's more we can say about it specifically.

QUESTION: And what is this building doing to secure his release beyond calling for his release from imprisonment? I mean, Ambassador King had tried months ago to go --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- for the other American under detention, Kenneth Bae. What's actually being done to get them out?

MS. PSAKI: Well, our Swedish protecting power just visited with him two days ago, and obviously that's an important component of reaching out to citizens who are detained in North Korea. We certainly do continue to call for his release. I don't have any other predictions or announcements on travel or visits of other officials at this point to tell you about.

QUESTION: But beyond those consular visits, I mean, is there any outreach to the Chinese specially on behalf of Mr. Newman?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have more I can outline for all of you, but I can check and see if there is any more to tell.

QUESTION: Have they been helpful the past with Kenneth Bae or with others? The Chinese (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: They have been helpful, but there's not more specifics I can outline.

QUESTION: Through the Swedes are elsewhere, has North Korea communicated any demands or requests of the United States that have to do with Newman or -- as a prelude to his possible release?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any more specifics on the contact with the Swedes and kind of what the discussion entailed beyond confirming --

QUESTION: Well, any -- in any forum, have they asked for anything from the United States?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any details on it. I am happy to check if there's any more to share with all of you.

QUESTION: But you guys are in touch with the North Koreans directly, just to confirm?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we -- as you know, we've long had a channel, but we've been working in this case through our Swedish protective -- protecting power.

QUESTION: But you have been in touch with the North Koreans specifically on this matter?

MS. PSAKI: On this specific case, not that I'm aware of, but I'm happy to check if there's anything more on that.

QUESTION: Are you in touch with Mr. Newman's family?

MS. PSAKI: We are. We have been. Let me see if I have the detail of when we last spoke with him -- with his family. I don't have that detail for you. I'm happy to put that in the pocket of things I'm going to check on.

QUESTION: And have they asked for you to help facilitate any kind of visit by them to North Korea, given that this gentleman's actually -- I mean, he's quite elderly --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- so you would imagine that if -- there would be concern enough to try and travel to visit him.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm. I'm not aware of a request that they've made about that specifically, but we can see.

QUESTION: So all the attention, really, is on this Mr. Newman. But as we've said, Kenneth Bae has been held for quite a long time.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm. You're right.

QUESTION: So in your efforts working with the Swedes or working to try and get the release, I mean, are you emphasizing because of Mr. Newman's age and health that you need to get him out right away, or are they part of a package that you think that they --

MS. PSAKI: I mean, we'd certainly like to see them both released as quickly as possible. In terms of that level of detail, I just don't have that.

QUESTION: These American citizens being held against their will in a rogue state, they're hostages, right?

MS. PSAKI: I mean, they're being held by the governments. The governments have confirmed that, so I don't know that I need to categorize it further, James.

QUESTION: You don't regard them as hostages?

MS. PSAKI: Do we have another topic?

QUESTION: Yes. Could I move onto the --

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

QUESTION: -- the Secretary's trip.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Okay. The portion to the West Bank and to Israel.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

QUESTION: Yes. If you have more to share with us -- today or yesterday, President Abbas, the president of the Palestinian Authority, was so impressed with the Geneva success, now he's suggesting a format, perhaps another Geneva, where the Palestinian-Israeli issue could be resolved. Would you look kindly at this suggestion?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I haven't seen those comments from him specifically. I know this has been an idea floated out there. Our focus remains on the direct negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians. We're a facilitator in that effort. There are certainly a number of countries who have a great investment and great interest in the success -- in a successful outcome here, including the Arab League, including many other countries that want to contribute to growing the Palestinian economy. But that's our focus, not on planning yet another conference.

QUESTION: And a Palestinian member of the Israeli Knesset, Mr. Ahmed Tibi, claims that the 20,000 housing that the Israelis announced and they put on hold were actually not put on hold, that there is -- construction is ongoing. Do you have any information on that?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything new on that. I'd have to look into that for you.  
Scott?

QUESTION: (Inaudible.)

MS. PSAKI: Oh.

QUESTION: Can we stay on stay on that?

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

QUESTION: Just on this idea of not necessarily a Geneva-type conference for the peace process, but just the idea of internationalizing the process, would the United States – would the Administration object to an internationalization of the peace process?

MS. PSAKI: Well, it's hard to know exactly what that means. Obviously, as you all are well aware, there's direct negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians now. That's what our focus is on, so certainly that's not a path we're pursuing.

QUESTION: Well, I think that the point that – right, it's not a path that you're pursuing --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- but the point that people who are suggesting that this might be a way to go, the point that they make is that the United States has been the sole and unique arbiter, mediator, facilitator, whatever you want to call it, of Israeli-Palestinian peace talks going back decades.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: And you haven't gotten anything out of it. There's been no success. It's been one failure after another. Is it perhaps not time to try something new, is the argument that these people would make.

MS. PSAKI: Well, Matt, obviously, many people are going to make different arguments about how it should proceed. We're less than halfway through the nine-month timeline here. There are a number of countries that are engaged and invested, including, of course, the Arab League, who, as you know, are in very close contact with the Palestinians and engaged in this effort. There are many who are engaged with the Israelis in this effort. So our focus remains on the direct negotiations, and I don't think we're at this point speculating on a different alternative forum.

QUESTION: Well, let me -- okay. Well, let me put it this way: Is it still the position of the Administration that the United States has unique leverage and influence with both sides that makes it the only logical or capable, competent, credible mediator for peace between Israel and the Palestinians?

MS. PSAKI: I don't know that we've ever stated it exactly like that. We're playing a facilitator role which both sides are comfortable with. There are other countries engaged with this effort and certainly in touch with the Israelis and the Palestinians. I expect that will continue. But in the meantime, we'll continue to play the facilitator role as long as it's productive.

QUESTION: Do you believe, does the Administration believe that the United States still has leverage and influence with Israel or the Palestinians? I mean, you say, in reference to other questions about, say, Mr. Newman or Mr. Bae in North Korea --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- that the Chinese have influence with the North Koreans and you would like to go through them, maybe after you're done yelling at them about their air defense zone. But do you still think that the United States -- does the Administration believe that it has influence and leverage with either Israel or the Palestinians?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think we have a close relationship with both. And obviously, we're at this point because both sides decided to come to the table. I don't think it's about leverage. There's -- it's in the interest of both sides to come to an agreement on the final status issues, and that's what they're working to do at this point.

QUESTION: Jen, could I just ask -- there was an agreement --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

QUESTION: -- reached last week between the EU and Israel which will allow Israel to actually touch some funding for scientific research. There have been some problems because the EU wanted to bar all research in areas of -- in the West Bank --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- settlement areas in the West Bank. Is there an -- I mean, does the American -- do America -- does America believe that this is a good agreement for the EU and Israel, given that Secretary Kerry has always mentioned that he fears an increasing isolation of Israel on the international stage?

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm. I haven't talked to our team about it, so I'd have to talk to them and see if we have any particular view on the agreement last week.

QUESTION: And is -- what is the message that Secretary Kerry's going to be bringing with him when he visits Israel later on this week?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think he'll be talking to both sides about the importance of staying firm with the timeline and working through the tough and difficult issues that they're doing at the negotiating table, and reiterating the importance of

coming to a peaceful end to the final negotiations. And of course, when he's meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu, they'll certainly be discussing the recent P5+1 agreement with Iran and having an ongoing dialogue about that as well.

**QUESTION:** And have there been any meetings, direct talks between the Israelis and Palestinians, since the resignation of the Palestinian team?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have any updates on meetings at this point. I'll see if there's any more we want to provide to all of you in terms of specific meetings and timing of that.

**QUESTION:** But I mean, since the last time the Secretary's been there, there's been another announcement of new settlement construction.

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

**QUESTION:** There's been the resignation of the Palestinian – it just seems that without him actually physically there holding their hand for hours at a time, that they're not able to sustain it on their own.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, they've had many meetings when he has not been there. So obviously, we didn't expect this to be easy. We certainly are aware of some bumps in the road of late, but both sides have also reaffirmed their commitment to seeing this through.

**QUESTION:** Would you really call those bumps in the road, though? I mean, particularly on the – actually, on either side, whether it's the Israelis continuing to announce settlement construction or the Palestinians' full negotiating team just giving up, it just doesn't seem as if --

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, when the negotiating -- and that's a good example. The negotiating team -- President Abbas reaffirmed his own commitment to seeing this through --

**QUESTION:** But it just --

**MS. PSAKI:** -- whether it was them or whether it was other officials in their place. So they're continuing to move forward.

**QUESTION:** It just doesn't seem like they have the -- while they may have the desire and the dream that there'll be a peace deal. The motivation to actually do the hard work day in and day out doesn't seem to be there. And so it does seem as if Secretary Kerry is the one holding this together personally, and isn't there, like, a limit to how much he can do?

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure. That's why he has a team to help work through it every day.

**QUESTION:** Well, I meant more the parties themselves.

**MS. PSAKI:** You're right, but there also is a long timeframe we still have left. One of the reasons committing to the nine-month timeframe was so important is because we knew there would be challenging periods throughout the process. But both sides remain committed to that, and so we'll continue to work through it.

**QUESTION:** But it doesn't sound like -- unless you could disabuse us of the notion, it doesn't sound like since Secretary Kerry's last trip in early November that there have actually been any direct talks.

**MS. PSAKI:** I wouldn't jump to that conclusion. We just have always said we wouldn't confirm every meeting.

**QUESTION:** Sure.

**MS. PSAKI:** So let me see if I can confirm any meetings since that point for all of you.

**QUESTION:** Jen, could you tell us if Ambassador Indyk is there now? Is he there? Is he in the region? Is he -- Ambassador Indyk, where --

**MS. PSAKI:** He's here. I saw him this morning.

**QUESTION:** He's here. Okay.

**MS. PSAKI:** Okay. Let's just do one or two more here.

Scott.

**QUESTION:** What is the U.S. view of what's going on in Thailand right now?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we certainly deeply regret the loss of life in Bangkok due to politically motivated violence. We condemn violence as a means to achieve political objectives and urge all sides to exercise restraint and respect the rule of law. We are concerned about the continuing political tension in Thailand, and we are following the situation closely. Peaceful protest and freedom of expression are important aspects of democracy, of course. Violence and seizure of public or private property, however, are not acceptable means of resolving political differences. We firmly believe all parties should work together to resolve differences through peaceful dialogue in ways that strengthen democracy and rule of law.

Ambassador Kenney spoke with the prime minister and -- has spoken with the prime minister and opposition leaders to also encourage restraint and peaceful dialogue. You may have also seen that the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok issued a

security message for U.S. citizens in Thailand explaining that large political demonstrations may continue in coming days – in the coming days, including at government facilities, in and outside of central Bangkok, and is advising them to avoid areas of demonstration and to exercise caution.

**QUESTION:** Following his talk with the prime minister, one of the main opposition leaders said that he would accept nothing short of her resignation. Is that a responsible position in the eyes of the United States?

**MS. PSAKI:** We just continue to encourage all parties to work together to resolve their differences. We, of course, have seen his comments, but I don't think we're going to weigh in further at this point, aside from encouraging restraint on the ground.

**QUESTION:** Would you weigh in on the general amnesty bill that the ruling party failed to get through parliament, which was one of the instigations for this?

**MS. PSAKI:** I know – I don't know if I've spoken to that in the past, Scott. I'd have to – I don't have anything for you on it at this particular moment, but I'm happy to follow up post-briefing.

Okay, let's do two more here. In the back, you've been very patient.

**QUESTION:** Thank you. Michael Vincent from the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. What's the U.S. response to the Australian Government's rejection of the U.S. company Archer Daniels Midland's bid for GrainCorp?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we are disappointed by the Government of Australia's decision to reject Archer Daniels Midland's proposed acquisition of GrainCorp. We do not – we do note that the Australian Treasurer Joe Hockey has expressed openness to approving an increase in ADM's current share in GrainCorp. The United States is the largest foreign investor – foreign direct investor in Australia, with 132 billion in investment projects to date, and we look forward to working closely with Australia's government to build stronger ties and investment – stronger trade and investment ties.

**QUESTION:** Just a quick follow-up.

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

**QUESTION:** Did – unrelated matter, but has the U.S. Government accepted private medical, legal, or religious information on Australian citizens as offered by Australian intelligence agencies?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have anything further or anything for you on a range of reports. I'm certainly not going to comment on any of them. As you know, we're undergoing our own review of these processes, which we expect to conclude by the end of the year.

**QUESTION:** Jen, back to ADM for a second.

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

**QUESTION:** Did – was this issue, this proposed sale, bid by ADM raised at the AUSMIN ministerial meetings?

**MS. PSAKI:** It's a good question, Matt. I'd have to check. It wasn't one raised while I was there, but let me check and see if it was.

**QUESTION:** And if it was, did – was – were you given any indication that this is the way your closest antipodal ally was going to go?

**MS. PSAKI:** I will check and see if it was even raised.

Okay, let's do one more. Go ahead, Samir.

**QUESTION:** Do you have a reaction to the draft constitution in Egypt today?

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** Can I throw a Bahrain question at the end of that?

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure. Why not?

Well, we continue to track the constitutional process with interest, and we'll examine the document carefully once it is finalized and sent to President Mansour, which we understand will occur tomorrow. The Egyptian people, of course, will decide the fate of the draft constitution in a referendum. We will continue to support a transition process that leads to an inclusive civilian government selected through free, fair, and transparent elections, and civilian government based on the rule of law, fundamental freedoms, accountability, and an open and competitive economy. So we will see when it is transferred, and we will take a close look at it.

Bahrain.

**QUESTION:** Yeah. Do you have any view on the government –

**QUESTION:** A quick one on Egypt. Hold on. I'm sorry, Matt. You don't have any comment on the prohibition of religious parties in Egypt?

**MS. PSAKI:** Again, we'll wait to comment on it until it's been officially transferred. Obviously, there are steps in there we may be complimentary of and others we may not be.

**QUESTION:** Yes, please.

**QUESTION:** Does the decision of the -- not to release this human rights campaigner when he was eligible to be released? It was yesterday or today.

**MS. PSAKI:** Let me see. I think I have something on this. One moment, Matt.

**QUESTION:** Mm-hmm. You can get it -- If you just want to make it a TQ, that's fine.

**MS. PSAKI:** Yeah, that's fine. I believe I have something on it for you. Let's see. We continue to encourage Bahrain to take the necessary steps to promote reconciliation among Bahrainis, including permitting all sectors of society to voice their political views in a peaceful manner. We have seen reports that the head of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights Nabeel Rajab -- is that who you're talking about -- okay --

**QUESTION:** (Inaudible.)

**MS. PSAKI:** -- was denied early release today in Bahrain. We understand that he has served 18 months of his two-year prison sentence and is scheduled to be released in May of next year. We remain deeply concerned about the three-year prison sentence for leading illegal gatherings. We urge the Government of Bahrain to protect the universal rights of freedom of expression and assembly, just as we urge all elements of Bahraini society to engage in peaceful expressions of political opinion.

**QUESTION:** Do you think that he should've been released as was -- as he could've been today?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I believe we are concerned about his -- we were concerned about his three-year prison sentence, I believe. Let me check and see, but I believe that's what we're implying here.

**QUESTION:** I mean, this is not the first. I mean, there have been several other opposition activists and so forth that have been detained. I mean, does this cast doubt on your encouraging words earlier in the year about Bahrain's commitment to political reforms?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we certainly are encouraging them to take some step -- to take necessary steps to promote reconciliation. And obviously, each time that there is a case like this, we have expressed concern. So I don't have any analysis as to what that will mean longer-term or about the overall relationship, but each time there has been an incident, we have certainly expressed our concern.

**QUESTION:** Well, but each time -- you say each time that there's been an incident. I mean, there's a pattern of incidents. I mean, does that say something about their actual commitment to reforms?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I don't have any more analysis on it for you.

Thanks, everyone.

**QUESTION:** Thank you.

(The briefing was concluded at 3:18 p.m.)

DPB # 196

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RELEASE IN PART B5,B6

**Fischer, Kyle G**

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**From:** Hickey, Lauren A  
**Sent:** Monday, May 09, 2016 5:45 PM  
**To:** Harf, Marie E  
**Subject:** RE: Urgent

Call me marie 

B6

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

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**From:** Harf, Marie E  
**Sent:** Monday, May 09, 2016 5:44 PM  
**To:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K; Hickey, Lauren A; Werberg, Samuel; Beechem, Stephanie; Kirby, John; Toner, Mark C  
**Cc:** Norris, Emily Y  
**Subject:** Re: Urgent

And if needed, here's Jen in dpb on Nov 23, 2013:

**QUESTION:** *The Boston Globe* was reporting today that then-Senator Kerry was a part of the talks in Oman, so I wanted to know if you do have any general comment on that. And also, given the time in advance of the P5+1 talks that occurred, does that give any indication of how complicated and challenging this next round of talks is going to be, given that there was so much of a preamble before the P5+1 talks started?

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure. Well, let me just give you – I know there have been a range of reports over the last couple of days, so let me just give you a quick overview, for those who are interested. So Secretary Kerry, when he was Senator and Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, did travel to Oman in coordination with the White House and with the Administration to meet with the Sultan and explore whether Oman could be a channel for engaging with the Iranians.

There – we have long had many channels to communicate bilaterally with the Iranians, including exchanges of high-level letters, bilateral discussions on the margins of the P5+1, passing messages through the Swiss protecting power in Tehran, passing messages through the UN missions in New York. And the Omanis, as many of you may remember, helped facilitate the release of hikers – of the hikers, as well, several years ago. So that was a trip he took when he was Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee.

There also have been, through that same line of communication, meetings in Oman – I know they've been reported – that – with the Iranians to discuss whether there was a channel for moving forward. These have been closely coordinated or we've briefed our P5+1 partners on those. We've consistently told P5+1 partners and our Israeli friends that if things developed substantively we'd – of course, it would be fed into the overall process, which is exactly what happened. So that's just a quick overview, but certainly I can confirm the Secretary's trip there when he was – to Oman when he was a senator, and the importance of that as a channel leading up.

But one last thing and then I'll go to you, Chris. Obviously, the election, as we predicted last spring – the election of President Rouhani, the new administration, the exchange of letters with the President, the openness to pursuing a channel moving forward was when things really picked up, and that's really what led, through the P5+1 process, to the agreement this weekend.

**QUESTION:** What was the timeline for this when you said that the Secretary was in the Senate?

**MS. PSAKI:** He went to Oman in December of 2011.

**QUESTION:** Thank you

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**From:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K  
**Sent:** Monday, May 9, 2016 5:42 PM  
**To:** Hickey, Lauren A; Harf, Marie E; Werberg, Samuel; Beechem, Stephanie; Kirby, John; Toner, Mark C  
**Cc:** Norris, Emily Y  
**Subject:** RE: Urgent

[REDACTED] Lauren, Beechem, can you call?

B5

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**From:** Hickey, Lauren A  
**Sent:** Monday, May 09, 2016 5:41 PM  
**To:** Harf, Marie E; Trudeau, Elizabeth K; Werberg, Samuel; Beechem, Stephanie; Kirby, John; Toner, Mark C  
**Cc:** Norris, Emily Y  
**Subject:** RE: Urgent

Trudeau – I assume you are calling James? His deadline is 545.

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

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**From:** Harf, Marie E  
**Sent:** Monday, May 09, 2016 5:41 PM  
**To:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K; Werberg, Samuel; Hickey, Lauren A; Beechem, Stephanie; Kirby, John; Toner, Mark C  
**Cc:** Norris, Emily Y  
**Subject:** Re: Urgent

Thank the lord

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**From:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K  
**Sent:** Monday, May 9, 2016 5:40 PM  
**To:** Harf, Marie E; Werberg, Samuel; Hickey, Lauren A; Beechem, Stephanie; Kirby, John; Toner, Mark C  
**Cc:** Norris, Emily Y  
**Subject:** RE: Urgent

Success – fully available on DVIDS [REDACTED]

B5

<https://www.dvidshub.net/video/310829/daily-state-department-briefing#.VzEDFnR-1s>

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**From:** Harf, Marie E  
**Sent:** Monday, May 09, 2016 5:39 PM  
**To:** Werberg, Samuel; Hickey, Lauren A; Trudeau, Elizabeth K; Beechem, Stephanie; Kirby, John; Toner, Mark C  
**Cc:** Norris, Emily Y  
**Subject:** Re: Urgent

I was here then and don't remember any editing at all - [REDACTED]

B5

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**From:** Werberg, Samuel  
**Sent:** Monday, May 9, 2016 5:37 PM  
**To:** Hickey, Lauren A; Trudeau, Elizabeth K; Harf, Marie E; Beechem, Stephanie; Kirby, John; Toner, Mark C  
**Cc:** Norris, Emily Y  
**Subject:** Re: Urgent

B5

+Emily in case I go out of service area again.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Hickey, Lauren A  
**Sent:** Monday, May 9, 2016 5:35 PM  
**To:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K; Harf, Marie E; Beechem, Stephanie; Kirby, John; Toner, Mark C; Werberg, Samuel  
**Subject:** RE: Urgent

[REDACTED]

B5

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**From:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K  
**Sent:** Monday, May 09, 2016 5:34 PM  
**To:** Harf, Marie E; Hickey, Lauren A; Beechem, Stephanie; Kirby, John; Toner, Mark C; Werberg, Samuel  
**Subject:** RE: Urgent

Bringing together threads: [REDACTED]

B5

[REDACTED]

B5

**From:** Harf, Marie E  
**Sent:** Monday, May 09, 2016 5:32 PM  
**To:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K; Hickey, Lauren A; Beechem, Stephanie; Kirby, John; Toner, Mark C; Werberg, Samuel  
**Subject:** Re: Urgent

B5

By the time of that press briefing, it was all out.

**From:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K  
**Sent:** Monday, May 09, 2016 5:30 PM  
**To:** Hickey, Lauren A; Beechem, Stephanie; Harf, Marie E; Kirby, John; Toner, Mark C; Werberg, Samuel  
**Subject:** RE: Urgent

Luke Forgeson from ODE looking into it now. I told him we need answer in 20 minutes.

B5

**From:** Hickey, Lauren A  
**Sent:** Monday, May 09, 2016 5:30 PM  
**To:** Beechem, Stephanie; Harf, Marie E; Kirby, John; Toner, Mark C; Trudeau, Elizabeth K; Werberg, Samuel  
**Subject:** RE: Urgent

B5

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

**From:** Beechem, Stephanie  
**Sent:** Monday, May 09, 2016 5:29 PM  
**To:** Hickey, Lauren A; Harf, Marie E; Kirby, John; Toner, Mark C; Trudeau, Elizabeth K; Werberg, Samuel  
**Subject:** RE: Urgent

Adding Sam here -- he says he hasn't heard of it

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

**From:** Hickey, Lauren A  
**Sent:** Monday, May 09, 2016 5:27 PM  
**To:** Harf, Marie E; Kirby, John; Toner, Mark C; Trudeau, Elizabeth K  
**Cc:** Beechem, Stephanie  
**Subject:** FW: Urgent

Marie – Any insight here? The transcript is online [REDACTED]

B5

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

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**From:** Rosen, James [mailto:[REDACTED]]  
**Sent:** Monday, May 09, 2016 5:21 PM  
**To:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K; Kirby, John  
**Cc:** Toner, Mark C; Beechem, Stephanie; Hickey, Lauren A  
**Subject:** RE: Urgent

B6

At the 12/2/13 briefing, I confronted Jen Psaki with the false statement made to me by Toria Nuland at the 2/6/13 briefing. That earlier exchange went like this:

**ROSEN:** There have been reports that intermittently, and outside of the formal P-5+1 mechanisms the Obama Administration, or members of it, have conducted direct, secret, bilateral talks with Iran. Is that true or false?

**NULAND:** We have made clear, as the Vice President did at Munich, that in the context of the larger P-5+1 framework, we would be prepared to talk to Iran bilaterally. *But with regard to the kind of thing that you're talking about on a government-to-government level, no.*

Of course, the secret Iran talks had begun eight months before that exchange.

The transcript for the 12/2/13 briefing is below, with the yellow part signifying the part that has been edited out of DOS's video of the briefing on its website and YT channel.

We want to know why and when DOS inserted a white-flash into the 12/2/13 video to censor the part where I asked Jen Psaki about Toria Nuland's false statement on the Iran talks (and Psaki in essence said the administration needed "privacy").

All of this is obviously relevant in light of the NYTM questions about whether Rhodes/DOS et al misled the people, and the press, about the origins and timing of the Iran talks.

If we don't hear back by 5:45p – we just discovered this act of censorship – we are going to report it as such in our 6p show.

-----  
 James Rosen  
 Chief Washington Correspondent  
 Host, "The Foxhole"  
 Twitter: @JamesRosenFNC

[REDACTED] (office)  
 [REDACTED] (mobile)

Author, Cheney One on One

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**From:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K [http://redirect.state.sbu/?url=mailto:trudeauek@state.gov]  
**Sent:** Monday, May 09, 2016 5:13 PM

**To:** Rosen, James; Kirby, John  
**Cc:** Toner, Mark C; Beechem, Stephanie; Hickey, Lauren A  
**Subject:** RE: Urgent

James, I am solo in town today – Kirby and Toner on road. Adding Beechem and Hickey on this.  
 Not sure I understand Q.

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**From:** Rosen, James [[http://redirect.state.sbu/?url=mailto:\[REDACTED\]](http://redirect.state.sbu/?url=mailto:[REDACTED])]  
**Sent:** Monday, May 09, 2016 5:10 PM  
**To:** Kirby, John  
**Cc:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K; Toner, Mark C  
**Subject:** Urgent

B6

Need a call from one of you in the next thirty minutes or so. We are going to go to air with the information below, in the context of the whole Ben Rhodes controversy, at 6p, and we'd like to give DOS a chance to clear it up. My contact info is below. The relevant info is also below, courtesy of one of our video librarians in the Fox News Washington bureau. The basic question is why – and when – DOS censored its video of the highlighted portion of the 12/2/13 briefing (26:58 into the clip) with a white flash, on both the DOS web page and the DOS YT channel. Yours cordially, James

-----  
 James Rosen  
 Chief Washington Correspondent  
 Host, "The Foxhole"  
 Twitter: @JamesRosenFNC

[REDACTED] (office)  
 [REDACTED] (mobile)  
 [REDACTED]

Author, Cheney One on One

Highlighted below. The video posted online here

(<http://redirect.state.sbu/?url=http://redirect.state.sbu/?url=http://redirect.state.sbu/?url=http://video.state.gov/en/video/2886914568001>) ends with Psaki responding to Roz's question saying "...and so that has not changed that." White flash on screen at 26:58 and then it picks up with Roz talking again.

#### TRANSCRIPT:

1:54 p.m. EST

MS. PSAKI: Hi, everyone. Happy --

QUESTION: Happy belated birthday.

MS. PSAKI: Thank you. Thank you very much. Twenty-two. It's glorious. (Laughter.)

QUESTION: And you will be 22 for the next --

MS. PSAKI: I will be.

QUESTION: What, 10, 15 years?

MS. PSAKI: At least, at least. Well, I have nothing at the top, so Matt, let's go to what's on your mind.

QUESTION: Let's see. I have a lot --

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

QUESTION: -- but nothing is really worth starting with, so let's just start with the Secretary's trip.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

QUESTION: Both – excluding the middle stop in Moldova, at the beginning, how much of the NAC do you expect is going to be concentrated on Afghanistan and then talking about the BSA? Will there be any Afghan officials there to talk with? And then – well, that'll be that one question for --

**MS. PSAKI:** Okay. Well, we'll clearly, as we typically do, be doing a briefing en route about the trip and about our visit to the NATO Ministerial tomorrow, where we will venture to have more specific details about who will be attending. Obviously, Afghanistan and the ongoing presence there post-2014 of the United States and of NATO will certainly be a big topic of discussion. But I will let our briefers outline more specifics en route to Brussels.

**QUESTION:** All right. Well, I was going to ask about the Middle East but -- as well, the stop in Israel and the PA. But if you're just -- are you going to give me the same answer, wait for the briefing on the plane?

**MS. PSAKI:** I likely will, yes.

**QUESTION:** Okay. Well, then never mind.

**MS. PSAKI:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** And then quickly on Afghanistan --

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure, Lesley.

**QUESTION:** Is -- what further is happening as far as trying to resolve this issue with Afghanistan?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well --

**QUESTION:** As far as -- is it true that --

**MS. PSAKI:** The BSA.

**QUESTION:** The -- exactly.

**MS. PSAKI:** The signing, I assume.

**QUESTION:** Is it true that Special Envoy Dobbins has gone -- is on his way to Afghanistan?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have any announcements at this point on travel for him or anyone else. Obviously, our team on the ground, Ambassador Cunningham and others, have been in close contact. At this point, we've made our position clear, and so have the Afghan people. Signing the BSA soon is the path forward, as we've said many times, to sustaining a partnership between the United States and Afghanistan to support Afghans in achieving lasting peace, security, and development. That's the message that we're conveying at every level. And as we've said before but important to reiterate here, given it's a week later now: We -- deferring the signature of the agreement until after next year's election is not viable. It would not provide Afghans with the certainty that they deserve regarding their future in the critical months leading to the elections, nor would it provide the United States and NATO allies the clarity necessary for a potential post-2014 military presence.

So we're continuing to convey that. Our team on the ground is certainly hard at work. I don't have any travel announcements. If that changes, we'll certainly let all of you know.

**QUESTION:** Has Secretary spoken to President Karzai in the last couple of days on BSA?

**MS. PSAKI:** He has not spoken with him in the last couple of days.

**QUESTION:** And the Pentagon today said that this is not the end of it; after BSA is signed, the U.S. and Afghanistan have to negotiate and sign their agreement called SOFA, and that would be done by the State Department. Has any process started on SOFA, signing of SOFA with Afghanistan?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'd have to look more specifically at what they said. Maybe you're referring to the NATO SOFA that they may have to negotiate and sign, I believe, as a step? But for our purposes, there's the signing; it goes through parliament, then it would have to be signed again. Obviously, as you all are very familiar with, this doesn't outline a specific number for a troop presence, so there would be a great deal of planning in regards to that that DOD would certainly be very engaged with. But in terms of that, I'd have to look at specifically what they said. I'm not familiar with that --

**QUESTION:** Is December 21<sup>st</sup> the redline, the deadline for signing of BSA, after which you will begin preparing for all troops pull out from Afghanistan post 2014.

**MS. PSAKI:** I am not going to get into new redlines or deadlines today, I will say. But on the trip question, well, as you all know, a decision hasn't been made. You would know if it had been. It's not our preference, but no troops is certainly a potential outcome for Afghanistan if there is no BSA. So that is, again, not our preference, but natural that planning would have to take place for all different options.

**QUESTION:** Have you tried to understand why President Karzai is doing what he's doing or conducting himself the way he has? Do you have a clearer picture than we do, for instance?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't know that I have any further insight than you do. Obviously, the Secretary spoke with him last week, as you all well know. We continue to press our case for why this should be signed as quickly as possible, but I don't have any analysis of particular actions or comments in Afghanistan.

**QUESTION:** So you think that he's perhaps more concerned about his personal safety post the elections?

**MS. PSAKI:** I will let you, Said, do your own analysis. I don't have any other analysis on it.

Do we have any more on Afghanistan?

QUESTION: Just the trip?

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: For those of us who are interested in Moldova --

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

QUESTION: -- could you just tell us why stop in Moldova? What's the importance? We see the winery, et cetera.

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Moldova is a country that has taken a number of important reform steps in recent years. They have -- they're taking steps to help grow their economy, and wine is obviously a significant export. But they have a number of exports they also work with. And given the steps they've taken, the Secretary felt it would be an important opportunity to pay a visit. You'd have to check my history and facts here, but I believe he may be, if not the first, one of the first Secretaries to pay a bilateral visit to Moldova.

QUESTION: And also it comes, obviously, right after Ukraine decided not to sign the agreement with the EU.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Moldova did. So you could read into this that the Secretary wants to buck them up or give them something, a sign of support.

MS. PSAKI: Well, we had planned this trip -- this trip was in the works before that decision was made. But certainly, they have put a number of reforms in place and they're working hard on their economy and the -- if -- the Secretary felt it was important to highlight that.

QUESTION: Following on that --

QUESTION: Okay. Can I go over just to Afghanistan for one very briefly?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Okay, and then we'll go to Anne.

QUESTION: I was gone last week so I'm -- most of last week, so what -- did the Secretary speak with Karzai before or after Ambassador Rice was there?

MS. PSAKI: Let's see. He spoke with Karzai -- President Karzai -- I'd have to look back. I believe it was prior to her visit. Let me double check that for you to make sure.

QUESTION: So the last senior official to speak with Karzai, as far as you know, was Ambassador Rice.

MS. PSAKI: I believe that's correct, yes.

QUESTION: Just following on the Moldova for Ukraine substitution, in saying that Secretary Kerry would not, as had been widely expected, attend the OSCE -- when you said that, I don't know, about 10 days ago or so --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- we were just at the very beginning of this whole episode.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: And at that point you said it was scheduling issues that had -- it would force his cancellation. Are you sticking with that? Is that still the case? Or might there be some policy implications to his decision not to go to the OSCE?

MS. PSAKI: I am sticking with that. I'm just looking at Lesley here in my -- corner of my eye. I am sticking with that. I don't have any new guidance for you on that front. Assistant Secretary Nuland is still planning to attend and travel there after joining us for the first part of the visit.

QUESTION: On Syria?

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Is it --

QUESTION: Can you tell us the -- oh, sorry.

QUESTION: Sorry. Just on this charade -- charade, for Lesley -- of scheduling reasons, is it not the case that not doing -- not going on this trip -- not going to Kyiv is a sign of displeasure?

MS. PSAKI: I will let you do your own reporting, Matt. I don't have any more analysis or comments on it from here.

QUESTION: But there was --

QUESTION: And one more quick one on Ukraine.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Obviously, we're seeing the demonstrations, violent crackdown.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: What's the response from the State Department?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we're of course, naturally, closely monitoring the ongoing demonstrations, not only in Kyiv but in cities around Ukraine. As you know, since the demonstrations began on November 21<sup>st</sup>, there have been an increasing

number of violent incidents, including against journalists. We stress there is no room, and we continue to stress there is no room for violence in a country that aspires to a democratic future. We continue to call on all sides to maintain calm, and on Ukrainian authorities to ensure that members of the public and the press are able to safely and peacefully exercise their rights of speech and assembly.

As I mentioned a little bit before, we still have – Assistant Secretary Nuland is still planning to travel there. The Ukrainian foreign ministry announced that the ministerial is proceeding as planned.

**QUESTION:** But there was –

**QUESTION:** Are you sure that Ukraine is a country that aspires to a democratic future?

**MS. PSAKI:** Any country that may aspire, certainly, these are important values to follow through on.

**QUESTION:** Right. But are you still convinced that Ukraine aspires to a westward-looking, democratic future?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we will see, Matt. Time will tell. Actions speak louder than words.

**QUESTION:** Do you – does this --

**QUESTION:** Do you still stand by the comments made by Ambassador Nuland in her speech to the Atlantic Council a couple of weeks ago and also comments from this podium that it is your belief that Ukraine should be following the path towards joining some kind of association agreement with the EU?

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure. Our view has not changed on that. Obviously, there have been a lot of events that have happened since then, but --

**QUESTION:** And do you believe that the demonstrations on the streets are actually – that's what they want? I mean, it seems to be that they're demonstrating because they're angry that the government hasn't taken this path that's been laid out for them.

**MS. PSAKI:** I would point you to the comments of the demonstrators, of which there have been many. I don't want to speak on their behalf, but our position hasn't changed on what steps they could take. Obviously, it's up to Ukraine to take those steps.

**QUESTION:** So – but, I mean, the United States is – if you don't want to give your backing to them – at least sympathetic to what the demonstrators are asking for.

**MS. PSAKI:** Again, the demonstrators are saying a range of things, so I don't – beyond what we've stated publicly many times, I don't have any other further public statements on our position, which has been stated by Assistant Secretary Nuland and by other officials in the past several weeks.

**QUESTION:** Given the estimates of some 300,000 people who were demonstrating across the country on Sunday, and given that they all seem, to a person, to be saying that the government is ignoring their wish to be more closely aligned with Europe, isn't it a bit disingenuous for this building to suggest that they need to show any restraint? They're not the ones who are bludgeoning people with battering rams and turning rubber bullets on the police. It seems they're taking the brunt of everything that's been happening.

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't think I took sides. I think I said that it's important for all sides to maintain calm, that there's no place for violence in a country that aspires to a democratic future. So I don't – I would disagree with the premise of your claims.

**QUESTION:** What does this building think of the prime minister's – call for his security forces to show restraint and seemingly to be missing in action when on Sunday there was more violence heaped upon the demonstrators, particularly in Kyiv?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I think I just expressed what our view is of violence against demonstrators, so that's what our view is.

**QUESTION:** Can I – has the Secretary spoken to somebody in Ukraine, his counterpart?

**MS. PSAKI:** He has not in the last several days. I can check if there's been any other calls I'm not aware of.

**QUESTION:** Because one of the big issues for Ukraine is tearing itself away from Russia and looking towards Western Europe for economic support. And one of the big things is that the president of Ukraine is heading to China to look for that. And if – I was wondering if the U.S. had offered them kind of – some kind of assurance or reassurance economically that they could be better off by signing these deals and with the support – and the U.S. would support any kind of reform through the International Monetary Fund.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, aside from public statements we've made, which, as Jo referenced, is – that our belief is that European integration is the surest course to economic growth and strengthening Ukraine's democracy. That's still our belief. That's been consistently our belief. But beyond that, I'm not aware of any other discussions. Obviously, there's a lot of – that's going on with the EU and with Russia, and beyond that we have made our position clear.

**QUESTION:** And what is the building's position on the detention of Yulia Tymoshenko?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we have consistently spoken about this in the past and expressed our concern about her detention. I know this was also a component that was potentially being worked through as an element of Ukraine getting into the EU. So we've consistently expressed concern, encouraged them to take steps forward. Obviously, there hasn't been progress on that on the ground.

**QUESTION:** I'm sorry, what did you say was the surest way to economic growth?

**MS. PSAKI:** I said European integration is the surest course to economic growth and strengthening --

**QUESTION:** Did you give the same advice to the Greeks?

(Laughter.)

**MS. PSAKI:** Matt. Behave.

Do we have any more on Ukraine or Afghanistan, since we touched on that too?

**QUESTION:** Still on Ukraine.

**MS. PSAKI:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** The Russians have proposed that the EU, Ukraine, and Russia get together to discuss some of these problems. Would the United States be in favor of that, some kind of a trilateral discussion to discuss the economic situation and political differences?

**MS. PSAKI:** It wouldn't involve the United States, so I don't have a particular position. I'm happy to talk to our team and see if we have a view on that.

Ukraine or Afghanistan? Okay, should we move on to Syria? Let's go to Margaret.

**QUESTION:** Thank you. Jen, the OPCW said over the past few days that the U.S. has stepped up, that they're going to give operational support, offering up financing. Can you give us some more detail on that?

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm. Well, I don't know if it will be satisfying, but let me try. (Laughter.) Well, as you know, the United States is committed to supporting the international community's efforts to destroy Syria's chemical weapons in the safest, most efficient and effective means possible. We have offered and are currently outfitting a U.S. vessel with field-deployable hydrolysis system technology to support the OPCW's efforts. We are in close contact with the OPCW and our international partners and remain confident that we can meet the milestones for destruction set out by the OPCW. Of course, the OPCW remains -- and the UN -- remain the lead coordinators on reaching out to countries and coordinating steps forward and any timeline, et cetera.

**QUESTION:** But on the financing, what is it exactly that we're offering? Is that a chunk of change? Is that financing and loans, or --

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we've offered -- we've offered in the -- prior to this, we have offered -- we have given 6 million to the OPCW and the UN Trust Fund, both in financial contributions and in kind, so I think we gave some materials as well. But this, of course, would be a DOD vessel. So I would point you to them on the specific costs. This, at this point, is an offer. So I think that's still being worked through.

**QUESTION:** So -- but beyond the vessel, the OPCW says the cost is going to be between 35 to 40 million euros for the private contractors who would actually be --

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

**QUESTION:** -- be doing the disposal themselves. So is any of that money coming through the State Department, or is the State Department topped out at \$6 million?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we've said we'd be open to exploring additional ways to provide assistance. I don't have any announcements today of additional assistance we're planning to provide, but that certainly is something we're in discussions with the OPCW about.

**QUESTION:** So we can understand correctly, it is a commercial vessel, correct, that they are trying --

**MS. PSAKI:** It is a --

**QUESTION:** -- (inaudible) --

**MS. PSAKI:** -- U.S. Government vessel, not a commercial vessel.

**QUESTION:** Right.

**MS. PSAKI:** But there is a part of this -- and this may be what you're asking about -- which is the OPCW reaching out to commercial companies about the destruction capabilities.

**QUESTION:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** So what -- so DOD is outfitting its own boat, which will be staffed with DOD personnel who will do this?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'd have to check on the specifics of that. I think some of it may still be work – be going through the process of being worked out, Matt, because they've offered – but obviously, how it would be staffed and the materials and the money – I mean, all of those are pieces that are still being discussed.

**QUESTION:** Do you actually have a timeline and the location for where this would happen?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have a location. That's still being discussed. The timeline, as you know, is – the next deadline is – not deadline, it's a target – is December 31<sup>st</sup>. And that is to get all of the chemical weapons out. But in terms of when the next step would be, I don't have a timeline of that.

Anne.

**QUESTION:** I realize part of this is kind of DOD-flavored, but you might know the answer.

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

**QUESTION:** So is it proper to call this a warship, or is it a military-owned, but not non-warship ship?

(Laughter.)

**MS. PSAKI:** That is a very specific ship question. I would hesitate to answer incorrectly. I'd have to check on specifically how we categorize it. I don't believe it is a warship, but let me see if we can get more specification on how we – what we call it exactly.

**QUESTION:** Okay. And on the policy side, I mean, is there any disappointment here that after casting about to – for a friend here, it ends up being the U.S. having to essentially do this on its own?

**MS. PSAKI:** I wouldn't categorize it that way. I mean, certainly this is a priority for the U.S., as it is for the international community, to destroy and eliminate the chemical weapons. The OPCW is still talking to countries. There are countries that have made public comments about their willingness to help, so we'll see how that all shakes out. And certainly, we'd welcome the support or contribution of other countries.

**QUESTION:** Well, I'd imagine from your perspective, it should be a shared priority among many nations who would also share the same goal of the ultimate destruction, right? I mean, everybody was waving a flag when that – when the thing was signed.

**MS. PSAKI:** Certainly, and there are countries, as you know, throughout that have been open to contributing that couldn't for a variety of reasons, whether it's regulations or capacity or resources. But they're still talking to countries about contributing and being a part of this, and certainly we're hopeful of that as well.

**QUESTION:** So if the question is: "Are you surprised that you've been left holding the bag on this, once again," --

**MS. PSAKI:** We're not holding the bag yet, Matt.

**QUESTION:** -- the answer would be no, you're not surprised. You expected your friends in Europe to wimp out.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we made clear we were open to contributing from the beginning, Matt. There are other countries that have expressed an openness to contributing in some capacity. They're all going to make their decisions about what that will – what will – that will entail, and we'll let the OPCW decide how all of it will work together.

**QUESTION:** What about Russia, who you made this deal with and has been instrumental, as you say, in helping move this towards a resolution? Why can't Russia contribute in a significant way like you can?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not familiar with what they have contributed or what they've committed to contribute or what they have not. Obviously, there are financial ways – there are a number of ways to contribute. We certainly welcome any country's contribution. There are different ways that each country can do that.

**QUESTION:** Are you in touch with the Russians specifically about making an – a contribution?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not sure. I'd have to check on that and see if it's a discussion that's been a part of the regular discussions with Foreign Minister Lavrov.

**QUESTION:** Jen, still on Syria.

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

**QUESTION:** Yesterday, Mike Rogers, the chair of the Intelligence Committee, warned that there are many jihadis that are Americans and Europeans and Westerners and so on, that they go back and forth and so on. Are you concerned about these jihadis being trained in Syria and now they come back to the United States and perhaps organize terrorist acts?

**MS. PSAKI:** I haven't seen his comments specifically. I know – I believe he may have been on a Sunday show yesterday. I haven't read them fully. We've – we're naturally concerned, as you know, about extremists whether they're going in and certainly and if they're coming out. I talked a little bit, I think it was a week or two ago, about ways that we coordinate with our international partners in the region to kind of track this and efforts we undertake to make sure we're watching, but of course we're concerned. I don't have any other specifics for you.

**QUESTION:** Are you pressing your partners in this case, like the Saudis and the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, that have been supplying arms and money in the past for these extremist groups – are you pressing them not to do so?

**MS. PSAKI:** We have consistently, and all the countries, as you know, have agreed repeatedly to contribute assistance through the SMC.

**QUESTION:** Finally, yesterday there was a report in the *Telegraph*, *The London Telegraph*, that says basically the Free Syrian Army now is becoming a group of warlords and accumulating money and gangs and so on and have no interest, really, in reaching a settlement. Is that your assessment, or are you still working very closely with General Idris?

**MS. PSAKI:** We are still working very closely with General Idris, we're still working towards a Geneva conference in January, and we still believe there's no military solution, as you know.

More on Syria?

**QUESTION:** Still on Syria.

**MS. PSAKI:** Or – go ahead, Roz.

**QUESTION:** Still on Syria, the Iranian Foreign Minister Zarif did an interview with Al Jazeera this morning. And when it came to Geneva II, he said that while Iran is, quote: not begging to attend the talks in January, it would attend if invited. My first question: Would the U.S. be willing to invite Iran to take part in these talks? And if so, what does the U.S. believe that Iran could bring to this situation to try to end the civil war?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, no decisions have been made about participation yet. There's another trilateral meeting on December 20<sup>th</sup> coming up that we'll be participating in with the UN and the Russians. Our position hasn't changed on Iran's participation or whether we believe they should be invited. They have not endorsed the Geneva communique. That's a condition we feel is necessary, but obviously this will continue to be discussed at the next trilateral meeting.

**QUESTION:** But given the – that the UN is now estimating that upwards of 120-25,000 people may have been killed in the civil war to date --

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

**QUESTION:** -- is there some sort of leverage that Tehran could bring to the table to try to induce the Assad regime to, if nothing else, stop the killing and try to at least put in some sort of ceasefire?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, this goes back to the premise that attendees should be endorsing the Geneva communique, because that is what the purpose and the goal of the conference is. So, I don't have any speculation on what leverage they may or may not have, but the conversations we have had with them in recent weeks have been about their nuclear program and moving towards a first-step agreement on that. They've not been focused on Syria. And our position on whether or not they should attend the Geneva conference in January hasn't changed.

**QUESTION:** But you do feel that if they do endorse Geneva I, there's a great deal of value for Iran's participation --

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we'd have to --

**QUESTION:** -- considering that it is --

**MS. PSAKI:** We'd have to evaluate it, Said. I don't want to get ahead of --

**QUESTION:** But it's a very ally of the regime. It supports other elements that help the regime in its fight, like Hezbollah so on.

**MS. PSAKI:** If that is a step they take, we can have a robust discussion in here about it.

**QUESTION:** Jen, are there any contacts currently between the United States Government and the Syrian regime? I mean, I know Secretary Kerry spoke months and months ago --

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** -- to Foreign Minister Muallem. Is there anything going on at the moment?

**MS. PSAKI:** And we have for some time, as you know, have had different channels, but I don't have anything specific for you. I can check if there have been any recent contacts on any level.

**QUESTION:** So there were reports over the weekend that some European countries are quietly beginning to --

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

**QUESTION:** -- reopen diplomatic conversations or channels with the Syrian regime because, I think, the fear is that this is just so blocked at the moment that they're --

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

**QUESTION:** -- it's not going anywhere.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, let me see if there have been any contacts at any level of the regime. We've -- they have happened in the past, as you mentioned, so I will see if there's more to report on that.

QUESTION: Can I go back to the Iranians and taking part in Geneva? I mean, I think over the last week or so, when there's been, like, various bouts of violence in Syria, that the Iranian Government has said that there needs to be a political solution to the situation in Syria. So don't you think that Iran is making more positive comments? I mean, I don't think the Russians have gone far beyond saying that there needs to be a political solution. They haven't said anything about President Assad leaving (inaudible).

MS. PSAKI: Well, the whole premise -- I mean the whole goal is to create a transitional governing body. That's the goal of a Geneva conference. So, certainly, they haven't embraced that as the focus of the Geneva communique, and --

QUESTION: Well, even though the Russians have agreed to a political transition, your definition of a transition is far different from the -- than the Russians' definition of a transition. So if the Iranians were to say, like, okay, we accept a political transition, I mean, does that really mean that they --

MS. PSAKI: It's not just about a political transition. It's about embracing the Geneva communique, which they have not done. If they do that, we will evaluate whether or not we'd support them -- an invitation to them to attend the conference.

QUESTION: Zarif also told us that his country is not interested in aggravating any sectarian tensions between Shiite and Sunni, between Alawite and other major Islamic communities; that they're trying to, in their efforts, promote more harmony, more peace. Does that add any -- does that change the complexion at all, particularly in Syria?

MS. PSAKI: I don't want to speak too specifically to an interview I haven't yet seen yet, and neither has anyone on our team. Broadly speaking, obviously we took a significant step forward with the first-step agreement on their nuclear program, but there are remaining concerns that we have, as you all are familiar with, whether it's their involvement in support of the regime in Syria or humanitarian issues, and so that has not changed that. I can take a closer look once we see the transcript of the interview and see if we have more comments on Foreign Minister Zarif's comments.

QUESTION: You're saying your team does not watch Al Jazeera?

MS. PSAKI: Well, that is not true; we do. However, I believe there's only been a very short clip that has played of this interview that I'm sure will get lots of attention once it all plays.

QUESTION: Beyond the interview, he's freely reaching out. He visited Kuwait. He's reaching out to the other Gulf countries. He wants to visit Saudi Arabia. I mean, there is an effort underway to alleviate their fears and actually encourage them towards participating in Geneva II to make it a success. You must have some sort of a reading of this effort.

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any particular reading of it for you, Said. Our position, I think, has been pretty clear on whether or not they attend the Geneva conference.

QUESTION: I have another really quick logistics thing. On the December 20<sup>th</sup> meeting, that's Wendy Sherman and that -- It's the same iteration?

MS. PSAKI: It is that level. Exactly, yes. Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Is that new or was that announced last week or something --

MS. PSAKI: I believe we talked about it last week as being the next meeting.

QUESTION: On China -- (inaudible).

QUESTION: Please, Jen, can we stay on Iran, please?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Let's stay on Iran and then we can go to China.

QUESTION: On the 6<sup>th</sup> of February in this room, I had a very brief exchange with your predecessor, Victoria Nuland --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- about Iran. And with your indulgence, I will read it in its entirety for the purpose of the record and so you can respond to it.

*"Rosen: There have been reports that intermittently, and outside of the formal P5+1 mechanisms, the Obama Administration, or members of it, have conducted direct secret bilateral talks with Iran. Is that true or false?"*

*"Nuland: We have made clear, as the Vice President did at Munich, that in the context of the larger P5+1 framework, we would be prepared to talk to Iran bilaterally. But with regard to the kind of thing that you're talking about on a government-to-government level, no."*

That's the entirety of the exchange.

As we now know, senior state department officials had, in fact, been conducting direct, secret bilateral talks with senior officials of the Iranian Government in Oman, perhaps dating back to 2011 by that point.

So the question today is a simple one: When the briefer was asked about those talks and flatly denied them from the podium, that was untrue, correct?

MS. PSAKI: I mean, James, I -- that -- you're talking about a February briefing, so 10 months ago. I don't think we've outlined or confirmed contacts or specifics beyond a March meeting. I'm not going to confirm others beyond that at this point. So I don't know that I have any more for you.

QUESTION: Do you stand by the accuracy of what Ms. Nuland told me, that there had been no government-to-government contacts, no secret direct bilateral talks with Iran as of the date of that briefing, February 6<sup>th</sup>? Do you stand by the accuracy of that?

MS. PSAKI: James, I have no new information for you today on the timing of when there were any discussions with any Iranian officials.

QUESTION: Let me try it one last way, Jen --

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

QUESTION: -- and I appreciate your indulgence.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

QUESTION: Is it the policy of the State Department, where the preservation or the secrecy of secret negotiations is concerned, to lie in order to achieve that goal?

MS. PSAKI: James, I think there are times where diplomacy needs privacy in order to progress. This is a good example of that. Obviously, we have made clear and laid out a number of details in recent weeks about discussions and about a bilateral channel that fed into the PS+1 negotiations, and we've answered questions on it, we've confirmed details. We're happy to continue to do that, but clearly, this was an important component leading up to the agreement that was reached a week ago.

QUESTION: Since you, standing at that podium last week, did confirm that there were such talks, at least as far back as March of this year, I don't see what would prohibit you from addressing directly this question: Were there secret direct bilateral talks between the United States and Iranian officials in 2011?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything more for you today. We've long had ways to speak with the Iranians through a range of channels, some of which you talked -- you mentioned, but I don't have any other specifics for you today.

QUESTION: One more on Iran?

QUESTION: *The Los Angeles Times* and *Politico* have reported that those talks were held as far back as 2011. Were those reports inaccurate?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not sure which reports you're talking about. Are you talking about visits that the Secretary and others made to Oman, or are you talking about other reports?

QUESTION: I'm talking about U.S. officials meeting directly and secretly with Iranian officials in Oman as far back as 2011. *The Los Angeles Times* and *Politico* have reported those meetings. Were those reports inaccurate?

MS. PSAKI: I have nothing more for you on it, James, today.

QUESTION: One more on Iran?

MS. PSAKI: On Iran? Let's just finish Iran and then we can go to China. Go ahead, Roz.

QUESTION: One of -- one more on Iran. Foreign Minister Zarif said, directly contradicting the Obama Administration's contention that sanctions worked, he told our interviewer that when the sanctions were first imposed, Iran had 200 working centrifuges. Today, they have more than 19,000. What is this building's reaction to his comment that sanctions did not work and did not bring Iran to the negotiating table?

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, I would like to look more closely at the context of the comments. But, just as reminder, President Rouhani and others have talked about how the impact -- how growing the economy and putting an end -- doing -- bringing an end to the sanctions is something that was a priority for them in order to help the economy and the Iranian people. There's no question, if you look just at the facts of the impact of oil revenues, the impact on their economic growth was large that there was a huge impact of -- that there -- the sanctions had an enormous impact, and that that was a driving factor in bringing the Iranians back to the negotiating table.

In terms of progress made on their efforts to develop a nuclear weapon, whether through centrifuges or at their various facilities, that to me sounds like a separate question. Obviously, there was concerns about steps they were taking and progress they were making, which was why it was so important to come to an acceptable agreement that would halt and roll back the progress of their program.

QUESTION: Just to follow up on that, though --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- Secretary Kerry, when he did his round robin of interviews after the announcement of the deal in Geneva, more than once stated that when Iran had reached out to the Bush-Cheney Administration in 2003, Iran was

only in possession of 164 centrifuges. Now, he would go on to say, they have 19,000, and this therefore represents the best possible deal that could be secured.

Isn't it a fact that since the Obama-Biden Administration took office, 70 percent of Iran's centrifuges have been installed?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I'd have to look at the statistics, James, but we have not questioned the fact that Iran has made progress on enrichment and on developing a nuclear weapon. We have not questioned that. That's one of the reasons why we stepped up sanctions over the past couple of years. The President and Secretary Kerry were big proponents of that. We worked with the international community to do just that to put that necessary pressure in place. The point I was trying to make to Rox is that -- what she's asking sounds to me like two separate questions, so that was --

QUESTION: Right. I'm pursuing the separate one part that she carved out, and that is to say -- and if this is untrue, I'd be grateful to be disabused of the notion -- but the great bulk of Iran's progress in the development of its enrichment program has taken place under President Obama's watch, correct?

MS. PSAKI: I'd have to check on the specific numbers. The --

QUESTION: You're not prepared to dispute that statement, as --

MS. PSAKI: Well, James, I think what we're focused on at this point is the fact that we're now at a point where we are halting and rolling back the progress of their program and we're working towards a comprehensive agreement to bring an end to it. I can't speculate for you what would happen without -- what would have happened without sanctions. I would venture to guess --

QUESTION: (Inaudible) sanctions.

MS. PSAKI: But they were being paired together, so that's why I'm bringing it into the conversation.

QUESTION: But the context of the question was exactly: "The Obama Administration says we showed up because our economy is falling apart. I'm here to tell you that's not the case. We have our own reasons for coming."

MS. PSAKI: Well, we will take a close look at his comments and we'll have more to say about them once we do.

QUESTION: Can I just go back to the Geneva meeting and --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

QUESTION: -- December 20<sup>th</sup> with Wendy Sherman?

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: This is --

MS. PSAKI: It's that level -- in terms of specific attendance, I'll have to just double-check that for you.

QUESTION: Oh, okay.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

QUESTION: This is going to be the first of the political meetings towards the next -- the comprehensive agreement --

MS. PSAKI: Well, they also --

QUESTION: -- or this is the technical discussions?

MS. PSAKI: No, no, no.

QUESTION: No, this is Syria.

MS. PSAKI: This is -- sorry, this is Syria.

QUESTION: Oh, I'm sorry.

MS. PSAKI: This is Syria.

QUESTION: Excuse me. I'm sorry.

MS. PSAKI: So this is the pre-Geneva. No, it's okay. It's confusing. Lots of Genevas.

QUESTION: Okay. But I did have an Iran question, actually.

QUESTION: But is there any new -- I mean --

QUESTION: Yeah.

QUESTION: -- when is it that you're going to start to negotiate the comprehensive deal with Iran?

MS. PSAKI: Well, right now, what we're focused on is the technical discussions leading up to the start of the six-month --

QUESTION: Right.

QUESTION: So do you have a date for those?

MS. PSAKI: I don't yet have a date on those.

QUESTION: Or a place?

MS. PSAKI: I don't yet have a place. It's being worked through. Hopefully we'll have an update for you all in the coming days.

QUESTION: And can I ask – I don't know if you had seen the reports that the new British envoy to Iran is actually going to visit Tehran tomorrow. I wondered what the --

MS. PSAKI: I haven't seen that.

QUESTION: Well, I wanted a U.S. reaction to this following on to the question I asked last week about how far along the line you are prepared to go with your new diplomatic relations or not with Iran.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm. I still don't have any prediction of any step beyond what step we've already taken, which is being a part of the P5+1 agreement on the first step here with Iran. Obviously, different countries are going to make their own decisions, and as with most issues, we certainly support that.

QUESTION: Would it be helpful, though? Do you believe it's helpful that the British envoy could be going to Tehran?

MS. PSAKI: I don't know that I have that level of analysis on it. I don't have all the details on what the purpose of the trip is or what they hope to accomplish. And obviously, every country will make their own decisions about diplomatic relationships.

QUESTION: Jen, one more on the --

QUESTION: East China Sea?

QUESTION: -- secret negotiations with Iran.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: I apologize if you've already addressed this, but there have been reports that the secret negotiations that the U.S. was engaging in with Iran created a feeling of resentment among P5+1 allies such as France, and then that contributed to a rift among the P5+1 and made it difficult to reach consensus within that group. Do you have a reaction to that or a comment on that?

MS. PSAKI: I don't want to speak to anonymous reports about what may or may not be the feelings by other countries, but I will reiterate for you that this was -- these discussions were fed into the P5+1 process. That is the process that we ultimately all worked through to achieve a first-step agreement here. The P5+1 members, as well as our friends in Israel, were briefed early this fall.

As to the discussions, we have always been clear we've been open to bilateral discussions with Iran; that there are a range of channels to do that through; that if anything got serious, that we would certainly be briefing our important partners on that; and that's exactly what we did in this case.

QUESTION: Jen --

QUESTION: And when did the talks begin?

MS. PSAKI: James, you're so tricky over there. (Laughter.)

QUESTION: Can I ask about China?

MS. PSAKI: Let me just say one thing, though, for James. It's important here too -- and then I promise we'll go to China -- it's important here also to note, though, that these really picked up after President Rouhani's election, that in terms of the discussion of specific pieces about how to move forward, what kind of -- what an agreement could look like, that's when it picked up. So I understand that's not answering your question, but I felt it was important to --

QUESTION: But just on the basis of methodology and removing the specifics of Iran and who's president or who's Secretary of State, if you were able to stand there at the podium last week and say, "Yes, I'm confirming a certain set of talks that occurred in March," explain to me what is it that prohibits you from saying, yes or no, that a certain set of talks occurred two years ago?

MS. PSAKI: If I have more details for you, James, I will -- happy to share them.

QUESTION: I didn't ask you -- I'm asking for your thinking about why you're not addressing the question, not the specifics of the meetings. What is it that prohibits you from addressing a question about meetings that are two years old?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to do a psychiatrist chair today.

Go ahead. On China?

QUESTION: What about the couch? (Laughter.)

QUESTION: Thank you, Jen. So as we know, the U.S. Government has already told U.S. carriers to comply with China's requirements before any flights pass through the new air defense zone established by the Chinese Government. So does that mean the U.S. Government has recognized this new air defense zone established by the Chinese Government?

**MS. PSAKI:** So let me be absolutely as clear as I can be here because I know there's been a range of reporting. It has been – some of it has been inaccurate, to no fault of – perhaps it's our fault for not explaining it well enough. So we are not – the State Department is not the point of contact with airlines. The FAA is the point of contact with airlines. There has not been any information that has been put out or confirmed that I am aware of that has conveyed what has or has not been communicated in that capacity to airlines.

There is – for safety and security of passengers, U.S. carriers operate internationally – operate consistently as a process with the notices to airmen issued by foreign countries, as is the case in this case. Their concerns are about the safety and security of passengers. That is different from what the U.S. Government policy is. It is not – this in no way indicates U.S. Government acceptance of China's requirements in the newly declared ADIZ and has absolutely no bearing on the firm and consistent U.S. Government position that we do not accept the legitimacy of China's requirements.

This is a case where China announced this in an uncoordinated fashion. It's inconsistent with standard practice. And their requirements for operating exceed internationally accepted practice in this capacity. So I don't know how much more clear that it is, but it does contradict a bit your question, so I wanted –

**QUESTION:** It looks like we received the statement or the Q&A from the State Department, so it looks like it's from the U.S. Government. And also, you are saying --

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, in that statement, which I certainly was well aware of, what was conveyed in there is that for safety and – for the safety and security of passengers, U.S. carriers operate consistently internationally with the notices to airmen issued by foreign governments. It did not convey that – anything specific about what had been communicated to airlines. It did not convey that the U.S. Government supported this effort. So I'm very familiar with the statement you're referring to, and there were a lot of – there were some assumptions made.

**QUESTION:** So (inaudible) --

**QUESTION:** Okay. It looks like --

**QUESTION:** -- that the FAA did not instruct airlines to comply with the Chinese regulations?

**MS. PSAKI:** I would point you to the FAA for what they did or did not communicate to commercial airlines.

**QUESTION:** Okay. Well, the FAA is part of the U.S. Government, is it not?

**MS. PSAKI:** They are. They --

**QUESTION:** Yes.

**MS. PSAKI:** Certainly, they are not housed in the State Department, however. (Laughter.)

**QUESTION:** So – I understand that, but the State Department does have a representative – you're familiar with the ICAO?

**MS. PSAKI:** I am not.

**QUESTION:** Okay. It's in Montreal.

**MS. PSAKI:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** It's a good excuse to get to Montreal --

**MS. PSAKI:** Good.

**QUESTION:** -- if you ever want to go up there.

**MS. PSAKI:** I will take that advice.

**QUESTION:** It's the International Civilian – it's the civilian airline – the UN agency for airlines. Do you know if the United States is going to use its membership in the ICAO to oppose this Chinese decision?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't.

**QUESTION:** And if you don't know, could you ask?

**MS. PSAKI:** Yeah, I'm happy to check on that for you, Matt. Absolutely.

**QUESTION:** And when you say that the U.S. Government does not accept the legitimacy of the Chinese requirements --

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, it doesn't accept -- yeah, the Chinese requirements, right.

**QUESTION:** Right. That's what you said.

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

**QUESTION:** Doesn't that – if the FAA has been telling airlines that they have to comply with this, or that they should comply with it, how is that not accepting – the government accepting the legitimacy?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, there's a whole field of regulations and regulatory policy that I am certainly far from an aviation expert, as it evidenced by your Montreal question. So I would point you to them on that.

Evidence of the fact that the U.S. Government does not accept China's requirement is by the fact that the announcement will not change how the United States conducts military operations in the region, which is something DOD announced last week. And that is certainly a U.S. Government decision to make.

**QUESTION:** So does that mean that U.S. Government planes will not obey the -- or will not follow the Chinese requirements if they're flying through this airspace?

**MS. PSAKI:** Military planes?

**QUESTION:** Say the Secretary of State flying on an Air Force plane to Seoul or to Tokyo will not notify the --

**MS. PSAKI:** I am not aware of any upcoming Seoul trip coming up.

**QUESTION:** Well, the Vice President is there right now, or in Tokyo, at least. Are you saying that his plane, an Air Force plane, will not follow the requirements of the Chinese?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I am saying military planes would not, and that level of specificity I'd certainly have to check and see where that falls in.

**QUESTION:** What is this episode -- what impact is this episode having on U.S.-Sino relations?

**MS. PSAKI:** There are times when we agree and there are times when we disagree, as you know. We've made clear our concerns about not only what was announced but how this was announced, the fact that there was no prior notice. As you also know, Vice President Biden is in the region now on a prior planned trip. He will, of course, be meeting with key leaders to discuss a range of issues. Certainly, this could be a topic of discussion, but there are a number of other issues that we discuss both with China and other partners in the region.

**QUESTION:** And has the pivot to Asia worked? Is this evidence of the pivot working?

**MS. PSAKI:** I wouldn't categorize this into -- I wouldn't put this in the evaluation category of whether or not it worked. Our pivot to Asia, or rebalance to Asia, means focusing on Asia and the important partnership we have with Asia, with countries in the region, the economic and strategic partners. And nothing is further evidence of that than the Vice President's trip there, the fact that, as you know, the Secretary will be going back to Asia soon, that he was just there a couple of months ago with Secretary Hagel. So that is evidence of our commitment to the region. And we work with them on a -- countries in the region on a broad range of issues.

**QUESTION:** But as we survey the last five years of this Administration, would you say that China is less aggressive in its serial commission of human rights abuses, currency manipulation, cyber warfare against U.S. businesses and government, territorial aggression, or is it better than it used to be?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not going to do an evaluation of that. Obviously, we work with them on economic issues, we work with them on strategic issues. There are still issues, including human rights, including this issue we're talking about now, that we express concerns about when warranted, and we'll continue to do that. But we know that the relationship is a vital one and one that we need to keep plugging away at even when we disagree.

**QUESTION:** Jen, could I (inaudible) for a second?

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

**QUESTION:** Is it fair to characterize the U.S. position as being that aside from the official policy, for the purposes of safety and avoiding some kind of unfortunate incident, that commercial carriers should abide by the Chinese ADIZ requirements?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have -- I'd point you again to the FAA on more specifics than what I just conveyed. There are a range of regulations and policies that, of course, they oversee or are in place, but our general position as a U.S. Government is that we don't accept China's requirements. And obviously, the military -- actions of military exercises is evidence of that.

**QUESTION:** Jen, this comes from --

**QUESTION:** Sorry, sorry. Just a quick follow-up on that.

**MS. PSAKI:** Go ahead.

**QUESTION:** It looks like the two main U.S. airlines are complying with -- are taking steps to comply. Delta and United are the two that have flight routes through the area, which seems to have kind of created a little bit of confusion/consternation in Japan over a perceived rift with Japanese policy, which is to not allow U.S. commercial airliners to file their flight plans with China. Do you have a -- do you have any kind of reassurance or any kind of response to that?

**MS. PSAKI:** We coordinate closely with Japan and with South Korea and all of the countries in the region about a range of issues. And certainly on this issue, we have been in touch with Japan and will continue to be. This is -- for specific actions of individual commercial airliners, I would point you to them or the FAA on any regulations.

**QUESTION:** But – so you're not – but you're not afraid for the safety or concerned about the safety of U.S. citizens on flights that are flying through the area?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, certainly safety and security of citizens should be of concern to everyone. Obviously, there are policies in place and regulations in place because of that. But we don't oversee airline regulations. The FAA does, so I would point you to them.

**QUESTION:** (Inaudible.) Did the United States Government – the position has changed toward this ADIZ, or not changed? What is the position to ADIZ now?

**MS. PSAKI:** It has not changed. We – China announced the ADIZ without prior consultations even though the newly-announced ADIZ overlaps with parts of longstanding ADIZs of Japan, the Republic of Korea, and Taiwan, and includes territory administered by Japan. As I mentioned, we – the fact that China's announcement has caused confusion and increased the risk of accidents only further underscores the validity of concerns and the need for China to rescind the procedures. It's consistently been our position and one we have communicated both publicly and privately. I know there was some confusion over the weekend about airlines and specifically.

**QUESTION:** Jen, you said that you are not still – not accepting China's new air defense zone. But I wonder, like, Japan has its own air defense zone, and also part of it covers Taiwan. But it looks like the U.S. doesn't say anything about it. So do you think there is sort of a double standard? Why do you react so strongly to China's air defense zone?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, one of the reasons is that they announced this without prior consultations. It was inconsistent with longstanding procedure and process. And obviously, it overlaps with a number of other longstanding air defense zones of some other neighboring countries.

**QUESTION:** Jen --

**QUESTION:** Jen, you do not contest the ability of China to declare such a identification zone; it's just the manner in which they did it, or the extent?

**MS. PSAKI:** No. I think I have – I've just consistently said that we believe they should rescind the procedures. I've just – I've also stated a couple of times that we don't accept China's requirements. So I think I've made that pretty clear.

**QUESTION:** (Inaudible.)

**QUESTION:** Is the first --

**QUESTION:** In response to the – China's declaration of its own ADIZ, the South Korean Government is poised to expand its own ADIZ, so-called KADIZ, to the South China Sea. What is the position of the United States? Would you encourage it or discourage it?

**MS. PSAKI:** I haven't seen those reports, or I don't even know if they're reports or if there's been an announcement. I haven't seen any announcement, I guess I should say. So let me check into that, and --

**QUESTION:** They say they have already started consultations with the United States.

**MS. PSAKI:** I'd have to check into it and see if we have more to say on that.

**QUESTION:** Is this the first time the U.S. has called --

**QUESTION:** Jennifer, you talk about safety --

**QUESTION:** -- for the zone to be rescinded?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'd have to check on that for you, Roz.

**QUESTION:** Can we change topic?

**QUESTION:** No.

**QUESTION:** You talk about safety. Are you really concerned that the Chinese may down an airliner or something?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not predicting that, but certainly there is – they created these Air Defense Identification Zones, they've asked for prior flight plans. So of course, the security and safety is part of the regulatory process, and – but I don't have any predictions. It's just the question of abiding by it.

**QUESTION:** Is it a real concern, downing an airliner?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't think I have any more for you on that question.

**QUESTION:** Jen, when you're taking that question that Roz had --

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** -- could you also check whether the United States actually is directly asking the Chinese to rescind it?

**MS. PSAKI:** Happy to. Sure.

**QUESTION:** Thank you.

**QUESTION:** Well, at least --

**QUESTION:** Apart from the specific concerns about how this was announced without any prior notice, its excessiveness, at least in terms of other regulations, and the safety risks that you say it cause, do you have any – are there broader concerns about this area being identified as essentially the entire East China Sea? Is the U.S. concerned that the Chinese are looking at anything on a map that has the word “China” in it as all their own?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, part of the concern is certainly that it overlaps with parts of other --

**QUESTION:** Right. But in terms of territorial claims --

**MS. PSAKI:** As well as territory administered by Japan, sure.

**QUESTION:** Right, right. But in terms of China's territorial claims, are you concerned that this is the first step or could be a first step towards actually moving in some kind of forceful way to take control of areas of territory and ocean maritime space that it says that it owns?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I don't want to make a prediction of that.

**QUESTION:** No, but I'm asking if you were concerned --

**MS. PSAKI:** But --

**QUESTION:** -- that this is a step in that direction, apart from the specific problems with the no prior notice and all that other -- the safety concerns.

**MS. PSAKI:** But one of the specific problems is also that this includes area -- territory administered by Japan, it includes overlapping area with other countries in the region. So certainly, that does touch on what your question is here. In terms of a prediction of what it will mean in the future, I certainly wouldn't venture to make that at this point.

**QUESTION:** Right. Well, the Chinese say that they would be well within their rights also to declare one of these zones over the entire -- over the South China Sea. Are you concerned about the possibility of that?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, you're familiar with what our position is on that, and we've long --

**QUESTION:** Well, that's over the territorial disputes over the -- it's a question of sovereignty for these little atolls and bits of rock.

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

**QUESTION:** Would you be as opposed as you are to this if the Chinese did it for the South China Sea, or is that a hypothetical question that you will wait to bash the Chinese over the head for once they -- if and when they do it?

**MS. PSAKI:** It is a hypothetical question at this stage in time.

**QUESTION:** All right.

**QUESTION:** One more thing. Just one more thing on that. China at the same time has announced they sent a fighter jet against United States and Japanese aircraft last week. Did you comment on that?

**MS. PSAKI:** I am not familiar with that specific report. In -- where, exactly?

**QUESTION:** If it's true, are you concerned about these Chinese announcement?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'd have to look at the specific report, and that may be a DOD question.

James.

**QUESTION:** Given that China makes this declaration --

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

**QUESTION:** -- and we regard it as thoroughly problematic, if not illegal, and therefore we have on our hands a dispute with the Chinese --

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

**QUESTION:** -- which is to be adjudicated somehow in a nonviolent way, wasn't it a kind of a provocative act for the United States to fly B-52s through that very zone in a short time thereafter?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I would point you to DOD on that, but I would reiterate the fact that we have made clear that this action, this announcement, is not going to change our military exercises. And that is an example of that.

**QUESTION:** So other than taking -- other than the Vice President, are you aware -- or has there been at this point any conversations that you're aware of in this -- from this building with the Chinese directly? It's kind of on Jill's question. And if not, do you expect them or is this going to be left up to the Vice President when he goes to --

**MS. PSAKI:** Let me check. I know we have expressed concerns. I mentioned this last week, Matt, so let me just make sure you have it.

**QUESTION:** Jen, the -- Secretary Kerry did meet on Wednesday with a senior Chinese official?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'd have to --

**QUESTION:** On Wednesday, the vice premier.

**QUESTION:** Lu.

**QUESTION:** Yeah.

**MS. PSAKI:** I'd have to look back at that. It seems like a long time ago.

**QUESTION:** I know it does. And it was happening on Wednesday.

**MS. PSAKI:** Deputy Secretary Burns met last week with a Chinese official where this was a topic of discussion. Also, Assistant Secretary Russel spoke with the ambassador about a week ago, and Ambassador Locke has also been in touch, of course, on the ground. In terms of specific contacts over the last couple of days, I'm happy to check and see what else we can read out for all of you.

**QUESTION:** Are you taking this to the UN in any forum there?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have any prediction of that, James, at this point in time.

**QUESTION:** New topic?

**QUESTION:** So it's strictly a bilateral or a multilateral thing, but outside the auspices of the UN is how you're going to seek to resolve it?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I don't have anything for you on it at this point. We're taking this day by day. I conveyed for you what we've done and what we've communicated. But obviously, we're taking steps day by day.

**QUESTION:** But is that a kind of – is that a consideration?

**MS. PSAKI:** Not that I'm aware of, Elise. But obviously, we're taking this day by day.

**QUESTION:** Can we change --

**QUESTION:** New subject?

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure, Jill. Go ahead.

**QUESTION:** I'm still on China. Can you actually clarify this? China's argument is that we institute the ADIZ that other countries have already instituted. If you're saying that China does not have a right to do that, they can say, well, what's good for the goose is good for the gander. And it doesn't seem like you have a legal foot to stand on. If you're opposed to the way in which they did it or the extent of it, these can be a subject of debate. And China has said we can get rid of our ADIZ if the Japanese get rid of theirs. I mean, something like that could happen. But somehow – are you really saying that you do not accept – you do not give China the right to declare a defense identification zone?

**MS. PSAKI:** I think I've thoroughly outlined what our concerns are, so I'm not sure I have much more to add to your question.

**QUESTION:** Just on another topic, Jen – sorry.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we were going to go to Jill next, and then I'm happy to go to you.

**QUESTION:** North Korea?

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** Merrill Newman.

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

**QUESTION:** You've seen probably, or read at least, his so-called confession. Do you have any comments about that, any reaction? And what is the latest on his status?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, the latest is – and let me do this first and then I'll do the second part. On November 30<sup>th</sup>, North Korea permitted the Embassy of Sweden, our protecting power, to consular access to Merrill Newman. It – and given his advanced age and health conditions, we continue to urge North Korea to release him so he may return home and reunite with his family.

We, of course, have seen the Korean Central News Agency report regarding Mr. Newman's detention. According to the report, he apologized for the misunderstanding that led him – led to his detention. We don't have any other further information regarding the reason for his detention. But again, given his age and health, we continue to call for North Korea to release him as quickly as possible.

**QUESTION:** Do you believe that the North Korean – that that apology was – that he wrote and that was released by the North Koreans – do you believe that he wrote that of his own volition and that he – and do you have reason to believe that all of those things in that apology are true?

**MS. PSAKI:** We just don't have any other further analysis. We've seen the same reports all of you have seen, of course, about his interview and the publication of that, but I don't have any other further analysis on it.

**QUESTION:** Are you aware if that – the subject of his quote, unquote "confession" came up in the meeting with the Swedes?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have anything more on it, but I'm happy to check and see if there's more detail we can outline for all of you.

**QUESTION:** Did the Swedes as for and did Mr. Newman sign a PAW?

**MS. PSAKI:** A Privacy Act waiver?

**QUESTION:** Correct.

**MS. PSAKI:** Yes, he did. That is why I am able to talk about him now.

**QUESTION:** Okay. So then if -- since he has signed the waiver, would you take it back to your -- whoever it is that liaises with the Swedes on this --

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

**QUESTION:** I assume it's EAP, but I guess it could also be EUR -- and find out if Mr. Newman, in his discussions with the Swedes, talked at all about or said that he had freely made this alleged confession and when it was that he recorded this or when it --

**MS. PSAKI:** I am happy to take that and see if there's more we can share.

Go ahead, Lesley.

**QUESTION:** Also, did the Swedes report back in what condition he is in? Has he been tortured? Anything today? And how long did they meet with him, and was it in a jail? Was it in a --

**QUESTION:** Guest house.

**QUESTION:** -- government -- a guest house?

**QUESTION:** A jailhouse guest house.

**MS. PSAKI:** A guest house. I don't have many specifics on that. I'm happy to also check with Matt's questions and to see if there's more we can share on that as well.

**QUESTION:** But didn't it include a --

**QUESTION:** But they did say -- the Swedes did say that he --

**QUESTION:** -- physical examination of him?

**QUESTION:** The Swedes did, I think, say that he was --

**MS. PSAKI:** I believe they've spoken publicly about it.

**QUESTION:** -- that he was treated -- that's he's being treated (inaudible), right?

**MS. PSAKI:** Right. I've seen those comments as well. So I don't have any other specifics on it, but if there's more we share beyond what they've said publicly, I'm happy --

**QUESTION:** Including whether or not there was a physical examination of him during this consular access?

**QUESTION:** I just want to get back to his confession. I mean, it is kind of written in language that kind of fits the narrative that North Korea has been saying, and I'm just wondering if you think that he wrote this. Are you -- I mean, there's often times that you would say, like, oh this person seemed under duress --

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

**QUESTION:** -- or something like that. So I mean, I'm just -- about this particular confession, do you have any reason to believe that he did not confess to all of those things?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't -- I certainly understand why you're asking. I don't have any particular analysis on it at this stage. I will see if this is something that our team is looking into, and if there's more we can say about it specifically.

**QUESTION:** And what is this building doing to secure his release beyond calling for his release from imprisonment? I mean, Ambassador King had tried months ago to go --

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

**QUESTION:** -- for the other American under detention, Kenneth Bae. What's actually being done to get them out?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, our Swedish protecting power just visited with him two days ago, and obviously that's an important component of reaching out to citizens who are detained in North Korea. We certainly do continue to call for his release. I don't have any other predictions or announcements on travel or visits of other officials at this point to tell you about.

**QUESTION:** But beyond those consular visits, I mean, is there any outreach to the Chinese specially on behalf of Mr. Newman?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have more I can outline for all of you, but I can check and see if there is any more to tell.

**QUESTION:** Have they been helpful the past with Kenneth Bae or with others? The Chinese (inaudible)?

**MS. PSAKI:** They have been helpful, but there's not more specifics I can outline.

**QUESTION:** Through the Swedes are elsewhere, has North Korea communicated any demands or requests of the United States that have to do with Newman or -- as a prelude to his possible release?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have any more specifics on the contact with the Swedes and kind of what the discussion entailed beyond confirming --

QUESTION: Well, any – in any forum, have they asked for anything from the United States?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any details on it. I am happy to check if there's any more to share with all of you.

QUESTION: But you guys are in touch with the North Koreans directly, just to confirm?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we – as you know, we've long had a channel, but we've been working in this case through our Swedish protective – protecting power.

QUESTION: But you have been in touch with the North Koreans specifically on his matter?

MS. PSAKI: On this specific case, not that I'm aware of, but I'm happy to check if there's anything more on that.

QUESTION: Are you in touch with Mr. Newman's family?

MS. PSAKI: We are. We have been. Let me see if I have the detail of when we last spoke with him – with his family. I don't have that detail for you. I'm happy to put that in the pocket of things I'm going to check on.

QUESTION: And have they asked for you to help facilitate any kind of visit by them to North Korea, given that this gentleman's actually – I mean, he's quite elderly --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- so you would imagine that if -- there would be concern enough to try and travel to visit him.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm. I'm not aware of a request that they've made about that specifically, but we can see.

QUESTION: So all the attention, really, is on this Mr. Newman. But as we've said, Kenneth Bae has been held for quite a long time.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm. You're right.

QUESTION: So in your efforts working with the Swedes or working to try and get the release, I mean, are you emphasizing because of Mr. Newman's age and health that you need to get him out right away, or are they part of a package that you think that they --

MS. PSAKI: I mean, we'd certainly like to see them both released as quickly as possible. In terms of that level of detail, I just don't have that.

QUESTION: These American citizens being held against their will in a rogue state, they're hostages, right?

MS. PSAKI: I mean, they're being held by the governments. The governments have confirmed that, so I don't know that I need to categorize it further, James.

QUESTION: You don't regard them as hostages?

MS. PSAKI: Do we have another topic?

QUESTION: Yes. Could I move onto the --

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

QUESTION: -- the Secretary's trip.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Okay. The portion to the West Bank and to Israel.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

QUESTION: Yes. If you have more to share with us -- today or yesterday, President Abbas, the president of the Palestinian Authority, was so impressed with the Geneva success, now he's suggesting a format, perhaps another Geneva, where the Palestinian-Israeli issue could be resolved. Would you look kindly at this suggestion?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I haven't seen those comments from him specifically. I know this has been an idea floated out there. Our focus remains on the direct negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians. We're a facilitator in that effort. There are certainly a number of countries who have a great investment and great interest in the success -- in a successful outcome here, including the Arab League, including many other countries that want to contribute to growing the Palestinian economy. But that's our focus, not on planning yet another conference.

QUESTION: And a Palestinian member of the Israeli Knesset, Mr. Ahmed Tibi, claims that the 20,000 housing that the Israelis announced and they put on hold were actually not put on hold, that there is -- construction is ongoing. Do you have any information on that?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything new on that. I'd have to look into that for you.  
Scott?

QUESTION: (Inaudible.)

MS. PSAKI: Oh.

QUESTION: Can we stay on stay on that?

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

**QUESTION:** Just on this idea of not necessarily a Geneva-type conference for the peace process, but just the idea of internationalizing the process, would the United States – would the Administration object to an internationalization of the peace process?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, it's hard to know exactly what that means. Obviously, as you all are well aware, there's direct negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians now. That's what our focus is on, so certainly that's not a path we're pursuing.

**QUESTION:** Well, I think that the point that – right, it's not a path that you're pursuing --

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

**QUESTION:** -- but the point that people who are suggesting that this might be a way to go, the point that they make is that the United States has been the sole and unique arbiter, mediator, facilitator, whatever you want to call it, of Israeli-Palestinian peace talks going back decades.

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

**QUESTION:** And you haven't gotten anything out of it. There's been no success. It's been one failure after another. Is it perhaps not time to try something new, is the argument that these people would make.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, Matt, obviously, many people are going to make different arguments about how it should proceed. We're less than halfway through the nine-month timeline here. There are a number of countries that are engaged and invested, including, of course, the Arab League, who, as you know, are in very close contact with the Palestinians and engaged in this effort. There are many who are engaged with the Israelis in this effort. So our focus remains on the direct negotiations, and I don't think we're at this point speculating on a different alternative forum.

**QUESTION:** Well, let me – okay. Well, let me put it this way: Is it still the position of the Administration that the United States has unique leverage and influence with both sides that makes it the only logical or capable, competent, credible mediator for peace between Israel and the Palestinians?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't know that we've ever stated it exactly like that. We're playing a facilitator role which both sides are comfortable with. There are other countries engaged with this effort and certainly in touch with the Israelis and the Palestinians. I expect that will continue. But in the meantime, we'll continue to play the facilitator role as long as it's productive.

**QUESTION:** Do you believe, does the Administration believe that the United States still has leverage and influence with Israel or the Palestinians? I mean, you say, in reference to other questions about, say, Mr. Newman or Mr. Bae in North Korea --

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

**QUESTION:** -- that the Chinese have influence with the North Koreans and you would like to go through them, maybe after you're done yelling at them about their air defense zone. But do you still think that the United States – does the Administration believe that it has influence and leverage with either Israel or the Palestinians?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I think we have a close relationship with both. And obviously, we're at this point because both sides decided to come to the table. I don't think it's about leverage. There's – it's in the interest of both sides to come to an agreement on the final status issues, and that's what they're working to do at this point.

**QUESTION:** Jen, could I just ask – there was an agreement --

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** -- reached last week between the EU and Israel which will allow Israel to actually touch some funding for scientific research. There have been some problems because the EU wanted to bar all research in areas of -- in the West Bank --

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

**QUESTION:** -- settlement areas in the West Bank. Is there an -- I mean, does the American -- do America -- does America believe that this is a good agreement for the EU and Israel, given that Secretary Kerry has always mentioned that he fears an increasing isolation of Israel on the international stage?

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm. I haven't talked to our team about it, so I'd have to talk to them and see if we have any particular view on the agreement last week.

**QUESTION:** And is -- what is the message that Secretary Kerry's going to be bringing with him when he visits Israel later on this week?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I think he'll be talking to both sides about the importance of staying firm with the timeline and working through the tough and difficult issues that they're doing at the negotiating table, and reiterating the importance of

coming to a peaceful end to the final negotiations. And of course, when he's meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu, they'll certainly be discussing the recent P5+1 agreement with Iran and having an ongoing dialogue about that as well.

**QUESTION:** And have there been any meetings, direct talks between the Israelis and Palestinians, since the resignation of the Palestinian team?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have any updates on meetings at this point. I'll see if there's any more we want to provide to all of you in terms of specific meetings and timing of that.

**QUESTION:** But I mean, since the last time the Secretary's been there, there's been another announcement of new settlement construction.

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

**QUESTION:** There's been the resignation of the Palestinian -- it just seems that without him actually physically there holding their hand for hours at a time, that they're not able to sustain it on their own.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, they've had many meetings when he has not been there. So obviously, we didn't expect this to be easy. We certainly are aware of some bumps in the road of late, but both sides have also reaffirmed their commitment to seeing this through.

**QUESTION:** Would you really call those bumps in the road, though? I mean, particularly on the -- actually, on either side, whether it's the Israelis continuing to announce settlement construction or the Palestinians' full negotiating team just giving up, it just doesn't seem as if --

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, when the negotiating -- and that's a good example. The negotiating team -- President Abbas reaffirmed his own commitment to seeing this through --

**QUESTION:** But it just --

**MS. PSAKI:** -- whether it was them or whether it was other officials in their place. So they're continuing to move forward.

**QUESTION:** It just doesn't seem like they have the -- while they may have the desire and the dream that there'll be a peace deal. The motivation to actually do the hard work day in and day out doesn't seem to be there. And so it does seem as if Secretary Kerry is the one holding this together personally, and isn't there, like, a limit to how much he can do?

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure. That's why he has a team to help work through it every day.

**QUESTION:** Well, I meant more the parties themselves.

**MS. PSAKI:** You're right, but there also is a long timeframe we still have left. One of the reasons committing to the nine-month timeframe was so important is because we knew there would be challenging periods throughout the process. But both sides remain committed to that, and so we'll continue to work through it.

**QUESTION:** But it doesn't sound like -- unless you could disabuse us of the notion, it doesn't sound like since Secretary Kerry's last trip in early November that there have actually been any direct talks.

**MS. PSAKI:** I wouldn't jump to that conclusion. We just have always said we wouldn't confirm every meeting.

**QUESTION:** Sure.

**MS. PSAKI:** So let me see if I can confirm any meetings since that point for all of you.

**QUESTION:** Jen, could you tell us if Ambassador Indyk is there now? Is he there? Is he in the region? Is he -- Ambassador Indyk, where --

**MS. PSAKI:** He's here. I saw him this morning.

**QUESTION:** He's here. Okay.

**MS. PSAKI:** Okay. Let's just do one or two more here.

Scott.

**QUESTION:** What is the U.S. view of what's going on in Thailand right now?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we certainly deeply regret the loss of life in Bangkok due to politically motivated violence. We condemn violence as a means to achieve political objectives and urge all sides to exercise restraint and respect the rule of law. We are concerned about the continuing political tension in Thailand, and we are following the situation closely. Peaceful protest and freedom of expression are important aspects of democracy, of course. Violence and seizure of public or private property, however, are not acceptable means of resolving political differences. We firmly believe all parties should work together to resolve differences through peaceful dialogue in ways that strengthen democracy and rule of law.

Ambassador Kenney spoke with the prime minister and -- has spoken with the prime minister and opposition leaders to also encourage restraint and peaceful dialogue. You may have also seen that the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok issued a

security message for U.S. citizens in Thailand explaining that large political demonstrations may continue in coming day – in the coming days, including at government facilities, in and outside of central Bangkok, and is advising them to avoid areas of demonstration and to exercise caution.

**QUESTION:** Following his talk with the prime minister, one of the main opposition leaders said that he would accept nothing short of her resignation. Is that a responsible position in the eyes of the United States?

**MS. PSAKI:** We just continue to encourage all parties to work together to resolve their differences. We, of course, have seen his comments, but I don't think we're going to weigh in further at this point, aside from encouraging restraint on the ground.

**QUESTION:** Would you weigh in on the general amnesty bill that the ruling party failed to get through parliament, which was one of the instigations for this?

**MS. PSAKI:** I know – I don't know if I've spoken to that in the past, Scott. I'd have to – I don't have anything for you on it at this particular moment, but I'm happy to follow up post-briefing.

Okay, let's do two more here. In the back, you've been very patient.

**QUESTION:** Thank you. Michael Vincent from the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. What's the U.S. response to the Australian Government's rejection of the U.S. company Archer Daniels Midland's bid for GrainCorp?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we are disappointed by the Government of Australia's decision to reject Archer Daniels Midland's proposed acquisition of GrainCorp. We do not – we do note that the Australian Treasurer Joe Hockey has expressed openness to approving an increase in ADM's current share in GrainCorp. The United States is the largest foreign investor – foreign direct investor in Australia, with 132 billion in investment projects to date, and we look forward to working closely with Australia's government to build stronger ties and investment – stronger trade and investment ties.

**QUESTION:** Just a quick follow-up.

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

**QUESTION:** Did – unrelated matter, but has the U.S. Government accepted private medical, legal, or religious information on Australian citizens as offered by Australian intelligence agencies?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have anything further or anything for you on a range of reports. I'm certainly not going to comment on any of them. As you know, we're undergoing our own review of these processes, which we expect to conclude by the end of the year.

**QUESTION:** Jen, back to ADM for a second.

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

**QUESTION:** Did – was this issue, this proposed sale, bid by ADM raised at the AUSMIN ministerial meetings?

**MS. PSAKI:** It's a good question, Matt. I'd have to check. It wasn't one raised while I was there, but let me check and see if it was.

**QUESTION:** And if it was, did – was – were you given any indication that this is the way your closest antipodal ally was going to go?

**MS. PSAKI:** I will check and see if it was even raised.

Okay, let's do one more. Go ahead, Samir.

**QUESTION:** Do you have a reaction to the draft constitution in Egypt today?

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** Can I throw a Bahrain question at the end of that?

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure. Why not?

Well, we continue to track the constitutional process with interest, and we'll examine the document carefully once it is finalized and sent to President Mansour, which we understand will occur tomorrow. The Egyptian people, of course, will decide the fate of the draft constitution in a referendum. We will continue to support a transition process that leads to an inclusive civilian government selected through free, fair, and transparent elections, and civilian government based on the rule of law, fundamental freedoms, accountability, and an open and competitive economy. So we will see when it is transferred, and we will take a close look at it.

Bahrain.

**QUESTION:** Yeah. Do you have any view on the government –

**QUESTION:** A quick one on Egypt. Hold on. I'm sorry, Matt. You don't have any comment on the prohibition of religious parties in Egypt?

**MS. PSAKI:** Again, we'll wait to comment on it until it's been officially transferred. Obviously, there are steps in there we may be complimentary of and others we may not be.

**QUESTION:** Yes, please.

**QUESTION:** Does the decision of the – not to release this human rights campaigner when he was eligible to be released? It was yesterday or today.

**MS. PSAKI:** Let me see. I think I have something on this. One moment, Matt.

**QUESTION:** Mm-hmm. You can get it – if you just want to make it a TQ, that's fine.

**MS. PSAKI:** Yeah, that's fine. I believe I have something on it for you. Let's see. We continue to encourage Bahrain to take the necessary steps to promote reconciliation among Bahrainis, including permitting all sectors of society to voice their political views in a peaceful manner. We have seen reports that the head of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights Nabeel Rajab – is that who you're talking about – okay --

**QUESTION:** (Inaudible.)

**MS. PSAKI:** -- was denied early release today in Bahrain. We understand that he has served 18 months of his two-year prison sentence and is scheduled to be released in May of next year. We remain deeply concerned about the three-year prison sentence for leading illegal gatherings. We urge the Government of Bahrain to protect the universal rights of freedom of expression and assembly, just as we urge all elements of Bahraini society to engage in peaceful expressions of political opinion.

**QUESTION:** Do you think that he should've been released as was – as he could've been today?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I believe we are concerned about his – we were concerned about his three-year prison sentence, I believe. Let me check and see, but I believe that's what we're implying here.

**QUESTION:** I mean, this is not the first. I mean, there have been several other opposition activists and so forth that have been detained. I mean, does this cast doubt on your encouraging words earlier in the year about Bahrain's commitment to political reforms?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we certainly are encouraging them to take some step – to take necessary steps to promote reconciliation. And obviously, each time that there is a case like this, we have expressed concern. So I don't have any analysis as to what that will mean longer-term or about the overall relationship, but each time there has been an incident, we have certainly expressed our concern.

**QUESTION:** Well, but each time – you say each time that there's been an incident. I mean, there's a pattern of incidents. I mean, does that say something about their actual commitment to reforms?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I don't have any more analysis on it for you.

Thanks, everyone.

**QUESTION:** Thank you.

(The briefing was concluded at 3:18 p.m.)

**DPB # 196**

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**Fischer, Kyle G**

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**From:** (U) Edwards, Harry G  
**Sent:** Wednesday, December 04, 2013 8:00 PM  
**Subject:** National Journal - The Allure of the Useful Lie

**RELEASE IN PART B6**

The Allure of the Useful Lie  
National Journal  
Wednesday, December 03, 2013  
By Major Garrett

When asked if it is the "policy" of the State Department to "lie" to keep secret talks under wraps, Psaki said: "There are times when diplomacy needs privacy in order to progress."

The enigmatic Iranian nuclear deal may bring more cloaks and daggers down the road.

With concision and clarity utterly lacking in administration discussions of Obamacare, the State Department on Monday called a lie a lie.

Under persistent questioning from James Rosen, Fox News' chief Washington correspondent, State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki admitted that her predecessor, Victoria Nuland, misled reporters when, in February, she denied the existence of "direct, secret bilateral talks with Iran."

The question was Rosen's, and Nuland's denial was unequivocal: "With regard to the kind of thing you're talking about on a government-to-government level: No."

It has now been revealed that senior U.S. diplomats—Deputy Secretary of State William Burns and Jake Sullivan, Vice President Joe Biden's top foreign policy adviser—conducted at least five secret negotiations with Iranian officials in Oman's capital of Muscat. Top administration nuclear-arms negotiator Wendy Sherman also participated. Administration officials later admitted that lower-level talks with Iran commenced in 2011 and occurred in Muscat.

This information now awkwardly marring the transparency table, Rosen reasonably asked Psaki if it is the "policy" of the State Department to "lie" to keep secret talks under wraps. "There are times when diplomacy needs privacy in order to progress," Psaki said.

The lie matters less than the investment in the talks themselves. They began when the U.S. was still fighting in Iraq, Iran's belligerence there and across the region was legitimately feared, and Iranian strongman Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was bellicose and manic.

The March talks intensified before the June election of new Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, meaning the Obama administration believed enough had been achieved with Iran's old guard that it could possibly seal a deal this year. Also, the talks continued even as the White House successfully pushed for tougher sanctions, imposed by its international partners and Congress. This belies the overheated assumptions back in September at the United Nations that Rouhani and his widely traveled foreign minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif, by themselves were paving the way toward a thaw in relations and a possible phase-one nuclear deal.

That means the White House has been playing the long game for some time, secretly talking and publicly sanctioning along the way. The administration can be accused of many things, but naivete and gullibility cannot be among them. They know the old and new Iranian guard and talked up to and around Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei—measuring his intentions, ambitions, and boundaries. From such calculations, big deals can be made. And the fact that

the administration took these long-running measurements means it is not, as some have accused, falling for a fanciful Rouhani/Zarif "charm offensive."

That doesn't mean the phase-one deal is an unvarnished success or unmitigated disaster. It is a product of continuously sifted calculations on both sides, and it most conspicuously illustrates the limits of sustained economic and diplomatic pressure applied by the P5+1. As the White House has made abundantly clear, these negotiating partners—Russia, China, Britain, France, and Germany—had reached their own limits of isolating, punishing, and prodding Iran. Negotiations carried out with such partners, by their very nature, constrain U.S. interests.

Russia has long-standing economic and foreign policy interests, some of which conflict with ours. Preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon influences China's calculus in dealing with a nuclearized North Korea and its now publicly declared intent to extend naval influence in the South China Sea. Again, China's aims are not the same as ours. Keeping these two nations in the P5+1 harness was becoming increasingly complicated, as was maintaining European buy-in on economic sanctions that denied Britain, France, and Germany millions in commerce they eventually want to recoup.

Plus, the pace and invisibility of Iran's uranium enrichment made the threat of it crossing the "breakout" threshold too dangerous and real to ignore. For the White House, the time for a time-out was now. Waiting longer could have left the world, the region, and Israel with an untenable nuclear fait accompli.

That doesn't mean there are not trap doors, the biggest of which concerns possible Iranian recipients of the estimated \$7 billion in sanctions relief Iran will now enjoy. As Der Spiegel points out, those now unfrozen funds, or some of them, could wind up in the hands of the National Development Fund, a benign-sounding entity that Western intelligence agencies suspect supports two nefarious entities: Novin Energy, a secretive part of Iran's feared nuclear-weapons program, and the Quds Force, a nasty cell within the Iranian Revolutionary Guards with a history of anti-Western terrorist training missions and campaigns (it's currently fighting to protect Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad).

What becomes of Iran's phase-one financial relief is a crucial issue for the U.S. to weigh—in addition to requiring full compliance with the new inspection protocols of Iranian enrichment facilities and the Arak heavy-water nuclear reactor.

This is why Congress is watching and threatening to wield the threat of tougher economic sanctions even as the initial deal begins to be implemented. The House passed its bill in August, and it sits as a ready cudgel on the desk of Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Robert Menendez, D-N.J., should Iran dissemble or backslide. While the White House makes great sport of opposing new economic sanctions, the threat reminds Iran about the price of noncompliance—and that the U.S. can and will assert its sovereign foreign policy goals even if Russia, China, and Europe go economically and geopolitically wobbly.

The administration told what it considered a useful lie about secret talks with Iran. The key to phase one of the Iran deal is for the White House to tell no lies to itself now about Iran's actions. It's equally important the administration not lie to itself about the value of its cloak-and-dagger diplomacy. Just because it got us here doesn't mean it can get us to an Iran that abandons its equally secretive pursuit of nuclear weapons.

The author is National Journal Correspondent-at-Large and Chief White House Correspondent for CBS News. He is also a distinguished fellow at the George Washington University School of Media and Public Affairs.

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Harry Edwards • Press Officer • Press Desk • U.S. Department of State

2201 C St, NW Rm 2109, Washington, DC 20520 | ☎:BB: [REDACTED]  
edwardshg@state.gov (PACE) or edwardsh2@state.gov (OPENNET)

B6

**RELEASE IN FULL****Fischer, Kyle G**

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**From:** Beechem, Stephanie  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 11, 2016 9:00 AM  
**To:** Finer, Jonathan J; Kirby, John; Sullivan, Thomas D; Toner, Mark C; Frifield, Julia E; Stout, Jennifer P; Harf, Marie E; Hickey, Lauren A; Jones, Ryan L; Johnston, Amy L; Trudeau, Elizabeth K; Stevenson, Susan N  
**Subject:** Morning Roundup 5/11/16

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**Morning Roundup 5/11/16**

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**Iraq / Syria / ISIL**

**AP: In New Push, IS Advances Toward Syrian City Of Palmyra.** Islamic State militants advanced toward the Syrian city of Palmyra on Wednesday, threatening to besiege the world-famous ancient site only several weeks after the government recaptured it from the extremists. Media allied with the group and other activists said IS fighters seized a strategically located but deserted rocket-launching site close to an air base less than 60 kilometers (40 miles) from Palmyra. [LINK](#)

**NYT: Iraq: Death Toll From Sadr City Car Bombing Rises to 63.** Iraqi officials say the death toll from a car bombing in a commercial area in a predominantly Shiite neighborhood of Baghdad has risen to at least 63 people killed. Two police officers say the explosives-laden car that went off Wednesday morning at a crowded outdoor market in Baghdad's eastern district of Sadr City also wounded up to 85 people, several seriously [LINK](#)

**AFP: Millions In US Aid To Syrians Suspended Over Graft Probe.** The US government has suspended millions of dollars in funding to several organisations providing aid for Syria after discovering they were systematically overpaying Turkish companies for basic goods with the collusion of some of their staff. The US Agency for International Development's independent government auditor said it had "established grounds resulting in the suspension of 14 entities and individuals involved with aid programs from Turkey." [LINK](#)

**Pravda: John Kerry Admits Russia Saves Tens Of Thousands Of Lives In Syria.** Initial ceasefire became possible in Syria owing to Russia's efforts, US Secretary of State John Kerry said in an interview with CNN. In the interview, Kerry explained Russia's vision of the political solution to the conflict in Syria may be "workable," but it was Moscow's participation in the conflict that "saved tens of thousands of lives." The US diplomat also said that nearly a million people were able to receive humanitarian aid. [LINK](#)

**Iran**

**NYT: Kerry Rebuts Claims That U.S. Is Undercutting Iran Trade And Investment.** Secretary of State John Kerry on Tuesday rebutted complaints that the United States is impeding others from investing and trading with Iran despite the easing of sanctions against that country under the nuclear agreement that took effect in January. Mr. Kerry said that some businesses were misusing the United States as an excuse. [LINK](#)

**WP Fact Checker: Kerry's Claim That Iran Has Only Received '\$3 Billion' From The Nuclear Deal.** This was always Iran's money, but the total amount made available remains unclear. But Kerry's claim that Iran has "received" \$3 billion since the agreement went into effect is misleading. That number reflects only what Iran has transferred back to the country, and belies the fact that U.S. officials are actively urging banks to give Iran even more access to the international banking system. [LINK](#)

**Daily Mail: State Department Says 'Glitch' Responsible For Missing Moment From Press Briefing Video When It Essentially Admitted To Lying About Iran Nuclear Talks.** The State Department is blaming the curious disappearance of unhelpful footage from an old press briefing on a 'glitch' today as the fallout continues from a profile that suggested the administration duped the press and its allies into backing the Iran nuclear deal. Yesterday Fox News reporter James Rosen discovered that a portion of his 2013 exchange with then-State Department spokeswoman, now White House Communications Director, Jen Psaki was missing from the video archive. [LINK](#)

## JAPAN

**NYT (Sanger): Obama's Visit Raises Ghosts of Hiroshima.** With his decision to speak beneath that famous dome, Mr. Obama is taking a step 11 of his predecessors avoided. Merely by showing up in Hiroshima, he will have no choice but to navigate a minefield of conflicting memory, in Japan and in the United States. The two drastically different interpretations of what happened have always pulled, sometimes in unspoken ways, at the strong alliance between the United States and Japan that emerged from the ashes. [LINK](#)

## ISRAEL

**Times Of Israel: French PM To Visit Israel In Bid To Relaunch Peace Process.** French Prime Minister Manuel Valls will visit Israel and the Palestinian territories this month in a bid to relaunch the peace process following the worst flare-up of violence in the Gaza Strip for two years, his office said Tuesday. His visit, from May 21-24, comes as France seeks to engineer a peace deal based on a two-state solution. [LINK](#)

## Corruption

**VOA News: Kerry To Face Questions At Anti-Corruption Summit.** ...anti-corruption campaigners said the top U.S. diplomat will get a message, quietly, but repeatedly at the anti-corruption summit. "He will hear the world identifies the U.S. as the biggest non-cooperative jurisdiction," said Cobham. Analysts say Washington and London are taking the need for anti-corruption reforms seriously. [LINK](#)

## STATE Department

**NYT (Myers): Released Emails Show Use Of Unclassified Systems Was Routine.** A review of the 30,322 emails from Mrs. Clinton's private server that the State Department has made public under the Freedom of Information Act provides an extensive record of how such sensitive information often looped throughout President Obama's foreign policy apparatus on unclassified systems, from embassies to the United Nations to the White House. [LINK](#)

**WP: U.S. Will Not Seek Death Penalty For Accused Ringleader In Benghazi Attacks.** The Justice Department announced Tuesday that it will not seek the death penalty against Ahmed Abu Khattala, 54, a U.S.-designated terrorist whom prosecutors accuse of leading the 2012 attacks in Benghazi, Libya, that killed four Americans. The announcement, contained in a notice to the federal trial court in Washington, clears the way for a major terrorism trial in the nation's capital, the first in the United States since 2015, barring a plea agreement by Abu Khattala. [LINK](#)

**WP: Clinton Aide Cheryl Mills Leaves FBI Interview Briefly After Being Asked About Emails.** Near the beginning of a recent interview, an FBI investigator broached a topic with longtime Hillary Clinton aide Cheryl Mills that her lawyer and the Justice Department had agreed would be off limits, according to several people familiar with the matter. Mills and her lawyer left the room — though both returned a short time later — and prosecutors were somewhat taken aback that their FBI colleague had ventured beyond what was anticipated, the people said. [LINK](#)

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

RELEASE IN PART  
B5, B6

**Fischer, Kyle G**

**From:** Rhodes, Benjamin J. <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 03, 2013 8:44 AM  
**To:** Harf, Marie E; Meehan, Bernadette; Psaki, Jennifer R  
**Cc:** Tiantawach, Y Dew  
**Subject:** RE: Iran issues for today's DPB

B6

We can discuss [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

-----Original Message-----

**From:** Harf, Marie E [mailto:HarfME@state.gov]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 03, 2013 7:51 AM  
**To:** Rhodes, Benjamin J.; Meehan, Bernadette; Psaki, Jennifer R  
**Cc:** Tiantawach, Y Dew  
**Subject:** Iran issues for today's DPB

B5

Hi guys --

Couple things I wanted to flag. [REDACTED] just wanted to put them on your radar.

B5

[REDACTED]

B5

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

B5

[REDACTED]

B5

**Fischer, Kyle G**

**From:** Rosen, James [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 10, 2016 6:12 AM  
**To:** Harf, Marie E  
**Subject:** Re: The Oman talks began in 2011

**RELEASE IN PART B6**

B6

Thanks for this. The really pivotal exchange was mine with Toria. And with Psaki, she did finally allude to the need for "privacy" as the reason for the deception by Toria (you can now see the exchange with Jen again, as DOS has reinserted it back into the video page on the DOS website, doing away with the white-flash edit).

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 James Rosen  
 Chief Washington Correspondent  
 Host, "The Foxhole"  
 Twitter: @JamesRosenFNC

[REDACTED] (office)

[REDACTED] (mobile)

B6

[REDACTED]  
 Author, *Cheney One on One*

On May 9, 2016, at 6:14 PM, Harf, Marie E <[HarfME@state.gov](mailto:HarfME@state.gov)> wrote:

As Jen said on the record in this exchange from the Nov 23, 2013 daily press briefing - not only eight months earlier as you said in your earlier note. And by the time of that exchange with Jen that you had, everything about the secret channel was out...

QUESTION: The Boston Globe was reporting today that then-Senator Kerry was a part of the talks in Oman, so I wanted to know if you do have any general comment on that. And also, given the time in advance of the P5+1 talks that occurred, does that give any indication of how complicated and challenging this next round of talks is going to be, given that there was so much of a preamble before the P5+1 talks started?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Well, let me just give you - I know there have been a range of reports over the last couple of days, so let me just give you a quick overview, for those who are interested. So Secretary Kerry, when he was Senator and Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, did travel to Oman in coordination with the White House and with the Administration to meet with the Sultan and explore whether Oman could be a channel for engaging with the Iranians.

There - we have long had many channels to communicate bilaterally with the Iranians, including exchanges of high-level letters, bilateral discussions on the margins of the P5+1, passing messages through the Swiss protecting power in Tehran, passing messages through the UN missions in New York. And the Omanis, as many of you may remember, helped facilitate the release of hikers - of the hikers, as well, several years ago. So that was a trip he took when he was Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee.

There also have been, through that same line of communication, meetings in Oman - I know they've been reported - that - with the Iranians to discuss whether there was a channel for

moving forward. These have been closely coordinated or we've briefed our P5+1 partners on those. We've consistently told P5+1 partners and our Israeli friends that if things developed substantively we'd – of course, it would be fed into the overall process, which is exactly what happened. So that's just a quick overview, but certainly I can confirm the Secretary's trip there when he was – to Oman when he was a senator, and the importance of that as a channel leading up.

But one last thing and then I'll go to you, Chris. Obviously, the election, as we predicted last spring – the election of President Rouhani, the new administration, the exchange of letters with the President, the openness to pursuing a channel moving forward was when things really picked up, and that's really what led, through the P5+1 process, to the agreement this weekend.

QUESTION: What was the timeline for this when you said that the Secretary was in the Senate?

MS. PSAKI: He went to Oman in December of 2011.

QUESTION: Thank you.

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**Fischer, Kyle G**

**From:** Harf, Marie E  
**Sent:** Friday, May 13, 2016 6:13 PM  
**To:** Kirby, John  
**Subject:** Re: Post Briefing Clip - WP - State Department's Kirby: 'very concerned' about missing video of Iran question from Fox News

**RELEASE IN PART B6**

So bizarre.

---

**From:** Kirby, John  
**Sent:** Friday, May 13, 2016 6:11 PM  
**To:** Harf, Marie E  
**Subject:** RE: Post Briefing Clip - WP - State Department's Kirby: 'very concerned' about missing video of Iran question from Fox News

Not really. Very strange.

---

**From:** Harf, Marie E  
**Sent:** Friday, May 13, 2016 6:10 PM  
**To:** Kirby, John  
**Subject:** Fw: Post Briefing Clip - WP - State Department's Kirby: 'very concerned' about missing video of Iran question from Fox News

Did you get any more clarity on what happened here?

---

**From:** PA Press Clips <PAPressMediaMonitors@state.gov>  
**Sent:** Friday, May 13, 2016 6:04 PM  
**To:** PA Monitoring Group  
**Subject:** Post Briefing Clip - WP - State Department's Kirby: 'very concerned' about missing video of Iran question from Fox News

State Department's Kirby: 'very concerned' about missing video of Iran question from Fox News

Washington Post

By Erik Wemple

Friday, May 13 at 5:06 PM EDT

High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini and Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif at a news conference in Vienna in 2015. (Herbert Neubauer/European Pressphoto Agency)

State Department spokesman John Kirby today said that he was "very concerned" about the disappearance of video from a December 2013 briefing in which Fox News reporter James Rosen pressed then-spokeswoman Jen Psaki about the administration's messaging regarding negotiations with Iran. About eight minutes of discussion, Rosen reported, mysteriously disappeared from the State Department's site and from the agency's YouTube page. In its place was a simple white flash.

"I say this as not just a spokesman for the department, but as the assistant secretary of state for public affairs — that I'm very concerned by this. And I have every intention of making sure that we look into it thoroughly and try to get answers as best we can about what happened here," said Kirby.

The vanished video has a complicated provenance. The short story: Rosen in February 2013 asked then-spokeswoman Victoria Nuland whether the United States was carrying on bilateral discussions with Iran and was told no. Ten months later, after it became clear that such discussions had indeed taken place, he asked Psaki this question:

**QUESTION:** Is it the policy of the State Department, where the preservation or the secrecy of secret negotiations is concerned, to lie in order to achieve that goal?

**MS. PSAKI:** James, I think there are times where diplomacy needs privacy in order to progress. This is a good example of that. Obviously, we have made clear and laid out a number of details in recent weeks about discussions and about a bilateral channel that fed into the P5+1 negotiations, and we've answered questions on it, we've confirmed details. We're happy to continue to do that, but clearly, this was an important component leading up to the agreement that was reached a week ago.

That exchange disappeared from the above-mentioned sites. Fox News discovered the unexplained gap this week, after a New York Times Magazine profile of deputy national security adviser for strategic communication Ben Rhodes accused the Obama administration of misleading the public about when the nuclear negotiations with Iran began.

In answering questions about the gap, Kirby did not use the word "glitch," an explanation trotted out this week by his colleague, Elizabeth Trudeau. "There was a glitch in the State Department video," said Trudeau at Tuesday's briefing. Matt Lee, AP's diplomatic correspondent, today asked Kirby if he knew whether someone intentionally created the gap because of the "content" in it. "I don't have enough information right now to say one way or the other. And I'm not — and I don't want to get ahead of the process," Kirby responded. State has noted that the full transcript of the session has stayed intact over the years.

A producer for Fox News came across the omission. He was working at the direction of Rosen, who told him, "I want you to get these two briefings — one where they lied to me, and one later on when I confronted them about it," Rosen said Wednesday on Fox News's afternoon program "The Five."

**Harry Edwards • Press Officer • U.S. Department of State**

2201 C St, NW Rm 2109, Washington, DC 20520 | ☎:BB:

<mailto:edwardshq2@state.gov> (OPENNET)

B6

**Fischer, Kyle G**

**From:** Rosen, James [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, May 09, 2016 6:59 PM  
**To:** Harf, Marie E  
**Subject:** RE: Heard you're working on a story

B6

M., This is probably better addressed in person. So what works for you? [REDACTED]

-----  
James Rosen  
Chief Washington Correspondent  
Host, "The Foxhole"  
Twitter: @JamesRosenFNC

[REDACTED] (office)

[REDACTED] (mobile)

B6

Author, Cheney One on One

-----Original Message-----

**From:** Harf, Marie E [<http://redirect.state.sbu/?url=mailto:HarfME@state.gov>]  
**Sent:** Monday, May 09, 2016 6:40 PM  
**To:** Rosen, James  
**Subject:** Re: Heard you're working on a story

[REDACTED] You know that.  
My job isn't dealing with reporters' stories any more, except in a limited way on Iran, and I am very careful to not get in the way of Kirby doing his job. It's not like you've reached out a bunch and I rebuffed you. I'd always be happy to hear from you. Also, I will say that the last interactions we had on stories were different - for some reason, it seemed that you had stopped believing anything I told you. It's like something had changed - not taking anything I said seriously - and then I hear that you're refusing to use quotes given to you by my colleagues at Treasury on Iran-related issues, and I can figure out what's going on. Any insight here? [REDACTED]

B6

B6

Original Message

**From:** Rosen, James  
**Sent:** Monday, May 9, 2016 6:30 PM  
**To:** Harf, Marie E  
**Subject:** RE: Heard you're working on a story

Right. [REDACTED]

B6

-----  
James Rosen  
Chief Washington Correspondent

Host, "The Foxhole"

Twitter: @JamesRosenFNC

(office)

(mobile)

Author, Cheney One on One

B6

-----Original Message-----

From: Harf, Marie E [http://redirect.state.sbu/?url=https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=http-3A\_\_redirect.state.sbu\_-3Furl-3Dmailto-3AHarfME-40state.gov&d=DQIFAw&c=cnx1hdOQtepEQkpermZGwQ&r=IFlkgh19RhBsrSW9Y4oTWpvYcEn7q5gQ6dk-3HG\_1iU&m=dc9hUpJv6n\_eF\_c3-ZCsgip4djQ7SKzyeZy61f1JMeE&s=ckohwJpitmIM2G9WrZnGB7pyw9kjsvJBkEol3vn-a\_8&e= ]

Sent: Monday, May 09, 2016 6:15 PM

To: Rosen, James

Subject: Re: Heard you're working on a story

You only hear from me on iran! I can't speak for anyone else at state, of course. But when you're working on Iran and asking about things I was a part of, I reach out, yeah

Original Message

From: Rosen, James

Sent: Monday, May 9, 2016 6:12 PM

To: Harf, Marie E

Subject: RE: Heard you're working on a story

PS - I love how I only hear from you when you or others at DOS are unhappy with my reporting.

James Rosen

Chief Washington Correspondent

Host, "The Foxhole"

Twitter: @JamesRosenFNC

(office)

(mobile)

Author, Cheney One on One

-----Original Message-----

From: Harf, Marie E [http://redirect.state.sbu/?url=https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=http-3A\_\_redirect.state.sbu\_-3Furl-3Dhttp-3A\_\_redirect.state.sbu\_-3Furl-3Dmailto-3AHarfME-40state.gov&d=DQIFAw&c=cnx1hdOQtepEQkpermZGwQ&r=IFlkgh19RhBsrSW9Y4oTWpvYcEn7q5gQ6dk-3HG\_1iU&m=dc9hUpJv6n\_eF\_c3-ZCsgip4djQ7SKzyeZy61f1JMeE&s=v58Wpn4VAN\_Y2Pv2E-003e\_gvYR42cnfQGJ47\_ULkv8&e= ]

Sent: Monday, May 09, 2016 6:04 PM

To: Rosen, James

Subject: Heard you're working on a story

Happy to refresh your memory on timeline of when we said what about the Iran talks. By the end of 2013 we had been upfront about all of the history, going back to jk's work with Oman on setting the secret channel up when he was in the Senate. All that history has been well-documented about when the talks started and why they eventually succeeded

I'm on cell

B6

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**Fischer, Kyle G**

**From:** Werberg, Samuel  
**Sent:** Monday, May 09, 2016 5:31 PM  
**To:** Beechem, Stephanie; Hickey, Lauren A; Harf, Marie E; Kirby, John; Toner, Mark C; Trudeau, Elizabeth K  
**Subject:** Re: Urgent

**RELEASE IN PART  
B5, B6**This was before my time, [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

B5

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**From:** Beechem, Stephanie  
**Sent:** Monday, May 9, 2016 5:28 PM  
**To:** Hickey, Lauren A; Harf, Marie E; Kirby, John; Toner, Mark C; Trudeau, Elizabeth K; Werberg, Samuel  
**Subject:** RE: Urgent

Adding Sam here – he says he hasn't heard of it

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

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**From:** Hickey, Lauren A  
**Sent:** Monday, May 09, 2016 5:27 PM  
**To:** Harf, Marie E; Kirby, John; Toner, Mark C; Trudeau, Elizabeth K  
**Cc:** Beechem, Stephanie  
**Subject:** FW: Urgent

Marie – Any insight here? [REDACTED]

B5

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

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**From:** Rosen, James [mailto:[REDACTED]]  
**Sent:** Monday, May 09, 2016 5:21 PM  
**To:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K; Kirby, John  
**Cc:** Toner, Mark C; Beechem, Stephanie; Hickey, Lauren A  
**Subject:** RE: Urgent

B6

At the 12/2/13 briefing, I confronted Jen Psaki with the false statement made to me by Tonia Nuland at the 2/6/13 briefing. That earlier exchange went like this:

**ROSEN:** There have been reports that intermittently, and outside of the formal P-5+1 mechanisms the Obama Administration, or members of it, have conducted direct, secret, bilateral talks with Iran. Is that true or false?

**NULAND:** We have made clear, as the Vice President did at Munich, that in the context of the larger P-5+1 framework, we would be prepared to talk to Iran bilaterally. *But with regard to the kind of thing that you're talking about on a government-to-government level, no.*

Of course, the secret Iran talks had begun eight months before that exchange.

The transcript for the 12/2/13 briefing is below, with the yellow part signifying the part that has been edited out of DOS's video of the briefing on its website and YT channel.

We want to know why and when DOS inserted a white-flash into the 12/2/13 video to censor the part where I asked Jen Psaki about Toria Nuland's false statement on the Iran talks (and Psaki in essence said the administration needed "privacy").

All of this is obviously relevant in light of the NYTM questions about whether Rhodes/DOS et al misled the people, and the press, about the origins and timing of the Iran talks.

If we don't hear back by 5:45p – we just discovered this act of censorship – we are going to report it as such in our 6p show.

-----  
James Rosen  
Chief Washington Correspondent  
Host, "The Foxhole"  
Twitter: @JamesRosenFNC

[redacted] (office)  
[redacted] (mobile)

B6

Author, Cheney One on One

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**From:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K [<http://redirect.state.sbu/?url=mailto:trudeauek@state.gov>]  
**Sent:** Monday, May 09, 2016 5:13 PM  
**To:** Rosen, James; Kirby, John  
**Cc:** Toner, Mark C; Beechem, Stephanie; Hickey, Lauren A  
**Subject:** RE: Urgent

James, I am solo in town today – Kirby and Toner on road. Adding Beechem and Hickey on this.  
Not sure I understand Q.

---

**From:** Rosen, James [[http://redirect.state.sbu/?url=mailto:\[redacted\]](http://redirect.state.sbu/?url=mailto:[redacted])]  
**Sent:** Monday, May 09, 2016 5:10 PM  
**To:** Kirby, John  
**Cc:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K; Toner, Mark C  
**Subject:** Urgent

Need a call from one of you in the next thirty minutes or so. We are going to go to air with the information below, in the context of the whole Ben Rhodes controversy, at 6p, and we'd like to give DOS a chance to clear it up. My contact info is below. The relevant info is also below, courtesy of one of our video librarians in the Fox News Washington bureau. The basic question is why – and when – DOS censored its video of the

highlighted portion of the 12/2/13 briefing (26:58 into the clip) with a white flash, on both the DOS web page and the DOS YT channel. Yours cordially, James

-----  
James Rosen  
Chief Washington Correspondent  
Host, "The Foxhole"  
Twitter: @JamesRosenFNC

[redacted] (office)  
[redacted] (mobile)  
[redacted]

Author, *Cheney One on One*

B6

Highlighted below. The video posted online here

(<http://redirect.state.sbu/?url=http://redirect.state.sbu/?url=http://redirect.state.sbu/?url=http://video.state.gov/en/video/2886914568001>) ends with Psaki responding to Roz's question saying "....and so that has not changed that." White flash on screen at 26:58 and then it picks up with Roz talking again.

#### TRANSCRIPT:

1:54 p.m. EST

MS. PSAKI: Hi, everyone. Happy --

QUESTION: Happy belated birthday.

MS. PSAKI: Thank you. Thank you very much. Twenty-two. It's glorious. (Laughter.)

QUESTION: And you will be 22 for the next --

MS. PSAKI: I will be.

QUESTION: What, 10, 15 years?

MS. PSAKI: At least, at least. Well, I have nothing at the top, so Matt, let's go to what's on your mind.

QUESTION: Let's see. I have a lot --

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

QUESTION: -- but nothing is really worth starting with, so let's just start with the Secretary's trip.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

QUESTION: Both -- excluding the middle stop in Moldova, at the beginning, how much of the NAC do you expect is going to be concentrated on Afghanistan and then talking about the BSA? Will there be any Afghan officials there to talk with? And then -- well, that'll be that one question for --

MS. PSAKI: Okay. Well, we'll clearly, as we typically do, be doing a briefing en route about the trip and about our visit to the NATO Ministerial tomorrow, where we will venture to have more specific details about who will be attending. Obviously, Afghanistan and the ongoing presence there post-2014 of the United States and of NATO will certainly be a big topic of discussion. But I will let our briefers outline more specifics en route to Brussels.

QUESTION: All right. Well, I was going to ask about the Middle East but -- as well, the stop in Israel and the PA. But if you're just -- are you going to give me the same answer, wait for the briefing on the plane?

MS. PSAKI: I likely will, yes.

QUESTION: Okay. Well, then never mind.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

QUESTION: And then quickly on Afghanistan --

MS. PSAKI: Sure, Lesley.

QUESTION: Is -- what further is happening as far as trying to resolve this issue with Afghanistan?

MS. PSAKI: Well --

QUESTION: As far as -- is it true that --

MS. PSAKI: The BSA.

QUESTION: The -- exactly.

MS. PSAKI: The signing, I assume.

**QUESTION:** Is it true that Special Envoy Dobbins has gone – is on his way to Afghanistan?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have any announcements at this point on travel for him or anyone else. Obviously, our team on the ground, Ambassador Cunningham and others, have been in close contact. At this point, we've made our position clear, and so have the Afghan people. Signing the BSA soon is the path forward, as we've said many times, to sustaining a partnership between the United States and Afghanistan to support Afghans in achieving lasting peace, security, and development. That's the message that we're conveying at every level. And as we've said before but important to reiterate here, given it's a week later now: We – deferring the signature of the agreement until after next year's election is not viable. It would not provide Afghans with the certainty that they deserve regarding their future in the critical months leading to the elections, nor would it provide the United States and NATO allies the clarity necessary for a potential post-2014 military presence.

So we're continuing to convey that. Our team on the ground is certainly hard at work. I don't have any travel announcements. If that changes, we'll certainly let all of you know.

**QUESTION:** Has Secretary spoken to President Karzai in the last couple of days on BSA?

**MS. PSAKI:** He has not spoken with him in the last couple of days.

**QUESTION:** And the Pentagon today said that this is not the end of it; after BSA is signed, the U.S. and Afghanistan have to negotiate and sign their agreement called SOFA, and that would be done by the State Department. Has any process started on SOFA, signing of SOFA with Afghanistan?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'd have to look more specifically at what they said. Maybe you're referring to the NATO SOFA that they may have to negotiate and sign, I believe, as a step? But for our purposes, there's the signing; it goes through parliament, then it would have to be signed again. Obviously, as you all are very familiar with, this doesn't outline a specific number for a troop presence, so there would be a great deal of planning in regards to that that DOD would certainly be very engaged with. But in terms of that, I'd have to look at specifically what they said. I'm not familiar with that --

**QUESTION:** Is December 21<sup>st</sup> the redline, the deadline for signing of BSA, after which you will begin preparing for all troops pull out from Afghanistan post 2014.

**MS. PSAKI:** I am not going to get into new redlines or deadlines today, I will say. But on the trip question, well, as you all know, a decision hasn't been made. You would know if it had been. It's not our preference, but no troops is certainly a potential outcome for Afghanistan if there is no BSA. So that is, again, not our preference, but natural that planning would have to take place for all different options.

**QUESTION:** Have you tried to understand why President Karzai is doing what he's doing or conducting himself the way he has? Do you have a clearer picture than we do, for instance?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't know that I have any further insight than you do. Obviously, the Secretary spoke with him last week, as you all well know. We continue to press our case for why this should be signed as quickly as possible, but I don't have any analysis of particular actions or comments in Afghanistan.

**QUESTION:** So you think that he's perhaps more concerned about his personal safety post the elections?

**MS. PSAKI:** I will let you, Said, do your own analysis. I don't have any other analysis on it.

Do we have any more on Afghanistan?

**QUESTION:** Just the trip?

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

**QUESTION:** For those of us who are interested in Moldova --

**MS. PSAKI:** Yes.

**QUESTION:** -- could you just tell us why stop in Moldova? What's the importance? We see the winery, et cetera.

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure. Moldova is a country that has taken a number of important reform steps in recent years. They have -- they're taking steps to help grow their economy, and wine is obviously a significant export. But they have a number of exports they also work with. And given the steps they've taken, the Secretary felt it would be an important opportunity to pay a visit. You'd have to check my history and facts here, but I believe he may be, if not the first, one of the first Secretaries to pay a bilateral visit to Moldova.

**QUESTION:** And also it comes, obviously, right after Ukraine decided not to sign the agreement with the EU.

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

**QUESTION:** Moldova did. So you could read into this that the Secretary wants to buck them up or give them something, a sign of support.

MS. PSAKI: Well, we had planned this trip – this trip was in the works before that decision was made. But certainly, they have put a number of reforms in place and they're working hard on their economy and the – if – the Secretary felt it was important to highlight that.

QUESTION: Following on that --

QUESTION: Okay. Can I go over just to Afghanistan for one very briefly?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Okay, and then we'll go to Anne.

QUESTION: I was gone last week so I'm – most of last week, so what – did the Secretary speak with Karzai before or after Ambassador Rice was there?

MS. PSAKI: Let's see. He spoke with Karzai – President Karzai – I'd have to look back. I believe it was prior to her visit. Let me double check that for you to make sure.

QUESTION: So the last senior official to speak with Karzai, as far as you know, was Ambassador Rice.

MS. PSAKI: I believe that's correct, yes.

QUESTION: Just following on the Moldova for Ukraine substitution, in saying that Secretary Kerry would not, as had been widely expected, attend the OSCE – when you said that, I don't know, about 10 days ago or so --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- we were just at the very beginning of this whole episode.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: And at that point you said it was scheduling issues that had – it would force his cancellation. Are you sticking with that? Is that still the case? Or might there be some policy implications to his decision not to go to the OSCE?

MS. PSAKI: I am sticking with that. I'm just looking at Lesley here in my – corner of my eye. I am sticking with that. I don't have any new guidance for you on that front. Assistant Secretary Nuland is still planning to attend and travel there after joining us for the first part of the visit.

QUESTION: On Syria?

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Is it --

QUESTION: Can you tell us the – oh, sorry.

QUESTION: Sorry. Just on this charade – charade, for Lesley – of scheduling reasons, is it not the case that not doing – not going on this trip – not going to Kyiv is a sign of displeasure?

MS. PSAKI: I will let you do your own reporting, Matt. I don't have any more analysis or comments on it from here.

QUESTION: But there was --

QUESTION: And one more quick one on Ukraine.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Obviously, we're seeing the demonstrations, violent crackdown.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: What's the response from the State Department?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we're of course, naturally, closely monitoring the ongoing demonstrations, not only in Kyiv but in cities around Ukraine. As you know, since the demonstrations began on November 21<sup>st</sup>, there have been an increasing number of violent incidents, including against journalists. We stress there is no room, and we continue to stress there is no room for violence in a country that aspires to a democratic future. We continue to call on all sides to maintain calm, and on Ukrainian authorities to ensure that members of the public and the press are able to safely and peacefully exercise their rights of speech and assembly.

As I mentioned a little bit before, we still have – Assistant Secretary Nuland is still planning to travel there. The Ukrainian foreign ministry announced that the ministerial is proceeding as planned.

QUESTION: But there was --

QUESTION: Are you sure that Ukraine is a country that aspires to a democratic future?

MS. PSAKI: Any country that may aspire, certainly, these are important values to follow through on.

QUESTION: Right. But are you still convinced that Ukraine aspires to a westward-looking, democratic future?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we will see, Matt. Time will tell. Actions speak louder than words.

QUESTION: Do you – does this --

QUESTION: Do you still stand by the comments made by Ambassador Nuland in her speech to the Atlantic Council a couple of weeks ago and also comments from this podium that it is your belief that Ukraine should be following the path towards joining some kind of association agreement with the EU?

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure. Our view has not changed on that. Obviously, there have been a lot of events that have happened since then, but --

**QUESTION:** And do you believe that the demonstrations on the streets are actually -- that's what they want? I mean, it seems to be that they're demonstrating because they're angry that the government hasn't taken this path that's been laid out for them.

**MS. PSAKI:** I would point you to the comments of the demonstrators, of which there have been many. I don't want to speak on their behalf, but our position hasn't changed on what steps they could take. Obviously, it's up to Ukraine to take those steps.

**QUESTION:** So -- but, I mean, the United States is -- if you don't want to give your backing to them -- at least sympathetic to what the demonstrators are asking for.

**MS. PSAKI:** Again, the demonstrators are saying a range of things, so I don't -- beyond what we've stated publicly many times, I don't have any other further public statements on our position, which has been stated by Assistant Secretary Nuland and by other officials in the past several weeks.

**QUESTION:** Given the estimates of some 300,000 people who were demonstrating across the country on Sunday, and given that they all seem, to a person, to be saying that the government is ignoring their wish to be more closely aligned with Europe, isn't it a bit disingenuous for this building to suggest that they need to show any restraint? They're not the ones who are bludgeoning people with battering rams and turning rubber bullets on the police. It seems they're taking the brunt of everything that's been happening.

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't think I took sides. I think I said that it's important for all sides to maintain calm, that there's no place for violence in a country that aspires to a democratic future. So I don't -- I would disagree with the premise of your claims.

**QUESTION:** What does this building think of the prime minister's -- call for his security forces to show restraint and seemingly to be missing in action when on Sunday there was more violence heaped upon the demonstrators, particularly in Kyiv?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I think I just expressed what our view is of violence against demonstrators, so that's what our view is.

**QUESTION:** Can I -- has the Secretary spoken to somebody in Ukraine, his counterpart?

**MS. PSAKI:** He has not in the last several days. I can check if there's been any other calls I'm not aware of.

**QUESTION:** Because one of the big issues for Ukraine is tearing itself away from Russia and looking towards Western Europe for economic support. And one of the big things is that the president of Ukraine is heading to China to look for that. And if -- I was wondering if the U.S. had offered them kind of -- some kind of assurance or reassurance economically that they could be better off by signing these deals and with the support -- and the U.S. would support any kind of reform through the International Monetary Fund.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, aside from public statements we've made, which, as Jo referenced, is -- that our belief is that European integration is the surest course to economic growth and strengthening Ukraine's democracy. That's still our belief. That's been consistently our belief. But beyond that, I'm not aware of any other discussions. Obviously, there's a lot of -- that's going on with the EU and with Russia, and beyond that we have made our position clear.

**QUESTION:** And what is the building's position on the detention of Yulia Tymoshenko?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we have consistently spoken about this in the past and expressed our concern about her detention. I know this was also a component that was potentially being worked through as an element of Ukraine getting into the EU. So we've consistently expressed concern, encouraged them to take steps forward. Obviously, there hasn't been progress on that on the ground.

**QUESTION:** I'm sorry, what did you say was the surest way to economic growth?

**MS. PSAKI:** I said European integration is the surest course to economic growth and strengthening --

**QUESTION:** Did you give the same advice to the Greeks?

(Laughter.)

**MS. PSAKI:** Matt. Behave.

Do we have any more on Ukraine or Afghanistan, since we touched on that too?

**QUESTION:** Still on Ukraine.

**MS. PSAKI:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** The Russians have proposed that the EU, Ukraine, and Russia get together to discuss some of these problems. Would the United States be in favor of that, some kind of a trilateral discussion to discuss the economic situation and political differences?

**MS. PSAKI:** It wouldn't involve the United States, so I don't have a particular position. I'm happy to talk to our team and see if we have a view on that.

Ukraine or Afghanistan? Okay, should we move on to Syria? Let's go to Margaret.

**QUESTION:** Thank you. Jen, the OPCW said over the past few days that the U.S. has stepped up, that they're going to give operational support, offering up financing. Can you give us some more detail on that?

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm. Well, I don't know if it will be satisfying, but let me try. (Laughter.) Well, as you know, the United States is committed to supporting the international community's efforts to destroy Syria's chemical weapons in the safest, most efficient and effective means possible. We have offered and are currently outfitting a U.S. vessel with field-deployable hydrolysis system technology to support the OPCW's efforts. We are in close contact with the OPCW and our international partners and remain confident that we can meet the milestones for destruction set out by the OPCW. Of course, the OPCW remains – and the UN – remain the lead coordinators on reaching out to countries and coordinating steps forward and any timeline, et cetera.

**QUESTION:** But on the financing, what is it exactly that we're offering? Is that a chunk of change? Is that financing and loans, or --

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we've offered – we've offered in the – prior to this, we have offered – we have given 6 million to the OPCW and the UN Trust Fund, both in financial contributions and in kind, so I think we gave some materials as well. But this, of course, would be a DOD vessel. So I would point you to them on the specific costs. This, at this point, is an offer. So I think that's still being worked through.

**QUESTION:** So – but beyond the vessel, the OPCW says the cost is going to be between 35 to 40 million euros for the private contractors who would actually be --

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

**QUESTION:** -- be doing the disposal themselves. So is any of that money coming through the State Department, or is the State Department topped out at \$6 million?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we've said we'd be open to exploring additional ways to provide assistance. I don't have any announcements today of additional assistance we're planning to provide, but that certainly is something we're in discussions with the OPCW about.

**QUESTION:** So we can understand correctly, it is a commercial vessel, correct, that they are trying --

**MS. PSAKI:** It is a --

**QUESTION:** -- (inaudible) --

**MS. PSAKI:** -- U.S. Government vessel, not a commercial vessel.

**QUESTION:** Right.

**MS. PSAKI:** But there is a part of this – and this may be what you're asking about – which is the OPCW reaching out to commercial companies about the destruction capabilities.

**QUESTION:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** So what – so DOD is outfitting its own boat, which will be staffed with DOD personnel who will do this?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'd have to check on the specifics of that. I think some of it may still be work – be going through the process of being worked out, Matt, because they've offered – but obviously, how it would be staffed and the materials and the money – I mean, all of those are pieces that are still being discussed.

**QUESTION:** Do you actually have a timeline and the location for where this would happen?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have a location. That's still being discussed. The timeline, as you know, is – the next deadline is – not deadline, it's a target – is December 31<sup>st</sup>. And that is to get all of the chemical weapons out. But in terms of when the next step would be, I don't have a timeline of that.

Anne.

**QUESTION:** I realize part of this is kind of DOD-flavored, but you might know the answer.

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

**QUESTION:** So is it proper to call this a warship, or is it a military-owned, but not non-warship ship?

(Laughter.)

**MS. PSAKI:** That is a very specific ship question. I would hesitate to answer incorrectly. I'd have to check on specifically how we categorize it. I don't believe it is a warship, but let me see if we can get more specification on how we – what we call it exactly.

**QUESTION:** Okay. And on the policy side, I mean, is there any disappointment here that after casting about to – for a friend here, it ends up being the U.S. having to essentially do this on its own?

**MS. PSAKI:** I wouldn't categorize it that way. I mean, certainly this is a priority for the U.S., as it is for the international community, to destroy and eliminate the chemical weapons. The OPCW is still talking to countries. There are countries that have made public comments about their willingness to help, so we'll see how that all shakes out. And certainly, we'd welcome the support or contribution of other countries.

**QUESTION:** Well, I'd imagine from your perspective, it should be a shared priority among many nations who would also share the same goal of the ultimate destruction, right? I mean, everybody was waving a flag when that – when the thing was signed.

**MS. PSAKI:** Certainly, and there are countries, as you know, throughout that have been open to contributing that couldn't for a variety of reasons, whether it's regulations or capacity or resources. But they're still talking to countries about contributing and being a part of this, and certainly we're hopeful of that as well.

**QUESTION:** So if the question is: "Are you surprised that you've been left holding the bag on this, once again," --

**MS. PSAKI:** We're not holding the bag yet, Matt.

**QUESTION:** -- the answer would be no, you're not surprised. You expected your friends in Europe to wimp out.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we made clear we were open to contributing from the beginning, Matt. There are other countries that have expressed an openness to contributing in some capacity. They're all going to make their decisions about what that will – what will – that will entail, and we'll let the OPCW decide how all of it will work together.

**QUESTION:** What about Russia, who you made this deal with and has been instrumental, as you say, in helping move this towards a resolution? Why can't Russia contribute in a significant way like you can?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not familiar with what they have contributed or what they've committed to contribute or what they have not. Obviously, there are financial ways – there are a number of ways to contribute. We certainly welcome any country's contribution. There are different ways that each country can do that.

**QUESTION:** Are you in touch with the Russians specifically about making an – a contribution?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not sure. I'd have to check on that and see if it's a discussion that's been a part of the regular discussions with Foreign Minister Lavrov.

**QUESTION:** Jen, still on Syria.

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

**QUESTION:** Yesterday, Mike Rogers, the chair of the Intelligence Committee, warned that there are many jihadis that are Americans and Europeans and Westerners and so on, that they go back and forth and so on. Are you concerned about these jihadis being trained in Syria and now they come back to the United States and perhaps organize terrorist acts?

**MS. PSAKI:** I haven't seen his comments specifically. I know – I believe he may have been on a Sunday show yesterday. I haven't read them fully. We've – we're naturally concerned, as you know, about extremists whether they're going in and certainly and if they're coming out. I talked a little bit, I think it was a week or two ago, about ways that we coordinate with our international partners in the region to kind of track this and efforts we undertake to make sure we're watching, but of course we're concerned. I don't have any other specifics for you.

**QUESTION:** Are you pressing your partners in this case, like the Saudis and the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, that have been supplying arms and money in the past for these extremist groups – are you pressing them not to do so?

**MS. PSAKI:** We have consistently, and all the countries, as you know, have agreed repeatedly to contribute assistance through the SMC.

**QUESTION:** Finally, yesterday there was a report in the *Telegraph*, *The London Telegraph*, that says basically the Free Syrian Army now is becoming a group of warlords and accumulating money and gangs and so on and have no interest, really, in reaching a settlement. Is that your assessment, or are you still working very closely with General Idris?

**MS. PSAKI:** We are still working very closely with General Idris, we're still working towards a Geneva conference in January, and we still believe there's no military solution, as you know.

More on Syria?

**QUESTION:** Still on Syria.

**MS. PSAKI:** Or – go ahead, Roz.

**QUESTION:** Still on Syria, the Iranian Foreign Minister Zarif did an interview with Al Jazeera this morning. And when it came to Geneva II, he said that while Iran is, quote: not begging to attend the talks in January, it would attend if invited. My first question: Would the U.S. be willing to invite Iran to take part in these talks? And if so, what does the U.S. believe that Iran could bring to this situation to try to end the civil war?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, no decisions have been made about participation yet. There's another trilateral meeting on December 20<sup>th</sup> coming up that we'll be participating in with the UN and the Russians. Our position hasn't changed on Iran's

participation or whether we believe they should be invited. They have not endorsed the Geneva communique. That's a condition we feel is necessary, but obviously this will continue to be discussed at the next trilateral meeting.

**QUESTION:** But given the -- that the UN is now estimating that upwards of 120-25,000 people may have been killed in the civil war to date --

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

**QUESTION:** -- is there some sort of leverage that Tehran could bring to the table to try to induce the Assad regime to, if nothing else, stop the killing and try to at least put in some sort of ceasefire?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, this goes back to the premise that attendees should be endorsing the Geneva communique, because that is what the purpose and the goal of the conference is. So, I don't have any speculation on what leverage they may or may not have, but the conversations we have had with them in recent weeks have been about their nuclear program and moving towards a first-step agreement on that. They've not been focused on Syria. And our position on whether or not they should attend the Geneva conference in January hasn't changed.

**QUESTION:** But you do feel that if they do endorse Geneva I, there's a great deal of value for Iran's participation --

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we'd have to --

**QUESTION:** -- considering that it is --

**MS. PSAKI:** We'd have to evaluate it, Said. I don't want to get ahead of --

**QUESTION:** But it's a very ally of the regime. It supports other elements that help the regime in its fight, like Hezbollah so on.

**MS. PSAKI:** If that is a step they take, we can have a robust discussion in here about it.

**QUESTION:** Jen, are there any contacts currently between the United States Government and the Syrian regime? I mean, I know Secretary Kerry spoke months and months ago --

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** -- to Foreign Minister Muallem. Is there anything going on at the moment?

**MS. PSAKI:** And we have for some time, as you know, have had different channels, but I don't have anything specific for you. I can check if there have been any recent contacts on any level.

**QUESTION:** So there were reports over the weekend that some European countries are quietly beginning to --

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

**QUESTION:** -- reopen diplomatic conversations or channels with the Syrian regime because, I think, the fear is that this is just so blocked at the moment that they're --

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

**QUESTION:** -- it's not going anywhere.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, let me see if there have been any contacts at any level of the regime. We've -- they have happened in the past, as you mentioned, so I will see if there's more to report on that.

**QUESTION:** Can I go back to the Iranians and taking part in Geneva? I mean, I think over the last week or so, when there's been, like, various bouts of violence in Syria, that the Iranian Government has said that there needs to be a political solution to the situation in Syria. So don't you think that Iran is making more positive comments? I mean, I don't think the Russians have gone far beyond saying that there needs to be a political solution. They haven't said anything about President Assad leaving (inaudible).

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, the whole premise -- I mean the whole goal is to create a transitional governing body. That's the goal of a Geneva conference. So, certainly, they haven't embraced that as the focus of the Geneva communique, and --

**QUESTION:** Well, even though the Russians have agreed to a political transition, your definition of a transition is far different from the -- than the Russians' definition of a transition. So if the Iranians were to say, like, okay, we accept a political transition, I mean, does that really mean that they --

**MS. PSAKI:** It's not just about a political transition. It's about embracing the Geneva communique, which they have not done. If they do that, we will evaluate whether or not we'd support their -- an invitation to them to attend the conference.

**QUESTION:** Zarif also told us that his country is not interested in aggravating any sectarian tensions between Shiite and Sunni, between Alawite and other major Islamic communities; that they're trying to, in their efforts, promote more harmony, more peace. Does that add any -- does that change the complexion at all, particularly in Syria?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't want to speak too specifically to an interview I haven't yet seen yet, and neither has anyone on our team. Broadly speaking, obviously we took a significant step forward with the first-step agreement on their nuclear program, but there are remaining concerns that we have, as you all are familiar with, whether it's their involvement in

support of the regime in Syria or humanitarian issues, and so that has not changed that. I can take a closer look once we see the transcript of the interview and see if we have more comments on Foreign Minister Zarif's comments.

QUESTION: You're saying your team does not watch Al Jazeera?

MS. PSAKI: Well, that is not true; we do. However, I believe there's only been a very short clip that has played of this interview that I'm sure will get lots of attention once it all plays.

QUESTION: Beyond the interview, he's freely reaching out. He visited Kuwait. He's reaching out to the other Gulf countries. He wants to visit Saudi Arabia. I mean, there is an effort underway to alleviate their fears and actually encourage them towards participating in Geneva II to make it a success. You must have some sort of a reading of this effort.

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any particular reading of it for you, Said. Our position, I think, has been pretty clear on whether or not they attend the Geneva conference.

QUESTION: I have another really quick logistics thing. On the December 20<sup>th</sup> meeting, that's Wendy Sherman and that -- it's the same iteration?

MS. PSAKI: It is that level. Exactly, yes. Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Is that new or was that announced last week or something --

MS. PSAKI: I believe we talked about it last week as being the next meeting.

QUESTION: On China -- (inaudible).

QUESTION: Please, Jen, can we stay on Iran, please?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Let's stay on Iran and then we can go to China.

QUESTION: On the 6<sup>th</sup> of February in this room, I had a very brief exchange with your predecessor, Victoria Nuland --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- about Iran. And with your indulgence, I will read it in its entirety for the purpose of the record and so you can respond to it.

*"Rosen: There have been reports that intermittently, and outside of the formal P5+1 mechanisms, the Obama Administration, or members of it, have conducted direct secret bilateral talks with Iran. Is that true or false?"*

*"Nuland: We have made clear, as the Vice President did at Munich, that in the context of the larger P5+1 framework, we would be prepared to talk to Iran bilaterally. But with regard to the kind of thing that you're talking about on a government-to-government level, no."*

That's the entirety of the exchange.

As we now know, senior state department officials had, in fact, been conducting direct, secret bilateral talks with senior officials of the Iranian Government in Oman, perhaps dating back to 2011 by that point.

So the question today is a simple one: When the briefer was asked about those talks and flatly denied them from the podium, that was untrue, correct?

MS. PSAKI: I mean, James, I -- that -- you're talking about a February briefing, so 10 months ago. I don't think we've outlined or confirmed contacts or specifics beyond a March meeting. I'm not going to confirm others beyond that at this point. So I don't know that I have any more for you.

QUESTION: Do you stand by the accuracy of what Ms. Nuland told me, that there had been no government-to-government contacts, no secret direct bilateral talks with Iran as of the date of that briefing, February 6<sup>th</sup>? Do you stand by the accuracy of that?

MS. PSAKI: James, I have no new information for you today on the timing of when there were any discussions with any Iranian officials.

QUESTION: Let me try it one last way, Jen --

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

QUESTION: -- and I appreciate your indulgence.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

QUESTION: Is it the policy of the State Department, where the preservation or the secrecy of secret negotiations is concerned, to lie in order to achieve that goal?

MS. PSAKI: James, I think there are times where diplomacy needs privacy in order to progress. This is a good example of that. Obviously, we have made clear and laid out a number of details in recent weeks about discussions and about a bilateral channel that fed into the P5+1 negotiations, and we've answered questions on it, we've confirmed details. We're happy to continue to do that, but clearly, this was an important component leading up to the agreement that was reached a week ago.

QUESTION: Since you, standing at that podium last week, did confirm that there were such talks, at least as far back as March of this year, I don't see what would prohibit you from addressing directly this question: Were there secret direct bilateral talks between the United States and Iranian officials in 2011?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything more for you today. We've long had ways to speak with the Iranians through a range of channels, some of which you talked – you mentioned, but I don't have any other specifics for you today.

QUESTION: One more on Iran?

QUESTION: *The Los Angeles Times* and *Politico* have reported that those talks were held as far back as 2011. Were those reports inaccurate?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not sure which reports you're talking about. Are you talking about visits that the Secretary and others made to Oman, or are you talking about other reports?

QUESTION: I'm talking about U.S. officials meeting directly and secretly with Iranian officials in Oman as far back as 2011. *The Los Angeles Times* and *Politico* have reported those meetings. Were those reports inaccurate?

MS. PSAKI: I have nothing more for you on it, James, today.

QUESTION: One more on Iran?

MS. PSAKI: On Iran? Let's just finish Iran and then we can go to China. Go ahead, Roz.

QUESTION: One of – one more on Iran. Foreign Minister Zarif said, directly contradicting the Obama Administration's contention that sanctions worked, he told our interviewer that when the sanctions were first imposed, Iran had 200 working centrifuges. Today, they have more than 19,000. What is this building's reaction to his comment that sanctions did not work and did not bring Iran to the negotiating table?

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, I would like to look more closely at the context of the comments. But, just as reminder, President Rouhani and others have talked about how the impact – how growing the economy and putting an end – doing – bringing an end to the sanctions is something that was a priority for them in order to help the economy and the Iranian people. There's no question, if you look just at the facts of the impact of oil revenues, the impact on their economic growth was large that there was a huge impact of – that there – the sanctions had an enormous impact, and that that was a driving factor in bringing the Iranians back to the negotiating table.

In terms of progress made on their efforts to develop a nuclear weapon, whether through centrifuges or at their various facilities, that to me sounds like a separate question. Obviously, there was concerns about steps they were taking and progress they were making, which was why it was so important to come to an acceptable agreement that would halt and roll back the progress of their program.

QUESTION: Just to follow up on that, though –

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- Secretary Kerry, when he did his round robin of interviews after the announcement of the deal in Geneva, more than once stated that when Iran had reached out to the Bush-Cheney Administration in 2003, Iran was only in possession of 164 centrifuges. Now, he would go on to say, they have 19,000, and this therefore represents the best possible deal that could be secured.

Isn't it a fact that since the Obama-Biden Administration took office, 70 percent of Iran's centrifuges have been installed?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I'd have to look at the statistics, James, but we have not questioned the fact that Iran has made progress on enrichment and on developing a nuclear weapon. We have not questioned that. That's one of the reasons why we stepped up sanctions over the past couple of years. The President and Secretary Kerry were big proponents of that. We worked with the international community to do just that to put that necessary pressure in place.

The point I was trying to make to Roz is that – what she's asking sounds to me like two separate questions, so that was –

QUESTION: Right. I'm pursuing the separate one part that she carved out, and that is to say – and if this is untrue, I'd be grateful to be disabused of the notion – but the great bulk of Iran's progress in the development of its enrichment program has taken place under President Obama's watch, correct?

MS. PSAKI: I'd have to check on the specific numbers. The --

QUESTION: You're not prepared to dispute that statement, as --

MS. PSAKI: Well, James, I think what we're focused on at this point is the fact that we're now at a point where we are halting and rolling back the progress of their program and we're working towards a comprehensive agreement to bring an end to it. I can't speculate for you what would happen without – what would have happened without sanctions. I would venture to guess --

QUESTION: (Inaudible) sanctions?

MS. PSAKI: But they were being paired together, so that's why I'm bringing it into the conversation.

QUESTION: But the context of the question was exactly: "The Obama Administration says we showed up because our economy is falling apart. I'm here to tell you that's not the case. We have our own reasons for coming."

MS. PSAKI: Well, we will take a close look at his comments and we'll have more to say about them once we do.

QUESTION: Can I just go back to the Geneva meeting and --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

QUESTION: -- December 20<sup>th</sup> with Wendy Sherman?

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: This is --

MS. PSAKI: It's that level -- in terms of specific attendance, I'll have to just double-check that for you.

QUESTION: Oh, okay.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

QUESTION: This is going to be the first of the political meetings towards the next -- the comprehensive agreement --

MS. PSAKI: Well, they also --

QUESTION: -- or this is the technical discussions?

MS. PSAKI: No, no, no.

QUESTION: No, this is Syria.

MS. PSAKI: This is -- sorry, this is Syria.

QUESTION: Oh, I'm sorry.

MS. PSAKI: This is Syria.

QUESTION: Excuse me. I'm sorry.

MS. PSAKI: So this is the pre-Geneva. No, it's okay. It's confusing. Lots of Genevas.

QUESTION: Okay. But I did have an Iran question, actually.

QUESTION: But is there any new -- I mean --

QUESTION: Yeah.

QUESTION: -- when is it that you're going to start to negotiate the comprehensive deal with Iran?

MS. PSAKI: Well, right now, what we're focused on is the technical discussions leading up to the start of the six-month --

QUESTION: Right.

QUESTION: So do you have a date for those?

MS. PSAKI: I don't yet have a date on those.

QUESTION: Or a place?

MS. PSAKI: I don't yet have a place. It's being worked through. Hopefully we'll have an update for you all in the coming days.

QUESTION: And can I ask -- I don't know if you had seen the reports that the new British envoy to Iran is actually going to visit Tehran tomorrow. I wondered what the --

MS. PSAKI: I haven't seen that.

QUESTION: Well, I wanted a U.S. reaction to this following on to the question I asked last week about how far along the line you are prepared to go with your new diplomatic relations or not with Iran.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm. I still don't have any prediction of any step beyond what step we've already taken, which is being a part of the P5+1 agreement on the first step here with Iran. Obviously, different countries are going to make their own decisions, and as with most issues, we certainly support that.

QUESTION: Would it be helpful, though? Do you believe it's helpful that the British envoy could be going to Tehran?

MS. PSAKI: I don't know that I have that level of analysis on it. I don't have all the details on what the purpose of the trip is or what they hope to accomplish. And obviously, every country will make their own decisions about diplomatic relationships.

QUESTION: Jen, one more on the --

QUESTION: East China Sea?

QUESTION: -- secret negotiations with Iran.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: I apologize if you've already addressed this, but there have been reports that the secret negotiations that the U.S. was engaging in with Iran created a feeling of resentment among P5+1 allies such as France, and then that

contributed to a rift among the P5+1 and made it difficult to reach consensus within that group. Do you have a reaction to that or a comment on that?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't want to speak to anonymous reports about what may or may not be the feelings by other countries, but I will reiterate for you that this was -- these discussions were fed into the P5+1 process. That is the process that we ultimately all worked through to achieve a first-step agreement here. The P5+1 members, as well as our friends in Israel, were briefed early this fall.

As to the discussions, we have always been clear we've been open to bilateral discussions with Iran; that there are a range of channels to do that through; that if anything got serious, that we would certainly be briefing our important partners on that; and that's exactly what we did in this case.

**QUESTION:** Jen --

**QUESTION:** And when did the talks begin?

**MS. PSAKI:** James, you're so tricky over there. (Laughter.)

**QUESTION:** Can I ask about China?

**MS. PSAKI:** Let me just say one thing, though, for James. It's important here too -- and then I promise we'll go to China -- It's important here also to note, though, that these really picked up after President Rouhani's election, that in terms of the discussion of specific pieces about how to move forward, what kind of -- what an agreement could look like, that's when it picked up. So I understand that's not answering your question, but I felt it was important to --

**QUESTION:** But just on the basis of methodology and removing the specifics of Iran and who's president or who's Secretary of State, if you were able to stand there at the podium last week and say, "Yes, I'm confirming a certain set of talks that occurred in March," explain to me what is it that prohibits you from saying, yes or no, that a certain set of talks occurred two years ago?

**MS. PSAKI:** If I have more details for you, James, I will -- happy to share them.

**QUESTION:** I didn't ask you -- I'm asking for your thinking about why you're not addressing the question, not the specifics of the meetings. What is it that prohibits you from addressing a question about meetings that are two years old?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not going to do a psychiatrist chair today.

Go ahead. On China?

**QUESTION:** What about the couch? (Laughter.)

**QUESTION:** Thank you, Jen. So as we know, the U.S. Government has already told U.S. carriers to comply with China's requirements before any flights pass through the new air defense zone established by the Chinese Government. So does that mean the U.S. Government has recognized this new air defense zone established by the Chinese Government?

**MS. PSAKI:** So let me be absolutely as clear as I can be here because I know there's been a range of reporting. It has been -- some of it has been inaccurate, to no fault of -- perhaps it's our fault for not explaining it well enough. So we are not -- the State Department is not the point of contact with airlines. The FAA is the point of contact with airlines. There has not been any information that has been put out or confirmed that I am aware of that has conveyed what has or has not been communicated in that capacity to airlines.

There is -- for safety and security of passengers, U.S. carriers operate internationally -- operate consistently as a process with the notices to airmen issued by foreign countries, as is the case in this case. Their concerns are about the safety and security of passengers. That is different from what the U.S. Government policy is. It is not -- this is in no way indicates U.S. Government acceptance of China's requirements in the newly declared ADIZ and has absolutely no bearing on the firm and consistent U.S. Government position that we do not accept the legitimacy of China's requirements.

This is a case where China announced this in an uncoordinated fashion. It's inconsistent with standard practice. And their requirements for operating exceed internationally accepted practice in this capacity. So I don't know how much more clear that it is, but it does contradict a bit your question, so I wanted --

**QUESTION:** It looks like we received the statement or the Q&A from the State Department, so it looks like it's from the U.S. Government. And also, you are saying --

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, in that statement, which I certainly was well aware of, what was conveyed in there is that for safety and -- for the safety and security of passengers, U.S. carriers operate consistently internationally with the notices to airmen issued by foreign governments. It did not convey that -- anything specific about what had been communicated to airlines. It did not convey that the U.S. Government supported this effort. So I'm very familiar with the statement you're referring to, and there were a lot of -- there were some assumptions made.

**QUESTION:** So (inaudible) --

**QUESTION:** Okay. It looks like --

**QUESTION:** -- that the FAA did not instruct airlines to comply with the Chinese regulations?

**MS. PSAKI:** I would point you to the FAA for what they did or did not communicate to commercial airlines.

**QUESTION:** Okay. Well, the FAA is part of the U.S. Government, is it not?

**MS. PSAKI:** They are. They --

**QUESTION:** Yes.

**MS. PSAKI:** Certainly, they are not housed in the State Department, however. (Laughter.)

**QUESTION:** So -- I understand that, but the State Department does have a representative -- you're familiar with the ICAO?

**MS. PSAKI:** I am not.

**QUESTION:** Okay. It's in Montreal.

**MS. PSAKI:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** It's a good excuse to get to Montreal --

**MS. PSAKI:** Good.

**QUESTION:** -- if you ever want to go up there.

**MS. PSAKI:** I will take that advice.

**QUESTION:** It's the International Civilian -- it's the civilian airline -- the UN agency for airlines. Do you know if the United States is going to use its membership in the ICAO to oppose this Chinese decision?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't.

**QUESTION:** And if you don't know, could you ask?

**MS. PSAKI:** Yeah, I'm happy to check on that for you, Matt. Absolutely.

**QUESTION:** And when you say that the U.S. Government does not accept the legitimacy of the Chinese requirements --

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, it doesn't accept -- yeah, the Chinese requirements, right.

**QUESTION:** Right. That's what you said.

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

**QUESTION:** Doesn't that -- if the FAA has been telling airlines that they have to comply with this, or that they should comply with it, how is that not accepting -- the government accepting the legitimacy?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, there's a whole field of regulations and regulatory policy that I am certainly far from an aviation expert, as it evidenced by your Montreal question. So I would point you to them on that.

Evidence of the fact that the U.S. Government does not accept China's requirement is by the fact that the announcement will not change how the United States conducts military operations in the region, which is something DOD announced last week. And that is certainly a U.S. Government decision to make.

**QUESTION:** So does that mean that U.S. Government planes will not obey the -- or will not follow the Chinese requirements if they're flying through this airspace?

**MS. PSAKI:** Military planes?

**QUESTION:** Say the Secretary of State flying on an Air Force plane to Seoul or to Tokyo will not notify the --

**MS. PSAKI:** I am not aware of any upcoming Seoul trip coming up.

**QUESTION:** Well, the Vice President is there right now, or in Tokyo, at least. Are you saying that his plane, an Air Force plane, will not follow the requirements of the Chinese?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I am saying military planes would not, and that level of specificity I'd certainly have to check and see where that falls in.

**QUESTION:** What is this episode -- what impact is this episode having on U.S.-Sino relations?

**MS. PSAKI:** There are times when we agree and there are times when we disagree, as you know. We've made clear our concerns about not only what was announced but how this was announced, the fact that there was no prior notice. As you also know, Vice President Biden is in the region now on a prior planned trip. He will, of course, be meeting with key leaders to discuss a range of issues. Certainly, this could be a topic of discussion, but there are a number of other issues that we discuss both with China and other partners in the region.

**QUESTION:** And has the pivot to Asia worked? Is this evidence of the pivot working?

**MS. PSAKI:** I wouldn't categorize this into -- I wouldn't put this in the evaluation category of whether or not it worked. Our pivot to Asia, or rebalance to Asia, means focusing on Asia and the important partnership we have with Asia, with countries in the region, the economic and strategic partners. And nothing is further evidence of that than the Vice President's trip there, the fact that, as you know, the Secretary will be going back to Asia soon, that he was just there a

couple of months ago with Secretary Hagel. So that is evidence of our commitment to the region. And we work with them on a – countries in the region on a broad range of issues.

**QUESTION:** But as we survey the last five years of this Administration, would you say that China is less aggressive in its serial commission of human rights abuses, currency manipulation, cyber warfare against U.S. businesses and government, territorial aggression, or is it better than it used to be?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not going to do an evaluation of that. Obviously, we work with them on economic issues, we work with them on strategic issues. There are still issues, including human rights, including this issue we're talking about now, that we express concerns about when warranted, and we'll continue to do that. But we know that the relationship is a vital one and one that we need to keep plugging away at even when we disagree.

**QUESTION:** Jen, could I (inaudible) for a second?

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

**QUESTION:** Is it fair to characterize the U.S. position as being that aside from the official policy, for the purposes of safety and avoiding some kind of unfortunate incident, that commercial carriers should abide by the Chinese ADIZ requirements?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have – I'd point you again to the FAA on more specifics than what I just conveyed. There are a range of regulations and policies that, of course, they oversee or are in place, but our general position as a U.S. Government is that we don't accept China's requirements. And obviously, the military – actions of military exercises is evidence of that.

**QUESTION:** Jen, this comes from --

**QUESTION:** Sorry, sorry. Just a quick follow-up on that.

**MS. PSAKI:** Go ahead.

**QUESTION:** It looks like the two main U.S. airlines are complying with – are taking steps to comply. Delta and United are the two that have flight routes through the area, which seems to have kind of created a little bit of confusion/consternation in Japan over a perceived rift with Japanese policy, which is to not allow U.S. commercial airliners to file their flight plans with China. Do you have a – do you have any kind of reassurance or any kind of response to that?

**MS. PSAKI:** We coordinate closely with Japan and with South Korea and all of the countries in the region about a range of issues. And certainly on this issue, we have been in touch with Japan and will continue to be. This is – for specific actions of individual commercial airliners, I would point you to them or the FAA on any regulations.

**QUESTION:** But – so you're not – but you're not afraid for the safety or concerned about the safety of U.S. citizens on flights that are flying through the area?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, certainly safety and security of citizens should be of concern to everyone. Obviously, there are policies in place and regulations in place because of that. But we don't oversee airline regulations. The FAA does, so I would point you to them.

**QUESTION:** (Inaudible.) Did the United States Government – the position has changed toward this ADIZ, or not changed? What is the position to ADIZ now?

**MS. PSAKI:** It has not changed. We – China announced the ADIZ without prior consultations even though the newly-announced ADIZ overlaps with parts of longstanding ADIZs of Japan, the Republic of Korea, and Taiwan, and includes territory administered by Japan. As I mentioned, we – the fact that China's announcement has caused confusion and increased the risk of accidents only further underscores the validity of concerns and the need for China to rescind the procedures. It's consistently been our position and one we have communicated both publicly and privately. I know there was some confusion over the weekend about airlines and specifically.

**QUESTION:** Jen, you said that you are not still – not accepting China's new air defense zone. But I wonder, like, Japan has its own air defense zone, and also part of it covers Taiwan. But it looks like the U.S. doesn't say anything about it. So do you think there is sort of a double standard? Why do you react so strongly to China's air defense zone?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, one of the reasons is that they announced this without prior consultations. It was inconsistent with longstanding procedure and process. And obviously, it overlaps with a number of other longstanding air defense zones of some other neighboring countries.

**QUESTION:** Jen --

**QUESTION:** Jen, you do not contest the ability of China to declare such a identification zone; it's just the manner in which they did it, or the extent?

**MS. PSAKI:** No. I think I have – I've just consistently said that we believe they should rescind the procedures. I've just – I've also stated a couple of times that we don't accept China's requirements. So I think I've made that pretty clear.

QUESTION: (Inaudible.)

QUESTION: Is the first --

QUESTION: In response to the -- China's declaration of its own ADIZ, the South Korean Government is poised to expand its own ADIZ, so-called KADIZ, to the South China Sea. What is the position of the United States? Would you encourage it or discourage it?

MS. PSAKI: I haven't seen those reports, or I don't even know if they're reports or if there's been an announcement. I haven't seen any announcement, I guess I should say. So let me check into that, and --

QUESTION: They say they have already started consultations with the United States.

MS. PSAKI: I'd have to check into it and see if we have more to say on that.

QUESTION: Is this the first time the U.S. has called --

QUESTION: Jennifer, you talk about safety --

QUESTION: -- for the zone to be rescinded?

MS. PSAKI: I'd have to check on that for you, Roz.

QUESTION: Can we change topic?

QUESTION: No.

QUESTION: You talk about safety. Are you really concerned that the Chinese may down an airliner or something?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not predicting that, but certainly there is -- they created these Air Defense Identification Zones, they've asked for prior flight plans. So of course, the security and safety is part of the regulatory process, and -- but I don't have any predictions. It's just the question of abiding by it.

QUESTION: Is it a real concern, downing an airliner?

MS. PSAKI: I don't think I have any more for you on that question.

QUESTION: Jen, when you're taking that question that Roz had --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

QUESTION: -- could you also check whether the United States actually is directly asking the Chinese to rescind it?

MS. PSAKI: Happy to. Sure.

QUESTION: Thank you.

QUESTION: Well, at least --

QUESTION: Apart from the specific concerns about how this was announced without any prior notice, its excessiveness, at least in terms of other regulations, and the safety risks that you say it cause, do you have any -- are there broader concerns about this area being identified as essentially the entire East China Sea? Is the U.S. concerned that the Chinese are looking at anything on a map that has the word "China" in it as all their own?

MS. PSAKI: Well, part of the concern is certainly that it overlaps with parts of other --

QUESTION: Right. But in terms of territorial claims --

MS. PSAKI: As well as territory administered by Japan, sure.

QUESTION: Right, right. But in terms of China's territorial claims, are you concerned that this is the first step or could be a first step towards actually moving in some kind of forceful way to take control of areas of territory and ocean maritime space that it says that it owns?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I don't want to make a prediction of that.

QUESTION: No, but I'm asking if you were concerned --

MS. PSAKI: But --

QUESTION: -- that this is a step in that direction, apart from the specific problems with the no prior notice and all that other -- the safety concerns.

MS. PSAKI: But one of the specific problems is also that this includes area -- territory administered by Japan, it includes overlapping area with other countries in the region. So certainly, that does touch on what your question is here. In terms of a prediction of what it will mean in the future, I certainly wouldn't venture to make that at this point.

QUESTION: Right. Well, the Chinese say that they would be well within their rights also to declare one of these zones over the entire -- over the South China Sea. Are you concerned about the possibility of that?

MS. PSAKI: Well, you're familiar with what our position is on that, and we've long --

QUESTION: Well, that's over the territorial disputes over the -- it's a question of sovereignty for these little atolls and bits of rock.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** Would you be as opposed as you are to this if the Chinese did it for the South China Sea, or is that a hypothetical question that you will wait to bash the Chinese over the head for once they – if and when they do it?

**MS. PSAKI:** It is a hypothetical question at this stage in time.

**QUESTION:** All right.

**QUESTION:** One more thing. Just one more thing on that. China at the same time has announced they sent a fighter jet against United States and Japanese aircraft last week. Did you comment on that?

**MS. PSAKI:** I am not familiar with that specific report. In – where, exactly?

**QUESTION:** If it's true, are you concerned about these Chinese announcement?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'd have to look at the specific report, and that may be a DOD question. James.

**QUESTION:** Given that China makes this declaration --

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

**QUESTION:** -- and we regard it as thoroughly problematic, if not illegal, and therefore we have on our hands a dispute with the Chinese --

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

**QUESTION:** -- which is to be adjudicated somehow in a nonviolent way, wasn't it a kind of a provocative act for the United States to fly B-52s through that very zone in a short time thereafter?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I would point you to DOD on that, but I would reiterate the fact that we have made clear that this action, this announcement, is not going to change our military exercises. And that is an example of that.

**QUESTION:** So other than taking -- other than the Vice President, are you aware -- or has there been at this point any conversations that you're aware of in this -- from this building with the Chinese directly? It's kind of on Jill's question. And if not, do you expect them or is this going to be left up to the Vice President when he goes to --

**MS. PSAKI:** Let me check. I know we have expressed concerns. I mentioned this last week, Matt, so let me just make sure you have it.

**QUESTION:** Jen, the -- Secretary Kerry did meet on Wednesday with a senior Chinese official?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'd have to --

**QUESTION:** On Wednesday, the vice premier.

**QUESTION:** Lu.

**QUESTION:** Yeah.

**MS. PSAKI:** I'd have to look back at that. It seems like a long time ago.

**QUESTION:** I know it does. And it was happening on Wednesday.

**MS. PSAKI:** Deputy Secretary Burns met last week with a Chinese official where this was a topic of discussion. Also, Assistant Secretary Russel spoke with the ambassador about a week ago, and Ambassador Locke has also been in touch, of course, on the ground. In terms of specific contacts over the last couple of days, I'm happy to check and see what else we can read out for all of you.

**QUESTION:** Are you taking this to the UN in any forum there?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have any prediction of that, James, at this point in time.

**QUESTION:** New topic?

**QUESTION:** So it's strictly a bilateral or a multilateral thing, but outside the auspices of the UN is how you're going to seek to resolve it?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I don't have anything for you on it at this point. We're taking this day by day. I conveyed for you what we've done and what we've communicated. But obviously, we're taking steps day by day.

**QUESTION:** But is that a kind of -- is that a consideration?

**MS. PSAKI:** Not that I'm aware of, Elise. But obviously, we're taking this day by day.

**QUESTION:** Can we change --

**QUESTION:** New subject?

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure, Jill. Go ahead.

**QUESTION:** I'm still on China. Can you actually clarify this? China's argument is that we institute the ADIZ that other countries have already instituted. If you're saying that China does not have a right to do that, they can say, well, what's good for the goose is good for the gander. And it doesn't seem like you have a legal foot to stand on. If you're opposed to the way in which they did it or the extent of it, these can be a subject of debate. And China has said we can get rid of

our ADIZ if the Japanese get rid of theirs. I mean, something like that could happen. But somehow – are you really saying that you do not accept – you do not give China the right to declare a defense identification zone?

MS. PSAKI: I think I've thoroughly outlined what our concerns are, so I'm not sure I have much more to add to your question.

QUESTION: Just on another topic, Jen – sorry.

MS. PSAKI: Well, we were going to go to Jill next, and then I'm happy to go to you.

QUESTION: North Korea?

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

QUESTION: Merrill Newman.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: You've seen probably, or read at least, his so-called confession. Do you have any comments about that, any reaction? And what is the latest on his status?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the latest is – and let me do this first and then I'll do the second part. On November 30<sup>th</sup>, North Korea permitted the Embassy of Sweden, our protecting power, to consular access to Merrill Newman. It – and given his advanced age and health conditions, we continue to urge North Korea to release him so he may return home and reunite with his family.

We, of course, have seen the Korean Central News Agency report regarding Mr. Newman's detention. According to the report, he apologized for the misunderstanding that led him – led to his detention. We don't have any other further information regarding the reason for his detention. But again, given his age and health, we continue to call for North Korea to release him as quickly as possible.

QUESTION: Do you believe that the North Korean – that that apology was – that he wrote and that was released by the North Koreans – do you believe that he wrote that of his own volition and that he – and do you have reason to believe that all of those things in that apology are true?

MS. PSAKI: We just don't have any other further analysis. We've seen the same reports all of you have seen, of course, about his interview and the publication of that, but I don't have any other further analysis on it.

QUESTION: Are you aware if that – the subject of his quote, unquote "confession" came up in the meeting with the Swedes?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything more on it, but I'm happy to check and see if there's more detail we can outline for all of you.

QUESTION: Did the Swedes as for and did Mr. Newman sign a PAW?

MS. PSAKI: A Privacy Act waiver?

QUESTION: Correct.

MS. PSAKI: Yes, he did. That is why I am able to talk about him now.

QUESTION: Okay. So then if – since he has signed the waiver, would you take it back to your – whoever it is that liaises with the Swedes on this --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: I assume it's EAP, but I guess it could also be EUR – and find out if Mr. Newman, in his discussions with the Swedes, talked at all about or said that he had freely made this alleged confession and when it was that he recorded this or when it --

MS. PSAKI: I am happy to take that and see if there's more we can share.

Go ahead, Lesley.

QUESTION: Also, did the Swedes report back in what condition he is in? Has he been tortured? Anything today? And how long did they meet with him, and was it in a jail? Was it in a --

QUESTION: Guest house.

QUESTION: -- government – a guest house?

QUESTION: A jailhouse guest house.

MS. PSAKI: A guest house. I don't have many specifics on that. I'm happy to also check with Matt's questions and to see if there's more we can share on that as well.

QUESTION: But didn't it include a --

QUESTION: But they did say – the Swedes did say that he --

QUESTION: -- physical examination of him?

QUESTION: The Swedes did, I think, say that he was --

**MS. PSAKI:** I believe they've spoken publicly about it.

**QUESTION:** -- that he was treated -- that's he's being treated (inaudible), right?

**MS. PSAKI:** Right. I've seen those comments as well. So I don't have any other specifics on it, but if there's more we share beyond what they've said publicly, I'm happy --

**QUESTION:** Including whether or not there was a physical examination of him during this consular access?

**QUESTION:** I just want to get back to his confession. I mean, it is kind of written in language that kind of fits the narrative that North Korea has been saying, and I'm just wondering if you think that he wrote this. Are you -- I mean, there's often times that you would say, like, oh this person seemed under duress --

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

**QUESTION:** -- or something like that. So I mean, I'm just -- about this particular confession, do you have any reason to believe that he did not confess to all of those things?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't -- I certainly understand why you're asking. I don't have any particular analysis on it at this stage. I will see if this is something that our team is looking into, and if there's more we can say about it specifically.

**QUESTION:** And what is this building doing to secure his release beyond calling for his release from imprisonment? I mean, Ambassador King had tried months ago to go --

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

**QUESTION:** -- for the other American under detention, Kenneth Bae. What's actually being done to get them out?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, our Swedish protecting power just visited with him two days ago, and obviously that's an important component of reaching out to citizens who are detained in North Korea. We certainly do continue to call for his release. I don't have any other predictions or announcements on travel or visits of other officials at this point to tell you about.

**QUESTION:** But beyond those consular visits, I mean, is there any outreach to the Chinese specially on behalf of Mr. Newman?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have more I can outline for all of you, but I can check and see if there is any more to tell.

**QUESTION:** Have they been helpful the past with Kenneth Bae or with others? The Chinese (inaudible)?

**MS. PSAKI:** They have been helpful, but there's not more specifics I can outline.

**QUESTION:** Through the Swedes are elsewhere, has North Korea communicated any demands or requests of the United States that have to do with Newman or -- as a prelude to his possible release?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have any more specifics on the contact with the Swedes and kind of what the discussion entailed beyond confirming --

**QUESTION:** Well, any -- in any forum, have they asked for anything from the United States?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have any details on it. I am happy to check if there's any more to share with all of you.

**QUESTION:** But you guys are in touch with the North Koreans directly, just to confirm?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we -- as you know, we've long had a channel, but we've been working in this case through our Swedish protective -- protecting power.

**QUESTION:** But you have been in touch with the North Koreans specifically on his matter?

**MS. PSAKI:** On this specific case, not that I'm aware of, but I'm happy to check if there's anything more on that.

**QUESTION:** Are you in touch with Mr. Newman's family?

**MS. PSAKI:** We are. We have been. Let me see if I have the detail of when we last spoke with him -- with his family. I don't have that detail for you. I'm happy to put that in the pocket of things I'm going to check on.

**QUESTION:** And have they asked for you to help facilitate any kind of visit by them to North Korea, given that this gentleman's actually -- I mean, he's quite elderly --

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

**QUESTION:** -- so you would imagine that if -- there would be concern enough to try and travel to visit him.

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm. I'm not aware of a request that they've made about that specifically, but we can see.

**QUESTION:** So all the attention, really, is on this Mr. Newman. But as we've said, Kenneth Bae has been held for quite a long time.

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm. You're right.

**QUESTION:** So in your efforts working with the Swedes or working to try and get the release, I mean, are you emphasizing because of Mr. Newman's age and health that you need to get him out right away, or are they part of a package that you think that they --

**MS. PSAKI:** I mean, we'd certainly like to see them both released as quickly as possible. In terms of that level of detail, I just don't have that.

QUESTION: These American citizens being held against their will in a rogue state, they're hostages, right?

MS. PSAKI: I mean, they're being held by the governments. The governments have confirmed that, so I don't know that I need to categorize it further, James.

QUESTION: You don't regard them as hostages?

MS. PSAKI: Do we have another topic?

QUESTION: Yes. Could I move onto the --

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

QUESTION: -- the Secretary's trip.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Okay. The portion to the West Bank and to Israel.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

QUESTION: Yes. If you have more to share with us -- today or yesterday, President Abbas, the president of the Palestinian Authority, was so impressed with the Geneva success, now he's suggesting a format, perhaps another Geneva, where the Palestinian-Israeli issue could be resolved. Would you look kindly at this suggestion?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I haven't seen those comments from him specifically. I know this has been an idea floated out there. Our focus remains on the direct negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians. We're a facilitator in that effort. There are certainly a number of countries who have a great investment and great interest in the success -- in a successful outcome here, including the Arab League, including many other countries that want to contribute to growing the Palestinian economy. But that's our focus, not on planning yet another conference.

QUESTION: And a Palestinian member of the Israeli Knesset, Mr. Ahmed Tibi, claims that the 20,000 housing that the Israelis announced and they put on hold were actually not put on hold, that there is -- construction is ongoing. Do you have any information on that?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything new on that. I'd have to look into that for you.

Scott?

QUESTION: (Inaudible.)

MS. PSAKI: Oh.

QUESTION: Can we stay on stay on that?

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

QUESTION: Just on this idea of not necessarily a Geneva-type conference for the peace process, but just the idea of internationalizing the process, would the United States -- would the Administration object to an internationalization of the peace process?

MS. PSAKI: Well, it's hard to know exactly what that means. Obviously, as you all are well aware, there's direct negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians now. That's what our focus is on, so certainly that's not a path we're pursuing.

QUESTION: Well, I think that the point that -- right, it's not a path that you're pursuing --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- but the point that people who are suggesting that this might be a way to go, the point that they make is that the United States has been the sole and unique arbiter, mediator, facilitator, whatever you want to call it, of Israeli-Palestinian peace talks going back decades.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: And you haven't gotten anything out of it. There's been no success. It's been one failure after another. Is it perhaps not time to try something new, is the argument that these people would make.

MS. PSAKI: Well, Matt, obviously, many people are going to make different arguments about how it should proceed. We're less than halfway through the nine-month timeline here. There are a number of countries that are engaged and invested, including, of course, the Arab League, who, as you know, are in very close contact with the Palestinians and engaged in this effort. There are many who are engaged with the Israelis in this effort. So our focus remains on the direct negotiations, and I don't think we're at this point speculating on a different alternative forum.

QUESTION: Well, let me -- okay. Well, let me put it this way: Is it still the position of the Administration that the United States has unique leverage and influence with both sides that makes it the only logical or capable, competent, credible mediator for peace between Israel and the Palestinians?

MS. PSAKI: I don't know that we've ever stated it exactly like that. We're playing a facilitator role which both sides are comfortable with. There are other countries engaged with this effort and certainly in touch with the Israelis and the

Palestinians. I expect that will continue. But in the meantime, we'll continue to play the facilitator role as long as it's productive.

**QUESTION:** Do you believe, does the Administration believe that the United States still has leverage and influence with Israel or the Palestinians? I mean, you say, in reference to other questions about, say, Mr. Newman or Mr. Bae in North Korea --

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

**QUESTION:** -- that the Chinese have influence with the North Koreans and you would like to go through them, maybe after you're done yelling at them about their air defense zone. But do you still think that the United States -- does the Administration believe that it has influence and leverage with either Israel or the Palestinians?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I think we have a close relationship with both. And obviously, we're at this point because both sides decided to come to the table. I don't think it's about leverage. There's -- it's in the interest of both sides to come to an agreement on the final status issues, and that's what they're working to do at this point.

**QUESTION:** Jen, could I just ask -- there was an agreement --

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** -- reached last week between the EU and Israel which will allow Israel to actually touch some funding for scientific research. There have been some problems because the EU wanted to bar all research in areas of -- In the West Bank --

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

**QUESTION:** -- settlement areas in the West Bank. Is there an -- I mean, does the American -- do America -- does America believe that this is a good agreement for the EU and Israel, given that Secretary Kerry has always mentioned that he fears an increasing isolation of Israel on the international stage?

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm. I haven't talked to our team about it, so I'd have to talk to them and see if we have any particular view on the agreement last week.

**QUESTION:** And is -- what is the message that Secretary Kerry's going to be bringing with him when he visits Israel later on this week?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I think he'll be talking to both sides about the importance of staying firm with the timeline and working through the tough and difficult issues that they're doing at the negotiating table, and reiterating the importance of coming to a peaceful end to the final negotiations. And of course, when he's meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu, they'll certainly be discussing the recent P5+1 agreement with Iran and having an ongoing dialogue about that as well.

**QUESTION:** And have there been any meetings, direct talks between the Israelis and Palestinians, since the resignation of the Palestinian team?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have any updates on meetings at this point. I'll see if there's any more we want to provide to all of you in terms of specific meetings and timing of that.

**QUESTION:** But I mean, since the last time the Secretary's been there, there's been another announcement of new settlement construction.

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

**QUESTION:** There's been the resignation of the Palestinian -- it just seems that without him actually physically there holding their hand for hours at a time, that they're not able to sustain it on their own.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, they've had many meetings when he has not been there. So obviously, we didn't expect this to be easy. We certainly are aware of some bumps in the road of late, but both sides have also reaffirmed their commitment to seeing this through.

**QUESTION:** Would you really call those bumps in the road, though? I mean, particularly on the -- actually, on either side, whether it's the Israelis continuing to announce settlement construction or the Palestinians' full negotiating team just giving up, it just doesn't seem as if --

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, when the negotiating -- and that's a good example. The negotiating team -- President Abbas reaffirmed his own commitment to seeing this through --

**QUESTION:** But it just --

**MS. PSAKI:** -- whether it was them or whether it was other officials in their place. So they're continuing to move forward.

**QUESTION:** It just doesn't seem like they have the -- while they may have the desire and the dream that there'll be a peace deal. The motivation to actually do the hard work day in and day out doesn't seem to be there. And so it does

seem as if Secretary Kerry is the one holding this together personally, and isn't there, like, a limit to how much he can do?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. That's why he has a team to help work through it every day.

QUESTION: Well, I meant more the parties themselves.

MS. PSAKI: You're right, but there also is a long timeframe we still have left. One of the reasons committing to the nine-month timeframe was so important is because we knew there would be challenging periods throughout the process. But both sides remain committed to that, and so we'll continue to work through it.

QUESTION: But it doesn't sound like – unless you could disabuse us of the notion, it doesn't sound like since Secretary Kerry's last trip in early November that there have actually been any direct talks.

MS. PSAKI: I wouldn't jump to that conclusion. We just have always said we wouldn't confirm every meeting.

QUESTION: Sure.

MS. PSAKI: So let me see if I can confirm any meetings since that point for all of you.

QUESTION: Jen, could you tell us if Ambassador Indyk is there now? Is he there? Is he in the region? Is he – Ambassador Indyk, where --

MS. PSAKI: He's here. I saw him this morning.

QUESTION: He's here. Okay.

MS. PSAKI: Okay. Let's just do one or two more here.

Scott.

QUESTION: What is the U.S. view of what's going on in Thailand right now?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we certainly deeply regret the loss of life in Bangkok due to politically motivated violence. We condemn violence as a means to achieve political objectives and urge all sides to exercise restraint and respect the rule of law. We are concerned about the continuing political tension in Thailand, and we are following the situation closely. Peaceful protest and freedom of expression are important aspects of democracy, of course. Violence and seizure of public or private property, however, are not acceptable means of resolving political differences. We firmly believe all parties should work together to resolve differences through peaceful dialogue in ways that strengthen democracy and rule of law.

Ambassador Kenney spoke with the prime minister and – has spoken with the prime minister and opposition leaders to also encourage restraint and peaceful dialogue. You may have also seen that the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok issued a security message for U.S. citizens in Thailand explaining that large political demonstrations may continue in coming days – in the coming days, including at government facilities, in and outside of central Bangkok, and is advising them to avoid areas of demonstration and to exercise caution.

QUESTION: Following his talk with the prime minister, one of the main opposition leaders said that he would accept nothing short of her resignation. Is that a responsible position in the eyes of the United States?

MS. PSAKI: We just continue to encourage all parties to work together to resolve their differences. We, of course, have seen his comments, but I don't think we're going to weigh in further at this point, aside from encouraging restraint on the ground.

QUESTION: Would you weigh in on the general amnesty bill that the ruling party failed to get through parliament, which was one of the instigations for this?

MS. PSAKI: I know – I don't know if I've spoken to that in the past, Scott. I'd have to – I don't have anything for you on it at this particular moment, but I'm happy to follow up post-briefing.

Okay, let's do two more here. In the back, you've been very patient.

QUESTION: Thank you. Michael Vincent from the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. What's the U.S. response to the Australian Government's rejection of the U.S. company Archer Daniels Midland's bid for GrainCorp?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we are disappointed by the Government of Australia's decision to reject Archer Daniels Midland's proposed acquisition of GrainCorp. We do not – we do note that the Australian Treasurer Joe Hockey has expressed openness to approving an increase in ADM's current share in GrainCorp. The United States is the largest foreign investor – foreign direct investor in Australia, with 132 billion in investment projects to date, and we look forward to working closely with Australia's government to build stronger ties and investment – stronger trade and investment ties.

QUESTION: Just a quick follow-up.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Did – unrelated matter, but has the U.S. Government accepted private medical, legal, or religious information on Australian citizens as offered by Australian intelligence agencies?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have anything further or anything for you on a range of reports. I'm certainly not going to comment on any of them. As you know, we're undergoing our own review of these processes, which we expect to conclude by the end of the year.

**QUESTION:** Jen, back to ADM for a second.

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

**QUESTION:** Did -- was this issue, this proposed sale, bid by ADM raised at the AUSMIN ministerial meetings?

**MS. PSAKI:** It's a good question, Matt. I'd have to check. It wasn't one raised while I was there, but let me check and see if it was.

**QUESTION:** And if it was, did -- was -- were you given any indication that this is the way your closest antipodal ally was going to go?

**MS. PSAKI:** I will check and see if it was even raised.

Okay, let's do one more. Go ahead, Samir.

**QUESTION:** Do you have a reaction to the draft constitution in Egypt today?

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** Can I throw a Bahrain question at the end of that?

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure. Why not?

Well, we continue to track the constitutional process with interest, and we'll examine the document carefully once it is finalized and sent to President Mansour, which we understand will occur tomorrow. The Egyptian people, of course, will decide the fate of the draft constitution in a referendum. We will continue to support a transition process that leads to an inclusive civilian government selected through free, fair, and transparent elections, and civilian government based on the rule of law, fundamental freedoms, accountability, and an open and competitive economy. So we will see when it is transferred, and we will take a close look at it.

Bahrain.

**QUESTION:** Yeah. Do you have any view on the government --

**QUESTION:** A quick one on Egypt. Hold on. I'm sorry, Matt. You don't have any comment on the prohibition of religious parties in Egypt?

**MS. PSAKI:** Again, we'll wait to comment on it until it's been officially transferred. Obviously, there are steps in there we may be complimentary of and others we may not be.

**QUESTION:** Yes, please.

**QUESTION:** Does the decision of the -- not to release this human rights campaigner when he was eligible to be released? It was yesterday or today.

**MS. PSAKI:** Let me see. I think I have something on this. One moment, Matt.

**QUESTION:** Mm-hmm. You can get it -- if you just want to make it a TQ, that's fine.

**MS. PSAKI:** Yeah, that's fine. I believe I have something on it for you. Let's see. We continue to encourage Bahrain to take the necessary steps to promote reconciliation among Bahrainis, including permitting all sectors of society to voice their political views in a peaceful manner. We have seen reports that the head of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights Nabeel Rajab -- is that who you're talking about -- okay --

**QUESTION:** (Inaudible.)

**MS. PSAKI:** -- was denied early release today in Bahrain. We understand that he has served 18 months of his two-year prison sentence and is scheduled to be released in May of next year. We remain deeply concerned about the three-year prison sentence for leading illegal gatherings. We urge the Government of Bahrain to protect the universal rights of freedom of expression and assembly, just as we urge all elements of Bahraini society to engage in peaceful expressions of political opinion.

**QUESTION:** Do you think that he should've been released as was -- as he could've been today?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I believe we are concerned about his -- we were concerned about his three-year prison sentence, I believe. Let me check and see, but I believe that's what we're implying here.

**QUESTION:** I mean, this is not the first. I mean, there have been several other opposition activists and so forth that have been detained. I mean, does this cast doubt on your encouraging words earlier in the year about Bahrain's commitment to political reforms?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we certainly are encouraging them to take some step -- to take necessary steps to promote reconciliation. And obviously, each time that there is a case like this, we have expressed concern. So I don't have any

analysis as to what that will mean longer-term or about the overall relationship, but each time there has been an incident, we have certainly expressed our concern.

**QUESTION:** Well, but each time – you say each time that there's been an incident. I mean, there's a pattern of incidents. I mean, does that say something about their actual commitment to reforms?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I don't have any more analysis on it for you.

Thanks, everyone.

**QUESTION:** Thank you.

(The briefing was concluded at 3:18 p.m.)

**DPB # 196**

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**RELEASE IN PART**  
B5, B6**Fischer, Kyle G**

**From:** Harf, Marie E  
**Sent:** Monday, May 09, 2016 5:39 PM  
**To:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K; Hickey, Lauren A; Beechem, Stephanie; Kirby, John; Toner, Mark C; Werberg, Samuel; Norris, Emily Y  
**Subject:** Re: Urgent

+emily

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**From:** Harf, Marie E  
**Sent:** Monday, May 9, 2016 5:37 PM  
**To:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K; Hickey, Lauren A; Beechem, Stephanie; Kirby, John; Toner, Mark C; Werberg, Samuel  
**Subject:** Re: Urgent

B5

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**From:** HarfME@state.gov  
**Sent:** Monday, May 9, 2016 5:36 PM  
**To:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K; Hickey, Lauren A; Beechem, Stephanie; Kirby, John; Toner, Mark C; Werberg, Samuel  
**Subject:** Re: Urgent

B5

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**From:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K  
**Sent:** Monday, May 9, 2016 5:34 PM  
**To:** Harf, Marie E; Hickey, Lauren A; Beechem, Stephanie; Kirby, John; Toner, Mark C; Werberg, Samuel  
**Subject:** RE: Urgent

Bringing together threads:

B5

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**From:** Harf, Marie E  
**Sent:** Monday, May 09, 2016 5:32 PM  
**To:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K; Hickey, Lauren A; Beechem, Stephanie; Kirby, John; Toner, Mark C; Werberg, Samuel  
**Subject:** Re: Urgent

[REDACTED]

B5

By the time of that press briefing, it was all out.

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**From:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K  
**Sent:** Monday, May 9, 2016 5:30 PM  
**To:** Hickey, Lauren A; Beechem, Stephanie; Harf, Marie E; Kirby, John; Toner, Mark C; Werberg, Samuel  
**Subject:** RE: Urgent

Luke Forgeron from ODE looking into it now. I told him we need answer in 20 minutes.

[REDACTED]

B5

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**From:** Hickey, Lauren A  
**Sent:** Monday, May 09, 2016 5:30 PM  
**To:** Beechem, Stephanie; Harf, Marie E; Kirby, John; Toner, Mark C; Trudeau, Elizabeth K; Werberg, Samuel  
**Subject:** RE: Urgent

[REDACTED]

B5

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

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**From:** Beechem, Stephanie  
**Sent:** Monday, May 09, 2016 5:29 PM  
**To:** Hickey, Lauren A; Harf, Marie E; Kirby, John; Toner, Mark C; Trudeau, Elizabeth K; Werberg, Samuel  
**Subject:** RE: Urgent

Adding Sam here – he says he hasn't heard of it

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

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**From:** Hickey, Lauren A  
**Sent:** Monday, May 09, 2016 5:27 PM  
**To:** Harf, Marie E; Kirby, John; Toner, Mark C; Trudeau, Elizabeth K  
**Cc:** Beechem, Stephanie  
**Subject:** FW: Urgent

Marie – Any insight here? [REDACTED]

B5

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

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**From:** Rosen, James [mailto:[REDACTED]]  
**Sent:** Monday, May 09, 2016 5:21 PM

B6

**To:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K; Kirby, John  
**Cc:** Toner, Mark C; Beechem, Stephanie; Hickey, Lauren A  
**Subject:** RE: Urgent

At the 12/2/13 briefing, I confronted Jen Psaki with the false statement made to me by Toria Nuland at the 2/6/13 briefing. That earlier exchange went like this:

**ROSEN:** There have been reports that intermittently, and outside of the formal P-5+1 mechanisms the Obama Administration, or members of it, have conducted direct, secret, bilateral talks with Iran. Is that true or false?

**NULAND:** We have made clear, as the Vice President did at Munich, that in the context of the larger P-5+1 framework, we would be prepared to talk to Iran bilaterally. *But with regard to the kind of thing that you're talking about on a government-to-government level, no.*

Of course, the secret Iran talks had begun eight months before that exchange.

The transcript for the 12/2/13 briefing is below, with the yellow part signifying the part that has been edited out of DOS's video of the briefing on its website and YT channel.

We want to know why and when DOS inserted a white-flash into the 12/2/13 video to censor the part where I asked Jen Psaki about Toria Nuland's false statement on the Iran talks (and Psaki in essence said the administration needed "privacy").

All of this is obviously relevant in light of the NYTM questions about whether Rhodes/DOS et al misled the people, and the press, about the origins and timing of the Iran talks.

If we don't hear back by 5:45p – we just discovered this act of censorship – we are going to report it as such in our 6p show.

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 James Rosen  
 Chief Washington Correspondent  
 Host, "The Foxhole"  
 Twitter: @JamesRosenFNC

(office)  
 (mobile)

Author, Cheney One on One

B6

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**From:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K [<http://redirect.state.sbu/?url=mailto:trudeauek@state.gov>]  
**Sent:** Monday, May 09, 2016 5:13 PM  
**To:** Rosen, James; Kirby, John  
**Cc:** Toner, Mark C; Beechem, Stephanie; Hickey, Lauren A  
**Subject:** RE: Urgent

James, I am solo in town today – Kirby and Toner on road. Adding Beechem and Hickey on this.  
 Not sure I understand Q.

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**From:** Rosen, James [<http://redirect.state.sbu/?url=mailto:>]  
**Sent:** Monday, May 09, 2016 5:10 PM  
**To:** Kirby, John

**Cc:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K; Toner, Mark C  
**Subject:** Urgent

Need a call from one of you in the next thirty minutes or so. We are going to go to air with the information below, in the context of the whole Ben Rhodes controversy, at 6p, and we'd like to give DOS a chance to clear it up. My contact info is below. The relevant info is also below, courtesy of one of our video librarians in the Fox News Washington bureau. The basic question is why – and when – DOS censored its video of the highlighted portion of the 12/2/13 briefing (26:58 into the clip) with a white flash, on both the DOS web page and the DOS YT channel. Yours cordially, James

-----  
 James Rosen  
 Chief Washington Correspondent  
 Host, "The Foxhole"  
 Twitter: @JamesRosenFNC

[redacted] (office)  
 [redacted] (mobile)

B6

Author, Cheney One on One

Highlighted below. The video posted online here

(<http://redirect.state.sbu/?url=http://redirect.state.sbu/?url=http://redirect.state.sbu/?url=http://video.state.gov/en/video/2886914568001>) ends with Psaki responding to Roz's question saying "....and so that has not changed that." White flash on screen at 26:58 and then it picks up with Roz talking again.

**TRANSCRIPT:**

1:54 p.m. EST

MS. PSAKI: Hi, everyone. Happy --

QUESTION: Happy belated birthday.

MS. PSAKI: Thank you. Thank you very much. Twenty-two. It's glorious. (Laughter.)

QUESTION: And you will be 22 for the next --

MS. PSAKI: I will be.

QUESTION: What, 10, 15 years?

MS. PSAKI: At least, at least. Well, I have nothing at the top, so Matt, let's go to what's on your mind.

QUESTION: Let's see. I have a lot --

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

QUESTION: -- but nothing is really worth starting with, so let's just start with the Secretary's trip.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

QUESTION: Both -- excluding the middle stop in Moldova, at the beginning, how much of the NAC do you expect is going to be concentrated on Afghanistan and then talking about the BSA? Will there be any Afghan officials there to talk with? And then -- well, that'll be that one question for --

MS. PSAKI: Okay. Well, we'll clearly, as we typically do, be doing a briefing en route about the trip and about our visit to the NATO Ministerial tomorrow, where we will venture to have more specific details about who will be attending.

Obviously, Afghanistan and the ongoing presence there post-2014 of the United States and of NATO will certainly be a big topic of discussion. But I will let our briefers outline more specifics en route to Brussels.

QUESTION: All right. Well, I was going to ask about the Middle East but -- as well, the stop in Israel and the PA. But if you're just -- are you going to give me the same answer, wait for the briefing on the plane?

MS. PSAKI: I likely will, yes.

QUESTION: Okay. Well, then never mind.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

QUESTION: And then quickly on Afghanistan --

MS. PSAKI: Sure, Lesley.

QUESTION: Is -- what further is happening as far as trying to resolve this issue with Afghanistan?

MS. PSAKI: Well --

QUESTION: As far as -- is it true that --

MS. PSAKI: The BSA.

QUESTION: The -- exactly.

MS. PSAKI: The signing, I assume.

QUESTION: Is it true that Special Envoy Dobbins has gone -- is on his way to Afghanistan?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any announcements at this point on travel for him or anyone else. Obviously, our team on the ground, Ambassador Cunningham and others, have been in close contact. At this point, we've made our position clear, and so have the Afghan people. Signing the BSA soon is the path forward, as we've said many times, to sustaining a partnership between the United States and Afghanistan to support Afghans in achieving lasting peace, security, and development. That's the message that we're conveying at every level. And as we've said before but important to reiterate here, given it's a week later now: We -- deferring the signature of the agreement until after next year's election is not viable. It would not provide Afghans with the certainty that they deserve regarding their future in the critical months leading to the elections, nor would it provide the United States and NATO allies the clarity necessary for a potential post-2014 military presence.

So we're continuing to convey that. Our team on the ground is certainly hard at work. I don't have any travel announcements. If that changes, we'll certainly let all of you know.

QUESTION: Has Secretary spoken to President Karzai in the last couple of days on BSA?

MS. PSAKI: He has not spoken with him in the last couple of days.

QUESTION: And the Pentagon today said that this is not the end of it; after BSA is signed, the U.S. and Afghanistan have to negotiate and sign their agreement called SOFA, and that would be done by the State Department. Has any process started on SOFA, signing of SOFA with Afghanistan?

MS. PSAKI: I'd have to look more specifically at what they said. Maybe you're referring to the NATO SOFA that they may have to negotiate and sign, I believe, as a step? But for our purposes, there's the signing; it goes through parliament, then it would have to be signed again. Obviously, as you all are very familiar with, this doesn't outline a specific number for a troop presence, so there would be a great deal of planning in regards to that that DOD would certainly be very engaged with. But in terms of that, I'd have to look at specifically what they said. I'm not familiar with that --

QUESTION: Is December 21<sup>st</sup> the redline, the deadline for signing of BSA, after which you will begin preparing for all troops pull out from Afghanistan post 2014.

MS. PSAKI: I am not going to get into new redlines or deadlines today, I will say. But on the trip question, well, as you all know, a decision hasn't been made. You would know if it had been. It's not our preference, but no troops is certainly a potential outcome for Afghanistan if there is no BSA. So that is, again, not our preference, but natural that planning would have to take place for all different options.

QUESTION: Have you tried to understand why President Karzai is doing what he's doing or conducting himself the way he has? Do you have a clearer picture than we do, for instance?

MS. PSAKI: I don't know that I have any further insight than you do. Obviously, the Secretary spoke with him last week, as you all well know. We continue to press our case for why this should be signed as quickly as possible, but I don't have any analysis of particular actions or comments in Afghanistan.

QUESTION: So you think that he's perhaps more concerned about his personal safety post the elections?

MS. PSAKI: I will let you, Said, do your own analysis. I don't have any other analysis on it.

Do we have any more on Afghanistan?

QUESTION: Just the trip?

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: For those of us who are interested in Moldova --

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

QUESTION: -- could you just tell us why stop in Moldova? What's the importance? We see the winery, et cetera.

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Moldova is a country that has taken a number of important reform steps in recent years. They have -- they're taking steps to help grow their economy, and wine is obviously a significant export. But they have a number of exports they also work with. And given the steps they've taken, the Secretary felt it would be an important opportunity

to pay a visit. You'd have to check my history and facts here, but I believe he may be, if not the first, one of the first Secretaries to pay a bilateral visit to Moldova.

QUESTION: And also it comes, obviously, right after Ukraine decided not to sign the agreement with the EU.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Moldova did. So you could read into this that the Secretary wants to buck them up or give them something, a sign of support.

MS. PSAKI: Well, we had planned this trip -- this trip was in the works before that decision was made. But certainly, they have put a number of reforms in place and they're working hard on their economy and the -- if -- the Secretary felt it was important to highlight that.

QUESTION: Following on that --

QUESTION: Okay. Can I go over just to Afghanistan for one very briefly?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Okay, and then we'll go to Anne.

QUESTION: I was gone last week so I'm -- most of last week, so what -- did the Secretary speak with Karzai before or after Ambassador Rice was there?

MS. PSAKI: Let's see. He spoke with Karzai -- President Karzai -- I'd have to look back. I believe it was prior to her visit. Let me double check that for you to make sure.

QUESTION: So the last senior official to speak with Karzai, as far as you know, was Ambassador Rice.

MS. PSAKI: I believe that's correct, yes.

QUESTION: Just following on the Moldova for Ukraine substitution, in saying that Secretary Kerry would not, as had been widely expected, attend the OSCE -- when you said that, I don't know, about 10 days ago or so --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- we were just at the very beginning of this whole episode.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: And at that point you said it was scheduling issues that had -- it would force his cancellation. Are you sticking with that? Is that still the case? Or might there be some policy implications to his decision not to go to the OSCE?

MS. PSAKI: I am sticking with that. I'm just looking at Lesley here in my -- corner of my eye. I am sticking with that. I don't have any new guidance for you on that front. Assistant Secretary Nuland is still planning to attend and travel there after joining us for the first part of the visit.

QUESTION: On Syria?

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Is it --

QUESTION: Can you tell us the -- oh, sorry.

QUESTION: Sorry. Just on this charade -- charade, for Lesley -- of scheduling reasons, is it not the case that not doing -- not going on this trip -- not going to Kyiv is a sign of displeasure?

MS. PSAKI: I will let you do your own reporting, Matt. I don't have any more analysis or comments on it from here.

QUESTION: But there was --

QUESTION: And one more quick one on Ukraine.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Obviously, we're seeing the demonstrations, violent crackdown.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: What's the response from the State Department?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we're of course, naturally, closely monitoring the ongoing demonstrations, not only in Kyiv but in cities around Ukraine. As you know, since the demonstrations began on November 21<sup>st</sup>, there have been an increasing number of violent incidents, including against journalists. We stress there is no room, and we continue to stress there is no room for violence in a country that aspires to a democratic future. We continue to call on all sides to maintain calm, and on Ukrainian authorities to ensure that members of the public and the press are able to safely and peacefully exercise their rights of speech and assembly.

As I mentioned a little bit before, we still have -- Assistant Secretary Nuland is still planning to travel there. The Ukrainian foreign ministry announced that the ministerial is proceeding as planned.

QUESTION: But there was --

QUESTION: Are you sure that Ukraine is a country that aspires to a democratic future?

MS. PSAKI: Any country that may aspire, certainly, these are important values to follow through on.

**QUESTION:** Right. But are you still convinced that Ukraine aspires to a westward-looking, democratic future?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we will see, Matt. Time will tell. Actions speak louder than words.

**QUESTION:** Do you -- does this --

**QUESTION:** Do you still stand by the comments made by Ambassador Nuland in her speech to the Atlantic Council a couple of weeks ago and also comments from this podium that it is your belief that Ukraine should be following the path towards joining some kind of association agreement with the EU?

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure. Our view has not changed on that. Obviously, there have been a lot of events that have happened since then, but --

**QUESTION:** And do you believe that the demonstrations on the streets are actually -- that's what they want? I mean, it seems to be that they're demonstrating because they're angry that the government hasn't taken this path that's been laid out for them.

**MS. PSAKI:** I would point you to the comments of the demonstrators, of which there have been many. I don't want to speak on their behalf, but our position hasn't changed on what steps they could take. Obviously, it's up to Ukraine to take those steps.

**QUESTION:** So -- but, I mean, the United States is -- if you don't want to give your backing to them -- at least sympathetic to what the demonstrators are asking for.

**MS. PSAKI:** Again, the demonstrators are saying a range of things, so I don't -- beyond what we've stated publicly many times, I don't have any other further public statements on our position, which has been stated by Assistant Secretary Nuland and by other officials in the past several weeks.

**QUESTION:** Given the estimates of some 300,000 people who were demonstrating across the country on Sunday, and given that they all seem, to a person, to be saying that the government is ignoring their wish to be more closely aligned with Europe, isn't it a bit disingenuous for this building to suggest that they need to show any restraint? They're not the ones who are bludgeoning people with battering rams and turning rubber bullets on the police. It seems they're taking the brunt of everything that's been happening.

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't think I took sides. I think I said that it's important for all sides to maintain calm, that there's no place for violence in a country that aspires to a democratic future. So I don't -- I would disagree with the premise of your claims.

**QUESTION:** What does this building think of the prime minister's -- call for his security forces to show restraint and seemingly to be missing in action when on Sunday there was more violence heaped upon the demonstrators, particularly in Kyiv?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I think I just expressed what our view is of violence against demonstrators, so that's what our view is.

**QUESTION:** Can I -- has the Secretary spoken to somebody in Ukraine, his counterpart?

**MS. PSAKI:** He has not in the last several days. I can check if there's been any other calls I'm not aware of.

**QUESTION:** Because one of the big issues for Ukraine is tearing itself away from Russia and looking towards Western Europe for economic support. And one of the big things is that the president of Ukraine is heading to China to look for that. And if -- I was wondering if the U.S. had offered them kind of -- some kind of assurance or reassurance economically that they could be better off by signing these deals and with the support -- and the U.S. would support any kind of reform through the International Monetary Fund.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, aside from public statements we've made, which, as Jo referenced, is -- that our belief is that European integration is the surest course to economic growth and strengthening Ukraine's democracy. That's still our belief. That's been consistently our belief. But beyond that, I'm not aware of any other discussions. Obviously, there's a lot of -- that's going on with the EU and with Russia, and beyond that we have made our position clear.

**QUESTION:** And what is the building's position on the detention of Yulia Tymoshenko?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we have consistently spoken about this in the past and expressed our concern about her detention. I know this was also a component that was potentially being worked through as an element of Ukraine getting into the EU. So we've consistently expressed concern, encouraged them to take steps forward. Obviously, there hasn't been progress on that on the ground.

**QUESTION:** I'm sorry, what did you say was the surest way to economic growth?

**MS. PSAKI:** I said European integration is the surest course to economic growth and strengthening --

**QUESTION:** Did you give the same advice to the Greeks?

(Laughter.)

**MS. PSAKI:** Matt. Behave.

Do we have any more on Ukraine or Afghanistan, since we touched on that too?

**QUESTION:** Still on Ukraine.

**MS. PSAKI:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** The Russians have proposed that the EU, Ukraine, and Russia get together to discuss some of these problems. Would the United States be in favor of that, some kind of a trilateral discussion to discuss the economic situation and political differences?

**MS. PSAKI:** It wouldn't involve the United States, so I don't have a particular position. I'm happy to talk to our team and see if we have a view on that.

Ukraine or Afghanistan? Okay, should we move on to Syria? Let's go to Margaret.

**QUESTION:** Thank you. Jen, the OPCW said over the past few days that the U.S. has stepped up, that they're going to give operational support, offering up financing. Can you give us some more detail on that?

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm. Well, I don't know if it will be satisfying, but let me try. (Laughter.) Well, as you know, the United States is committed to supporting the international community's efforts to destroy Syria's chemical weapons in the safest, most efficient and effective means possible. We have offered and are currently outfitting a U.S. vessel with field-deployable hydrolysis system technology to support the OPCW's efforts. We are in close contact with the OPCW and our international partners and remain confident that we can meet the milestones for destruction set out by the OPCW. Of course, the OPCW remains -- and the UN -- remain the lead coordinators on reaching out to countries and coordinating steps forward and any timeline, et cetera.

**QUESTION:** But on the financing, what is it exactly that we're offering? Is that a chunk of change? Is that financing and loans, or --

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we've offered -- we've offered in the -- prior to this, we have offered -- we have given 6 million to the OPCW and the UN Trust Fund, both in financial contributions and in kind, so I think we gave some materials as well. But this, of course, would be a DOD vessel. So I would point you to them on the specific costs. This, at this point, is an offer. So I think that's still being worked through.

**QUESTION:** So -- but beyond the vessel, the OPCW says the cost is going to be between 35 to 40 million euros for the private contractors who would actually be --

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

**QUESTION:** -- be doing the disposal themselves. So is any of that money coming through the State Department, or is the State Department topped out at \$6 million?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we've said we'd be open to exploring additional ways to provide assistance. I don't have any announcements today of additional assistance we're planning to provide, but that certainly is something we're in discussions with the OPCW about.

**QUESTION:** So we can understand correctly, it is a commercial vessel, correct, that they are trying --

**MS. PSAKI:** It is a --

**QUESTION:** -- (inaudible) --

**MS. PSAKI:** -- U.S. Government vessel, not a commercial vessel.

**QUESTION:** Right.

**MS. PSAKI:** But there is a part of this -- and this may be what you're asking about -- which is the OPCW reaching out to commercial companies about the destruction capabilities.

**QUESTION:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** So what -- so DOD is outfitting its own boat, which will be staffed with DOD personnel who will do this?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'd have to check on the specifics of that. I think some of it may still be work -- be going through the process of being worked out, Matt, because they've offered -- but obviously, how it would be staffed and the materials and the money -- I mean, all of those are pieces that are still being discussed.

**QUESTION:** Do you actually have a timeline and the location for where this would happen?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have a location. That's still being discussed. The timeline, as you know, is -- the next deadline is -- not deadline, it's a target -- is December 31<sup>st</sup>. And that is to get all of the chemical weapons out. But in terms of when the next step would be, I don't have a timeline of that.

Anne.

**QUESTION:** I realize part of this is kind of DOD-flavored, but you might know the answer.

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

**QUESTION:** So is it proper to call this a warship, or is it a military-owned, but not non-warship ship?

(Laughter.)

**MS. PSAKI:** That is a very specific ship question. I would hesitate to answer incorrectly. I'd have to check on specifically how we categorize it. I don't believe it is a warship, but let me see if we can get more specification on how we – what we call it exactly.

**QUESTION:** Okay. And on the policy side, I mean, is there any disappointment here that after casting about to – for a friend here, it ends up being the U.S. having to essentially do this on its own?

**MS. PSAKI:** I wouldn't categorize it that way. I mean, certainly this is a priority for the U.S., as it is for the international community, to destroy and eliminate the chemical weapons. The OPCW is still talking to countries. There are countries that have made public comments about their willingness to help, so we'll see how that all shakes out. And certainly, we'd welcome the support or contribution of other countries.

**QUESTION:** Well, I'd imagine from your perspective, it should be a shared priority among many nations who would also share the same goal of the ultimate destruction, right? I mean, everybody was waving a flag when that – when the thing was signed.

**MS. PSAKI:** Certainly, and there are countries, as you know, throughout that have been open to contributing that couldn't for a variety of reasons, whether it's regulations or capacity or resources. But they're still talking to countries about contributing and being a part of this, and certainly we're hopeful of that as well.

**QUESTION:** So if the question is: "Are you surprised that you've been left holding the bag on this, once again," --

**MS. PSAKI:** We're not holding the bag yet, Matt.

**QUESTION:** -- the answer would be no, you're not surprised. You expected your friends in Europe to wimp out.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we made clear we were open to contributing from the beginning, Matt. There are other countries that have expressed an openness to contributing in some capacity. They're all going to make their decisions about what that will – what will – that will entail, and we'll let the OPCW decide how all of it will work together.

**QUESTION:** What about Russia, who you made this deal with and has been instrumental, as you say, in helping move this towards a resolution? Why can't Russia contribute in a significant way like you can?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not familiar with what they have contributed or what they've committed to contribute or what they have not. Obviously, there are financial ways – there are a number of ways to contribute. We certainly welcome any country's contribution. There are different ways that each country can do that.

**QUESTION:** Are you in touch with the Russians specifically about making an – a contribution?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not sure. I'd have to check on that and see if it's a discussion that's been a part of the regular discussions with Foreign Minister Lavrov.

**QUESTION:** Jen, still on Syria.

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

**QUESTION:** Yesterday, Mike Rogers, the chair of the Intelligence Committee, warned that there are many jihadis that are Americans and Europeans and Westerners and so on, that they go back and forth and so on. Are you concerned about these jihadis being trained in Syria and now they come back to the United States and perhaps organize terrorist acts?

**MS. PSAKI:** I haven't seen his comments specifically. I know – I believe he may have been on a Sunday show yesterday. I haven't read them fully. We've – we're naturally concerned, as you know, about extremists whether they're going in and certainly and if they're coming out. I talked a little bit, I think it was a week or two ago, about ways that we coordinate with our international partners in the region to kind of track this and efforts we undertake to make sure we're watching, but of course we're concerned. I don't have any other specifics for you.

**QUESTION:** Are you pressing your partners in this case, like the Saudis and the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, that have been supplying arms and money in the past for these extremist groups – are you pressing them not to do so?

**MS. PSAKI:** We have consistently, and all the countries, as you know, have agreed repeatedly to contribute assistance through the SMC.

**QUESTION:** Finally, yesterday there was a report in the *Telegraph*, *The London Telegraph*, that says basically the Free Syrian Army now is becoming a group of warlords and accumulating money and gangs and so on and have no interest, really, in reaching a settlement. Is that your assessment, or are you still working very closely with General Idris?

**MS. PSAKI:** We are still working very closely with General Idris, we're still working towards a Geneva conference in January, and we still believe there's no military solution, as you know.

More on Syria?

**QUESTION:** Still on Syria.

**MS. PSAKI:** Or – go ahead, Roz.

**QUESTION:** Still on Syria, the Iranian Foreign Minister Zarif did an interview with Al Jazeera this morning. And when it came to Geneva II, he said that while Iran is, quote: not begging to attend the talks in January, it would attend if invited. My first question: Would the U.S. be willing to invite Iran to take part in these talks? And if so, what does the U.S. believe that Iran could bring to this situation to try to end the civil war?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, no decisions have been made about participation yet. There's another trilateral meeting on December 20<sup>th</sup> coming up that we'll be participating in with the UN and the Russians. Our position hasn't changed on Iran's participation or whether we believe they should be invited. They have not endorsed the Geneva communique. That's a condition we feel is necessary, but obviously this will continue to be discussed at the next trilateral meeting.

**QUESTION:** But given the -- that the UN is now estimating that upwards of 120-25,000 people may have been killed in the civil war to date --

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

**QUESTION:** -- Is there some sort of leverage that Tehran could bring to the table to try to induce the Assad regime to, if nothing else, stop the killing and try to at least put in some sort of ceasefire?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, this goes back to the premise that attendees should be endorsing the Geneva communique, because that is what the purpose and the goal of the conference is. So, I don't have any speculation on what leverage they may or may not have, but the conversations we have had with them in recent weeks have been about their nuclear program and moving towards a first-step agreement on that. They've not been focused on Syria. And our position on whether or not they should attend the Geneva conference in January hasn't changed.

**QUESTION:** But you do feel that if they do endorse Geneva I, there's a great deal of value for Iran's participation --

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we'd have to --

**QUESTION:** -- considering that it is --

**MS. PSAKI:** We'd have to evaluate it, Said. I don't want to get ahead of --

**QUESTION:** But it's a very ally of the regime. It supports other elements that help the regime in its fight, like Hezbollah so on.

**MS. PSAKI:** If that is a step they take, we can have a robust discussion in here about it.

**QUESTION:** Jen, are there any contacts currently between the United States Government and the Syrian regime? I mean, I know Secretary Kerry spoke months and months ago --

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** -- to Foreign Minister Muallem. Is there anything going on at the moment?

**MS. PSAKI:** And we have for some time, as you know, have had different channels, but I don't have anything specific for you. I can check if there have been any recent contacts on any level.

**QUESTION:** So there were reports over the weekend that some European countries are quietly beginning to --

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

**QUESTION:** -- reopen diplomatic conversations or channels with the Syrian regime because, I think, the fear is that this is just so blocked at the moment that they're --

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

**QUESTION:** -- it's not going anywhere.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, let me see if there have been any contacts at any level of the regime. We've -- they have happened in the past, as you mentioned, so I will see if there's more to report on that.

**QUESTION:** Can I go back to the Iranians and taking part in Geneva? I mean, I think over the last week or so, when there's been, like, various bouts of violence in Syria, that the Iranian Government has said that there needs to be a political solution to the situation in Syria. So don't you think that Iran is making more positive comments? I mean, I don't think the Russians have gone far beyond saying that there needs to be a political solution. They haven't said anything about President Assad leaving (inaudible).

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, the whole premise -- I mean the whole goal is to create a transitional governing body. That's the goal of a Geneva conference. So, certainly, they haven't embraced that as the focus of the Geneva communique, and --

**QUESTION:** Well, even though the Russians have agreed to a political transition, your definition of a transition is far different from the -- than the Russians' definition of a transition. So if the Iranians were to say, like, okay, we accept a political transition, I mean, does that really mean that they --

**MS. PSAKI:** It's not just about a political transition. It's about embracing the Geneva communique, which they have not done. If they do that, we will evaluate whether or not we'd support their -- an invitation to them to attend the conference.

QUESTION: Zarif also told us that his country is not interested in aggravating any sectarian tensions between Shiite and Sunni, between Alawite and other major Islamic communities; that they're trying to, in their efforts, promote more harmony, more peace. Does that add any – does that change the complexion at all, particularly in Syria?

MS. PSAKI: I don't want to speak too specifically to an interview I haven't yet seen yet, and neither has anyone on our team. Broadly speaking, obviously we took a significant step forward with the first-step agreement on their nuclear program, but there are remaining concerns that we have, as you all are familiar with, whether it's their involvement in support of the regime in Syria or humanitarian issues, and so that has not changed that. I can take a closer look once we see the transcript of the interview and see if we have more comments on Foreign Minister Zarif's comments.

QUESTION: You're saying your team does not watch Al Jazeera?

MS. PSAKI: Well, that is not true; we do. However, I believe there's only been a very short clip that has played of this interview that I'm sure will get lots of attention once it all plays.

QUESTION: Beyond the interview, he's freely reaching out. He visited Kuwait. He's reaching out to the other Gulf countries. He wants to visit Saudi Arabia. I mean, there is an effort underway to alleviate their fears and actually encourage them towards participating in Geneva II to make it a success. You must have some sort of a reading of this effort.

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any particular reading of it for you, Said. Our position, I think, has been pretty clear on whether or not they attend the Geneva conference.

QUESTION: I have another really quick logistics thing. On the December 20<sup>th</sup> meeting, that's Wendy Sherman and that – it's the same iteration?

MS. PSAKI: It is that level. Exactly, yes. Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Is that new or was that announced last week or something –

MS. PSAKI: I believe we talked about it last week as being the next meeting.

QUESTION: On China – (inaudible)

QUESTION: Please, Jen, can we stay on Iran, please?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Let's stay on Iran and then we can go to China.

QUESTION: On the 6<sup>th</sup> of February in this room, I had a very brief exchange with your predecessor, Victoria Nuland –

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- about Iran. And with your indulgence, I will read it in its entirety for the purpose of the record and so you can respond to it.

*"Rosen: There have been reports that intermittently, and outside of the formal P5+1 mechanisms, the Obama Administration, or members of it, have conducted direct secret bilateral talks with Iran. Is that true or false?"*

*"Nuland: We have made clear, as the Vice President did at Munich, that in the context of the larger P5+1 framework, we would be prepared to talk to Iran bilaterally. But with regard to the kind of thing that you're talking about on a government-to-government level, no."*

That's the entirety of the exchange.

As we now know, senior state department officials had, in fact, been conducting direct, secret bilateral talks with senior officials of the Iranian Government in Oman, perhaps dating back to 2011 by that point.

So the question today is a simple one: When the briefer was asked about those talks and flatly denied them from the podium, that was untrue, correct?

MS. PSAKI: I mean, James, I – that – you're talking about a February briefing, so 10 months ago. I don't think we've outlined or confirmed contacts or specifics beyond a March meeting. I'm not going to confirm others beyond that at this point. So I don't know that I have any more for you.

QUESTION: Do you stand by the accuracy of what Ms. Nuland told me, that there had been no government-to-government contacts, no secret direct bilateral talks with Iran as of the date of that briefing, February 6<sup>th</sup>? Do you stand by the accuracy of that?

MS. PSAKI: James, I have no new information for you today on the timing of when there were any discussions with any Iranian officials.

QUESTION: Let me try it one last way, Jen --

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

QUESTION: -- and I appreciate your indulgence.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

QUESTION: Is it the policy of the State Department, where the preservation or the secrecy of secret negotiations is concerned, to lie in order to achieve that goal?

MS. PSAKI: James, I think there are times where diplomacy needs privacy in order to progress. This is a good example of that. Obviously, we have made clear and laid out a number of details in recent weeks about discussions and about a bilateral channel that fed into the P5+1 negotiations, and we've answered questions on it, we've confirmed details. We're happy to continue to do that, but clearly, this was an important component leading up to the agreement that was reached a week ago.

QUESTION: Since you, standing at that podium last week, did confirm that there were such talks, at least as far back as March of this year, I don't see what would prohibit you from addressing directly this question: Were there secret direct bilateral talks between the United States and Iranian officials in 2011?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything more for you today. We've long had ways to speak with the Iranians through a range of channels, some of which you talked – you mentioned, but I don't have any other specifics for you today.

QUESTION: One more on Iran?

QUESTION: *The Los Angeles Times* and *Politico* have reported that those talks were held as far back as 2011. Were those reports inaccurate?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not sure which reports you're talking about. Are you talking about visits that the Secretary and others made to Oman, or are you talking about other reports?

QUESTION: I'm talking about U.S. officials meeting directly and secretly with Iranian officials in Oman as far back as 2011. *The Los Angeles Times* and *Politico* have reported those meetings. Were those reports inaccurate?

MS. PSAKI: I have nothing more for you on it, James, today.

QUESTION: One more on Iran?

MS. PSAKI: On Iran? Let's just finish Iran and then we can go to China. Go ahead, Roz.

QUESTION: One of – one more on Iran. Foreign Minister Zarif said, directly contradicting the Obama Administration's contention that sanctions worked, he told our interviewer that when the sanctions were first imposed, Iran had 200 working centrifuges. Today, they have more than 19,000. What is this building's reaction to his comment that sanctions did not work and did not bring Iran to the negotiating table?

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, I would like to look more closely at the context of the comments. But, just as reminder, President Rouhani and others have talked about how the impact – how growing the economy and putting an end – doing – bringing an end to the sanctions is something that was a priority for them in order to help the economy and the Iranian people. There's no question, if you look just at the facts of the impact of oil revenues, the impact on their economic growth writ large that there was a huge impact of – that there – the sanctions had an enormous impact, and that that was a driving factor in bringing the Iranians back to the negotiating table.

In terms of progress made on their efforts to develop a nuclear weapon, whether through centrifuges or at their various facilities, that to me sounds like a separate question. Obviously, there was concerns about steps they were taking and progress they were making, which was why it was so important to come to an acceptable agreement that would halt and roll back the progress of their program.

QUESTION: Just to follow up on that, though –

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- Secretary Kerry, when he did his round robin of interviews after the announcement of the deal in Geneva, more than once stated that when Iran had reached out to the Bush-Cheney Administration in 2003, Iran was only in possession of 164 centrifuges. Now, he would go on to say, they have 19,000, and this therefore represents the best possible deal that could be secured.

Isn't it a fact that since the Obama-Biden Administration took office, 70 percent of Iran's centrifuges have been installed?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I'd have to look at the statistics, James, but we have not questioned the fact that Iran has made progress on enrichment and on developing a nuclear weapon. We have not questioned that. That's one of the reasons why we stepped up sanctions over the past couple of years. The President and Secretary Kerry were big proponents of that. We worked with the International community to do just that to put that necessary pressure in place. The point I was trying to make to Roz is that – what she's asking sounds to me like two separate questions, so that was –

QUESTION: Right. I'm pursuing the separate one part that she carved out, and that is to say -- and if this is untrue, I'd be grateful to be disabused of the notion -- but the great bulk of Iran's progress in the development of its enrichment program has taken place under President Obama's watch, correct?

MS. PSAKI: I'd have to check on the specific numbers. The --

QUESTION: You're not prepared to dispute that statement, as --

MS. PSAKI: Well, James, I think what we're focused on at this point is the fact that we're now at a point where we are halting and rolling back the progress of their program and we're working towards a comprehensive agreement to bring an end to it. I can't speculate for you what would happen without -- what would have happened without sanctions. I would venture to guess --

QUESTION: (Inaudible) sanctions.

MS. PSAKI: But they were being paired together, so that's why I'm bringing it into the conversation.

QUESTION: But the context of the question was exactly: "The Obama Administration says we showed up because our economy is falling apart. I'm here to tell you that's not the case. We have our own reasons for coming."

MS. PSAKI: Well, we will take a close look at his comments and we'll have more to say about them once we do.

QUESTION: Can I just go back to the Geneva meeting and --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

QUESTION: -- December 20<sup>th</sup> with Wendy Sherman?

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: This is --

MS. PSAKI: It's that level -- in terms of specific attendance, I'll have to just double-check that for you.

QUESTION: Oh, okay.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

QUESTION: This is going to be the first of the political meetings towards the next -- the comprehensive agreement --

MS. PSAKI: Well, they also --

QUESTION: -- or this is the technical discussions?

MS. PSAKI: No, no, no.

QUESTION: No, this is Syria.

MS. PSAKI: This is -- sorry, this is Syria.

QUESTION: Oh, I'm sorry.

MS. PSAKI: This is Syria.

QUESTION: Excuse me. I'm sorry.

MS. PSAKI: So this is the pre-Geneva. No, it's okay. It's confusing. Lots of Genevas.

QUESTION: Okay. But I did have an Iran question, actually.

QUESTION: But is there any new -- I mean --

QUESTION: Yeah.

QUESTION: -- when is it that you're going to start to negotiate the comprehensive deal with Iran?

MS. PSAKI: Well, right now, what we're focused on is the technical discussions leading up to the start of the six-month --

QUESTION: Right.

QUESTION: So do you have a date for those?

MS. PSAKI: I don't yet have a date on those.

QUESTION: Or a place?

MS. PSAKI: I don't yet have a place. It's being worked through. Hopefully we'll have an update for you all in the coming days.

QUESTION: And can I ask -- I don't know if you had seen the reports that the new British envoy to Iran is actually going to visit Tehran tomorrow. I wondered what the --

MS. PSAKI: I haven't seen that.

QUESTION: Well, I wanted a U.S. reaction to this following on to the question I asked last week about how far along the line you are prepared to go with your new diplomatic relations or not with Iran.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm. I still don't have any prediction of any step beyond what step we've already taken, which is being a part of the P5+1 agreement on the first step here with Iran. Obviously, different countries are going to make their own decisions, and as with most issues, we certainly support that.

QUESTION: Would it be helpful, though? Do you believe it's helpful that the British envoy could be going to Tehran?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't know that I have that level of analysis on it. I don't have all the details on what the purpose of the trip is or what they hope to accomplish. And obviously, every country will make their own decisions about diplomatic relationships.

**QUESTION:** Jen, one more on the --

**QUESTION:** East China Sea?

**QUESTION:** -- secret negotiations with Iran.

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

**QUESTION:** I apologize if you've already addressed this, but there have been reports that the secret negotiations that the U.S. was engaging in with Iran created a feeling of resentment among P5+1 allies such as France, and then that contributed to a rift among the P5+1 and made it difficult to reach consensus within that group. Do you have a reaction to that or a comment on that?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't want to speak to anonymous reports about what may or may not be the feelings by other countries, but I will reiterate for you that this was -- these discussions were fed into the P5+1 process. That is the process that we ultimately all worked through to achieve a first-step agreement here. The P5+1 members, as well as our friends in Israel, were briefed early this fall.

As to the discussions, we have always been clear we've been open to bilateral discussions with Iran; that there are a range of channels to do that through; that if anything got serious, that we would certainly be briefing our important partners on that; and that's exactly what we did in this case.

**QUESTION:** Jen --

**QUESTION:** And when did the talks begin?

**MS. PSAKI:** James, you're so tricky over there. (Laughter.)

**QUESTION:** Can I ask about China?

**MS. PSAKI:** Let me just say one thing, though, for James. It's important here too -- and then I promise we'll go to China -- it's important here also to note, though, that these really picked up after President Rouhani's election, that in terms of the discussion of specific pieces about how to move forward, what kind of -- what an agreement could look like, that's when it picked up. So I understand that's not answering your question, but I felt it was important to --

**QUESTION:** But just on the basis of methodology and removing the specifics of Iran and who's president or who's Secretary of State, if you were able to stand there at the podium last week and say, "Yes, I'm confirming a certain set of talks that occurred in March," explain to me what is it that prohibits you from saying, yes or no, that a certain set of talks occurred two years ago?

**MS. PSAKI:** If I have more details for you, James, I will -- happy to share them.

**QUESTION:** I didn't ask you -- I'm asking for your thinking about why you're not addressing the question, not the specifics of the meetings. What is it that prohibits you from addressing a question about meetings that are two years old?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not going to do a psychiatrist chair today.

Go ahead. On China?

**QUESTION:** What about the couch? (Laughter.)

**QUESTION:** Thank you, Jen. So as we know, the U.S. Government has already told U.S. carriers to comply with China's requirements before any flights pass through the new air defense zone established by the Chinese Government. So does that mean the U.S. Government has recognized this new air defense zone established by the Chinese Government?

**MS. PSAKI:** So let me be absolutely as clear as I can be here because I know there's been a range of reporting. It has been -- some of it has been inaccurate, to no fault of -- perhaps it's our fault for not explaining it well enough. So we are not -- the State Department is not the point of contact with airlines. The FAA is the point of contact with airlines. There has not been any information that has been put out or confirmed that I am aware of that has conveyed what has or has not been communicated in that capacity to airlines.

There is -- for safety and security of passengers, U.S. carriers operate internationally -- operate consistently as a process with the notices to airmen issued by foreign countries, as is the case in this case. Their concerns are about the safety and security of passengers. That is different from what the U.S. Government policy is. It is not -- this is in no way indicates U.S. Government acceptance of China's requirements in the newly declared ADIZ and has absolutely no bearing on the firm and consistent U.S. Government position that we do not accept the legitimacy of China's requirements.

This is a case where China announced this in an uncoordinated fashion. It's inconsistent with standard practice. And their requirements for operating exceed internationally accepted practice in this capacity. So I don't know how much more clear that it is, but it does contradict a bit your question, so I wanted --

QUESTION: It looks like we received the statement or the Q&A from the State Department, so it looks like it's from the U.S. Government. And also, you are saying --

MS. PSAKI: Well, in that statement, which I certainly was well aware of, what was conveyed in there is that for safety and -- for the safety and security of passengers, U.S. carriers operate consistently internationally with the notices to airmen issued by foreign governments. It did not convey that -- anything specific about what had been communicated to airlines. It did not convey that the U.S. Government supported this effort. So I'm very familiar with the statement you're referring to, and there were a lot of -- there were some assumptions made.

QUESTION: So (inaudible) --

QUESTION: Okay. It looks like --

QUESTION: -- that the FAA did not instruct airlines to comply with the Chinese regulations?

MS. PSAKI: I would point you to the FAA for what they did or did not communicate to commercial airlines.

QUESTION: Okay. Well, the FAA is part of the U.S. Government, is it not?

MS. PSAKI: They are. They --

QUESTION: Yes.

MS. PSAKI: Certainly, they are not housed in the State Department, however. (Laughter.)

QUESTION: So -- I understand that, but the State Department does have a representative -- you're familiar with the ICAO?

MS. PSAKI: I am not.

QUESTION: Okay. It's in Montreal.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

QUESTION: It's a good excuse to get to Montreal --

MS. PSAKI: Good.

QUESTION: -- If you ever want to go up there.

MS. PSAKI: I will take that advice.

QUESTION: It's the International Civilian -- it's the civilian airline -- the UN agency for airlines. Do you know if the United States is going to use its membership in the ICAO to oppose this Chinese decision?

MS. PSAKI: I don't.

QUESTION: And if you don't know, could you ask?

MS. PSAKI: Yeah, I'm happy to check on that for you, Matt. Absolutely.

QUESTION: And when you say that the U.S. Government does not accept the legitimacy of the Chinese requirements --

MS. PSAKI: Well, it doesn't accept -- yeah, the Chinese requirements, right.

QUESTION: Right. That's what you said.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Doesn't that -- if the FAA has been telling airlines that they have to comply with this, or that they should comply with it, how is that not accepting -- the government accepting the legitimacy?

MS. PSAKI: Well, there's a whole field of regulations and regulatory policy that I am certainly far from an aviation expert, as it evidenced by your Montreal question. So I would point you to them on that.

Evidence of the fact that the U.S. Government does not accept China's requirement is by the fact that the announcement will not change how the United States conducts military operations in the region, which is something DOD announced last week. And that is certainly a U.S. Government decision to make.

QUESTION: So does that mean that U.S. Government planes will not obey the -- or will not follow the Chinese requirements if they're flying through this airspace?

MS. PSAKI: Military planes?

QUESTION: Say the Secretary of State flying on an Air Force plane to Seoul or to Tokyo will not notify the --

MS. PSAKI: I am not aware of any upcoming Seoul trip coming up.

QUESTION: Well, the Vice President is there right now, or in Tokyo, at least. Are you saying that his plane, an Air Force plane, will not follow the requirements of the Chinese?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I am saying military planes would not, and that level of specificity I'd certainly have to check and see where that falls in.

**QUESTION:** What is this episode – what impact is this episode having on U.S.-Sino relations?

**MS. PSAKI:** There are times when we agree and there are times when we disagree, as you know. We've made clear our concerns about not only what was announced but how this was announced, the fact that there was no prior notice. As you also know, Vice President Biden is in the region now on a prior planned trip. He will, of course, be meeting with key leaders to discuss a range of issues. Certainly, this could be a topic of discussion, but there are a number of other issues that we discuss both with China and other partners in the region.

**QUESTION:** And has the pivot to Asia worked? Is this evidence of the pivot working?

**MS. PSAKI:** I wouldn't categorize this into – I wouldn't put this in the evaluation category of whether or not it worked. Our pivot to Asia, or rebalance to Asia, means focusing on Asia and the important partnership we have with Asia, with countries in the region, the economic and strategic partners. And nothing is further evidence of that than the Vice President's trip there, the fact that, as you know, the Secretary will be going back to Asia soon, that he was just there a couple of months ago with Secretary Hagel. So that is evidence of our commitment to the region. And we work with them on a – countries in the region on a broad range of issues.

**QUESTION:** But as we survey the last five years of this Administration, would you say that China is less aggressive in its serial commission of human rights abuses, currency manipulation, cyber warfare against U.S. businesses and government, territorial aggression, or is it better than it used to be?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not going to do an evaluation of that. Obviously, we work with them on economic issues, we work with them on strategic issues. There are still issues, including human rights, including this issue we're talking about now, that we express concerns about when warranted, and we'll continue to do that. But we know that the relationship is a vital one and one that we need to keep plugging away at even when we disagree.

**QUESTION:** Jen, could I (inaudible) for a second?

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

**QUESTION:** Is it fair to characterize the U.S. position as being that aside from the official policy, for the purposes of safety and avoiding some kind of unfortunate incident, that commercial carriers should abide by the Chinese ADIZ requirements?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have – I'd point you again to the FAA on more specifics than what I just conveyed. There are a range of regulations and policies that, of course, they oversee or are in place, but our general position as a U.S. Government is that we don't accept China's requirements. And obviously, the military – actions of military exercises is evidence of that.

**QUESTION:** Jen, this comes from --

**QUESTION:** Sorry, sorry. Just a quick follow-up on that.

**MS. PSAKI:** Go ahead.

**QUESTION:** It looks like the two main U.S. airlines are complying with – are taking steps to comply. Delta and United are the two that have flight routes through the area, which seems to have kind of created a little bit of confusion/consternation in Japan over a perceived rift with Japanese policy, which is to not allow U.S. commercial airliners to file their flight plans with China. Do you have a – do you have any kind of reassurance or any kind of response to that?

**MS. PSAKI:** We coordinate closely with Japan and with South Korea and all of the countries in the region about a range of issues. And certainly on this issue, we have been in touch with Japan and will continue to be. This is – for specific actions of individual commercial airliners, I would point you to them or the FAA on any regulations.

**QUESTION:** But – so you're not – but you're not afraid for the safety or concerned about the safety of U.S. citizens on flights that are flying through the area?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, certainly safety and security of citizens should be of concern to everyone. Obviously, there are policies in place and regulations in place because of that. But we don't oversee airline regulations. The FAA does, so I would point you to them.

**QUESTION:** (Inaudible.) Did the United States Government – the position has changed toward this ADIZ, or not changed? What is the position to ADIZ now?

**MS. PSAKI:** It has not changed. We – China announced the ADIZ without prior consultations even though the newly-announced ADIZ overlaps with parts of longstanding ADIZs of Japan, the Republic of Korea, and Taiwan, and includes territory administered by Japan. As I mentioned, we – the fact that China's announcement has caused confusion and increased the risk of accidents only further underscores the validity of concerns and the need for China to rescind the procedures. It's consistently been our position and one we have communicated both publicly and privately. I know there was some confusion over the weekend about airlines and specifically.

**QUESTION:** Jen, you said that you are not still – not accepting China's new air defense zone. But I wonder, like, Japan has its own air defense zone, and also part of it covers Taiwan. But it looks like the U.S. doesn't say anything about it. So do you think there is sort of a double standard? Why do you react so strongly to China's air defense zone?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, one of the reasons is that they announced this without prior consultations. It was inconsistent with longstanding procedure and process. And obviously, it overlaps with a number of other longstanding air defense zones of some other neighboring countries.

**QUESTION:** Jen --

**QUESTION:** Jen, you do not contest the ability of China to declare such a identification zone; it's just the manner in which they did it, or the extent?

**MS. PSAKI:** No. I think I have -- I've just consistently said that we believe they should rescind the procedures. I've just -- I've also stated a couple of times that we don't accept China's requirements. So I think I've made that pretty clear.

**QUESTION:** (Inaudible.)

**QUESTION:** Is the first --

**QUESTION:** In response to the -- China's declaration of its own ADIZ, the South Korean Government is poised to expand its own ADIZ, so-called KADIZ, to the South China Sea. What is the position of the United States? Would you encourage it or discourage it?

**MS. PSAKI:** I haven't seen those reports, or I don't even know if they're reports or if there's been an announcement. I haven't seen any announcement, I guess I should say. So let me check into that, and --

**QUESTION:** They say they have already started consultations with the United States.

**MS. PSAKI:** I'd have to check into it and see if we have more to say on that.

**QUESTION:** Is this the first time the U.S. has called --

**QUESTION:** Jennifer, you talk about safety --

**QUESTION:** -- for the zone to be rescinded?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'd have to check on that for you, Roz.

**QUESTION:** Can we change topic?

**QUESTION:** No.

**QUESTION:** You talk about safety. Are you really concerned that the Chinese may down an airliner or something?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not predicting that, but certainly there is -- they created these Air Defense Identification Zones, they've asked for prior flight plans. So of course, the security and safety is part of the regulatory process, and -- but I don't have any predictions. It's just the question of abiding by it.

**QUESTION:** Is it a real concern, downing an airliner?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't think I have any more for you on that question.

**QUESTION:** Jen, when you're taking that question that Roz had --

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** -- could you also check whether the United States actually is directly asking the Chinese to rescind it?

**MS. PSAKI:** Happy to. Sure.

**QUESTION:** Thank you.

**QUESTION:** Well, at least --

**QUESTION:** Apart from the specific concerns about how this was announced without any prior notice, its excessiveness, at least in terms of other regulations, and the safety risks that you say it cause, do you have any -- are there broader concerns about this area being identified as essentially the entire East China Sea? Is the U.S. concerned that the Chinese are looking at anything on a map that has the word "China" in it as all their own?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, part of the concern is certainly that it overlaps with parts of other --

**QUESTION:** Right. But in terms of territorial claims --

**MS. PSAKI:** As well as territory administered by Japan, sure.

**QUESTION:** Right, right. But in terms of China's territorial claims, are you concerned that this is the first step or could be a first step towards actually moving in some kind of forceful way to take control of areas of territory and ocean maritime space that it says that it owns?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I don't want to make a prediction of that.

**QUESTION:** No, but I'm asking if you were concerned --

**MS. PSAKI:** But --

**QUESTION:** -- that this is a step in that direction, apart from the specific problems with the no prior notice and all that other -- the safety concerns.

**MS. PSAKI:** But one of the specific problems is also that this includes area -- territory administered by Japan, it includes overlapping area with other countries in the region. So certainly, that does touch on what your question is here. In terms of a prediction of what it will mean in the future, I certainly wouldn't venture to make that at this point.

**QUESTION:** Right. Well, the Chinese say that they would be well within their rights also to declare one of these zones over the entire -- over the South China Sea. Are you concerned about the possibility of that?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, you're familiar with what our position is on that, and we've long --

**QUESTION:** Well, that's over the territorial disputes over the -- It's a question of sovereignty for these little atolls and bits of rock.

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

**QUESTION:** Would you be as opposed as you are to this if the Chinese did it for the South China Sea, or is that a hypothetical question that you will wait to bash the Chinese over the head for once they -- if and when they do it?

**MS. PSAKI:** It is a hypothetical question at this stage in time.

**QUESTION:** All right.

**QUESTION:** One more thing. Just one more thing on that. China at the same time has announced they sent a fighter jet against United States and Japanese aircraft last week. Did you comment on that?

**MS. PSAKI:** I am not familiar with that specific report. In -- where, exactly?

**QUESTION:** If it's true, are you concerned about these Chinese announcement?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'd have to look at the specific report, and that may be a DOD question. James.

**QUESTION:** Given that China makes this declaration --

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

**QUESTION:** -- and we regard it as thoroughly problematic, if not illegal, and therefore we have on our hands a dispute with the Chinese --

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

**QUESTION:** -- which is to be adjudicated somehow in a nonviolent way, wasn't it a kind of a provocative act for the United States to fly B-52s through that very zone in a short time thereafter?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I would point you to DOD on that, but I would reiterate the fact that we have made clear that this action, this announcement, is not going to change our military exercises. And that is an example of that.

**QUESTION:** So other than taking -- other than the Vice President, are you aware -- or has there been at this point any conversations that you're aware of in this -- from this building with the Chinese directly? It's kind of on Jill's question. And if not, do you expect them or is this going to be left up to the Vice President when he goes to --

**MS. PSAKI:** Let me check. I know we have expressed concerns. I mentioned this last week, Matt, so let me just make sure you have it.

**QUESTION:** Jen, the -- Secretary Kerry did meet on Wednesday with a senior Chinese official?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'd have to --

**QUESTION:** On Wednesday, the vice premier.

**QUESTION:** Lu.

**QUESTION:** Yeah.

**MS. PSAKI:** I'd have to look back at that. It seems like a long time ago.

**QUESTION:** I know it does. And it was happening on Wednesday.

**MS. PSAKI:** Deputy Secretary Burns met last week with a Chinese official where this was a topic of discussion. Also, Assistant Secretary Russel spoke with the ambassador about a week ago, and Ambassador Locke has also been in touch, of course, on the ground. In terms of specific contacts over the last couple of days, I'm happy to check and see what else we can read out for all of you.

**QUESTION:** Are you taking this to the UN in any forum there?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have any prediction of that, James, at this point in time.

**QUESTION:** New topic?

**QUESTION:** So it's strictly a bilateral or a multilateral thing, but outside the auspices of the UN is how you're going to seek to resolve it?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I don't have anything for you on it at this point. We're taking this day by day. I conveyed for you what we've done and what we've communicated. But obviously, we're taking steps day by day.

**QUESTION:** But is that a kind of – is that a consideration?

**MS. PSAKI:** Not that I'm aware of, Elise. But obviously, we're taking this day by day.

**QUESTION:** Can we change --

**QUESTION:** New subject?

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure, Jill. Go ahead.

**QUESTION:** I'm still on China. Can you actually clarify this? China's argument is that we institute the ADIZ that other countries have already instituted. If you're saying that China does not have a right to do that, they can say, well, what's good for the goose is good for the gander. And it doesn't seem like you have a legal foot to stand on. If you're opposed to the way in which they did it or the extent of it, these can be a subject of debate. And China has said we can get rid of our ADIZ if the Japanese get rid of theirs. I mean, something like that could happen. But somehow – are you really saying that you do not accept – you do not give China the right to declare a defense identification zone?

**MS. PSAKI:** I think I've thoroughly outlined what our concerns are, so I'm not sure I have much more to add to your question.

**QUESTION:** Just on another topic, Jen – sorry.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we were going to go to Jill next, and then I'm happy to go to you.

**QUESTION:** North Korea?

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** Merrill Newman.

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

**QUESTION:** You've seen probably, or read at least, his so-called confession. Do you have any comments about that, any reaction? And what is the latest on his status?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, the latest is – and let me do this first and then I'll do the second part. On November 30<sup>th</sup>, North Korea permitted the Embassy of Sweden, our protecting power, to consular access to Merrill Newman. It – and given his advanced age and health conditions, we continue to urge North Korea to release him so he may return home and reunite with his family.

We, of course, have seen the Korean Central News Agency report regarding Mr. Newman's detention. According to the report, he apologized for the misunderstanding that led him – led to his detention. We don't have any other further information regarding the reason for his detention. But again, given his age and health, we continue to call for North Korea to release him as quickly as possible.

**QUESTION:** Do you believe that the North Korean – that that apology was – that he wrote and that was released by the North Koreans – do you believe that he wrote that of his own volition and that he – and do you have reason to believe that all of those things in that apology are true?

**MS. PSAKI:** We just don't have any other further analysis. We've seen the same reports all of you have seen, of course, about his interview and the publication of that, but I don't have any other further analysis on it.

**QUESTION:** Are you aware if that – the subject of his quote, unquote "confession" came up in the meeting with the Swedes?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have anything more on it, but I'm happy to check and see if there's more detail we can outline for all of you.

**QUESTION:** Did the Swedes as for and did Mr. Newman sign a PAW?

**MS. PSAKI:** A Privacy Act waiver?

**QUESTION:** Correct.

**MS. PSAKI:** Yes, he did. That is why I am able to talk about him now.

**QUESTION:** Okay. So then if – since he has signed the waiver, would you take it back to your – whoever it is that liaises with the Swedes on this --

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

**QUESTION:** I assume it's EAP, but I guess it could also be EUR – and find out if Mr. Newman, in his discussions with the Swedes, talked at all about or said that he had freely made this alleged confession and when it was that he recorded this or when it --

**MS. PSAKI:** I am happy to take that and see if there's more we can share.  
Go ahead, Lesley.

QUESTION: Also, did the Swedes report back in what condition he is in? Has he been tortured? Anything today? And how long did they meet with him, and was it in a jail? Was it in a --

QUESTION: Guest house.

QUESTION: -- government -- a guest house?

QUESTION: A jailhouse guest house.

MS. PSAKI: A guest house. I don't have many specifics on that. I'm happy to also check with Matt's questions and to see if there's more we can share on that as well.

QUESTION: But didn't it include a --

QUESTION: But they did say -- the Swedes did say that he --

QUESTION: -- physical examination of him?

QUESTION: The Swedes did, I think, say that he was --

MS. PSAKI: I believe they've spoken publicly about it.

QUESTION: -- that he was treated -- that's he's being treated (inaudible), right?

MS. PSAKI: Right. I've seen those comments as well. So I don't have any other specifics on it, but if there's more we share beyond what they've said publicly, I'm happy --

QUESTION: Including whether or not there was a physical examination of him during this consular access?

QUESTION: I just want to get back to his confession. I mean, it is kind of written in language that kind of fits the narrative that North Korea has been saying, and I'm just wondering if you think that he wrote this. Are you -- I mean, there's often times that you would say, like, oh this person seemed under duress --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- or something like that. So I mean, I'm just -- about this particular confession, do you have any reason to believe that he did not confess to all of those things?

MS. PSAKI: I don't -- I certainly understand why you're asking. I don't have any particular analysis on it at this stage. I will see if this is something that our team is looking into, and if there's more we can say about it specifically.

QUESTION: And what is this building doing to secure his release beyond calling for his release from imprisonment? I mean, Ambassador King had tried months ago to go --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- for the other American under detention, Kenneth Bae. What's actually being done to get them out?

MS. PSAKI: Well, our Swedish protecting power just visited with him two days ago, and obviously that's an important component of reaching out to citizens who are detained in North Korea. We certainly do continue to call for his release. I don't have any other predictions or announcements on travel or visits of other officials at this point to tell you about.

QUESTION: But beyond those consular visits, I mean, is there any outreach to the Chinese specially on behalf of Mr. Newman?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have more I can outline for all of you, but I can check and see if there is any more to tell.

QUESTION: Have they been helpful the past with Kenneth Bae or with others? The Chinese (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: They have been helpful, but there's not more specifics I can outline.

QUESTION: Through the Swedes are elsewhere, has North Korea communicated any demands or requests of the United States that have to do with Newman or -- as a prelude to his possible release?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any more specifics on the contact with the Swedes and kind of what the discussion entailed beyond confirming --

QUESTION: Well, any -- in any forum, have they asked for anything from the United States?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any details on it. I am happy to check if there's any more to share with all of you.

QUESTION: But you guys are in touch with the North Koreans directly, just to confirm?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we -- as you know, we've long had a channel, but we've been working in this case through our Swedish protective -- protecting power.

QUESTION: But you have been in touch with the North Koreans specifically on his matter?

MS. PSAKI: On this specific case, not that I'm aware of, but I'm happy to check if there's anything more on that.

QUESTION: Are you in touch with Mr. Newman's family?

MS. PSAKI: We are. We have been. Let me see if I have the detail of when we last spoke with him -- with his family. I don't have that detail for you. I'm happy to put that in the pocket of things I'm going to check on.

QUESTION: And have they asked for you to help facilitate any kind of visit by them to North Korea, given that this gentleman's actually -- I mean, he's quite elderly --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- so you would imagine that if -- there would be concern enough to try and travel to visit him.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm. I'm not aware of a request that they've made about that specifically, but we can see.

QUESTION: So all the attention, really, is on this Mr. Newman. But as we've said, Kenneth Bae has been held for quite a long time.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm. You're right.

QUESTION: So in your efforts working with the Swedes or working to try and get the release, I mean, are you emphasizing because of Mr. Newman's age and health that you need to get him out right away, or are they part of a package that you think that they --

MS. PSAKI: I mean, we'd certainly like to see them both released as quickly as possible. In terms of that level of detail, I just don't have that.

QUESTION: These American citizens being held against their will in a rogue state, they're hostages, right?

MS. PSAKI: I mean, they're being held by the governments. The governments have confirmed that, so I don't know that I need to categorize it further, James.

QUESTION: You don't regard them as hostages?

MS. PSAKI: Do we have another topic?

QUESTION: Yes. Could I move onto the --

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

QUESTION: -- the Secretary's trip.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Okay. The portion to the West Bank and to Israel.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

QUESTION: Yes. If you have more to share with us -- today or yesterday, President Abbas, the president of the Palestinian Authority, was so impressed with the Geneva success, now he's suggesting a format, perhaps another Geneva, where the Palestinian-Israeli issue could be resolved. Would you look kindly at this suggestion?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I haven't seen those comments from him specifically. I know this has been an idea floated out there. Our focus remains on the direct negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians. We're a facilitator in that effort. There are certainly a number of countries who have a great investment and great interest in the success -- in a successful outcome here, including the Arab League, including many other countries that want to contribute to growing the Palestinian economy. But that's our focus, not on planning yet another conference.

QUESTION: And a Palestinian member of the Israeli Knesset, Mr. Ahmed Tibi, claims that the 20,000 housing that the Israelis announced and they put on hold were actually not put on hold, that there is -- construction is ongoing. Do you have any information on that?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything new on that. I'd have to look into that for you.  
Scott?

QUESTION: (Inaudible.)

MS. PSAKI: Oh.

QUESTION: Can we stay on stay on that?

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

QUESTION: Just on this idea of not necessarily a Geneva-type conference for the peace process, but just the idea of internationalizing the process, would the United States -- would the Administration object to an internationalization of the peace process?

MS. PSAKI: Well, it's hard to know exactly what that means. Obviously, as you all are well aware, there's direct negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians now. That's what our focus is on, so certainly that's not a path we're pursuing.

QUESTION: Well, I think that the point that -- right, it's not a path that you're pursuing --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- but the point that people who are suggesting that this might be a way to go, the point that they make is that the United States has been the sole and unique arbiter, mediator, facilitator, whatever you want to call it, of Israeli-Palestinian peace talks going back decades.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** And you haven't gotten anything out of it. There's been no success. It's been one failure after another. Is it perhaps not time to try something new, is the argument that these people would make.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, Matt, obviously, many people are going to make different arguments about how it should proceed. We're less than halfway through the nine-month timeline here. There are a number of countries that are engaged and invested, including, of course, the Arab League, who, as you know, are in very close contact with the Palestinians and engaged in this effort. There are many who are engaged with the Israelis in this effort. So our focus remains on the direct negotiations, and I don't think we're at this point speculating on a different alternative forum.

**QUESTION:** Well, let me -- okay. Well, let me put it this way: Is it still the position of the Administration that the United States has unique leverage and influence with both sides that makes it the only logical or capable, competent, credible mediator for peace between Israel and the Palestinians?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't know that we've ever stated it exactly like that. We're playing a facilitator role which both sides are comfortable with. There are other countries engaged with this effort and certainly in touch with the Israelis and the Palestinians. I expect that will continue. But in the meantime, we'll continue to play the facilitator role as long as it's productive.

**QUESTION:** Do you believe, does the Administration believe that the United States still has leverage and influence with Israel or the Palestinians? I mean, you say, in reference to other questions about, say, Mr. Newman or Mr. Bae in North Korea --

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

**QUESTION:** -- that the Chinese have influence with the North Koreans and you would like to go through them, maybe after you're done yelling at them about their air defense zone. But do you still think that the United States -- does the Administration believe that it has influence and leverage with either Israel or the Palestinians?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I think we have a close relationship with both. And obviously, we're at this point because both sides decided to come to the table. I don't think it's about leverage. There's -- it's in the interest of both sides to come to an agreement on the final status issues, and that's what they're working to do at this point.

**QUESTION:** Jen, could I just ask -- there was an agreement --

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** -- reached last week between the EU and Israel which will allow Israel to actually touch some funding for scientific research. There have been some problems because the EU wanted to bar all research in areas of -- in the West Bank --

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

**QUESTION:** -- settlement areas in the West Bank. Is there an -- I mean, does the American -- do America -- does America believe that this is a good agreement for the EU and Israel, given that Secretary Kerry has always mentioned that he fears an increasing isolation of Israel on the international stage?

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm. I haven't talked to our team about it, so I'd have to talk to them and see if we have any particular view on the agreement last week.

**QUESTION:** And is -- what is the message that Secretary Kerry's going to be bringing with him when he visits Israel later on this week?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I think he'll be talking to both sides about the importance of staying firm with the timeline and working through the tough and difficult issues that they're doing at the negotiating table, and reiterating the importance of coming to a peaceful end to the final negotiations. And of course, when he's meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu, they'll certainly be discussing the recent P5+1 agreement with Iran and having an ongoing dialogue about that as well.

**QUESTION:** And have there been any meetings, direct talks between the Israelis and Palestinians, since the resignation of the Palestinian team?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have any updates on meetings at this point. I'll see if there's any more we want to provide to all of you in terms of specific meetings and timing of that.

**QUESTION:** But I mean, since the last time the Secretary's been there, there's been another announcement of new settlement construction.

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

**QUESTION:** There's been the resignation of the Palestinian -- it just seems that without him actually physically there holding their hand for hours at a time, that they're not able to sustain it on their own.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, they've had many meetings when he has not been there. So obviously, we didn't expect this to be easy. We certainly are aware of some bumps in the road of late, but both sides have also reaffirmed their commitment to seeing this through.

**QUESTION:** Would you really call those bumps in the road, though? I mean, particularly on the -- actually, on either side, whether it's the Israelis continuing to announce settlement construction or the Palestinians' full negotiating team just giving up, it just doesn't seem as if --

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, when the negotiating -- and that's a good example. The negotiating team -- President Abbas reaffirmed his own commitment to seeing this through --

**QUESTION:** But it just --

**MS. PSAKI:** -- whether it was them or whether it was other officials in their place. So they're continuing to move forward.

**QUESTION:** It just doesn't seem like they have the -- while they may have the desire and the dream that there'll be a peace deal. The motivation to actually do the hard work day in and day out doesn't seem to be there. And so it does seem as if Secretary Kerry is the one holding this together personally, and isn't there, like, a limit to how much he can do?

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure. That's why he has a team to help work through it every day.

**QUESTION:** Well, I meant more the parties themselves.

**MS. PSAKI:** You're right, but there also is a long timeframe we still have left. One of the reasons committing to the nine-month timeframe was so important is because we knew there would be challenging periods throughout the process. But both sides remain committed to that, and so we'll continue to work through it.

**QUESTION:** But it doesn't sound like -- unless you could disabuse us of the notion, it doesn't sound like since Secretary Kerry's last trip in early November that there have actually been any direct talks.

**MS. PSAKI:** I wouldn't jump to that conclusion. We just have always said we wouldn't confirm every meeting.

**QUESTION:** Sure.

**MS. PSAKI:** So let me see if I can confirm any meetings since that point for all of you.

**QUESTION:** Jen, could you tell us if Ambassador Indyk is there now? Is he there? Is he in the region? Is he -- Ambassador Indyk, where --

**MS. PSAKI:** He's here. I saw him this morning.

**QUESTION:** He's here. Okay.

**MS. PSAKI:** Okay. Let's just do one or two more here.

Scott.

**QUESTION:** What is the U.S. view of what's going on in Thailand right now?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we certainly deeply regret the loss of life in Bangkok due to politically motivated violence. We condemn violence as a means to achieve political objectives and urge all sides to exercise restraint and respect the rule of law. We are concerned about the continuing political tension in Thailand, and we are following the situation closely. Peaceful protest and freedom of expression are important aspects of democracy, of course. Violence and seizure of public or private property, however, are not acceptable means of resolving political differences. We firmly believe all parties should work together to resolve differences through peaceful dialogue in ways that strengthen democracy and rule of law.

Ambassador Kenney spoke with the prime minister and -- has spoken with the prime minister and opposition leaders to also encourage restraint and peaceful dialogue. You may have also seen that the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok issued a security message for U.S. citizens in Thailand explaining that large political demonstrations may continue in coming days -- in the coming days, including at government facilities, in and outside of central Bangkok, and is advising them to avoid areas of demonstration and to exercise caution.

**QUESTION:** Following his talk with the prime minister, one of the main opposition leaders said that he would accept nothing short of her resignation. Is that a responsible position in the eyes of the United States?

**MS. PSAKI:** We just continue to encourage all parties to work together to resolve their differences. We, of course, have seen his comments, but I don't think we're going to weigh in further at this point, aside from encouraging restraint on the ground.

**QUESTION:** Would you weigh in on the general amnesty bill that the ruling party failed to get through parliament, which was one of the instigations for this?

**MS. PSAKI:** I know – I don't know if I've spoken to that in the past, Scott. I'd have to – I don't have anything for you on it at this particular moment, but I'm happy to follow up post-briefing.

Okay, let's do two more here. In the back, you've been very patient.

**QUESTION:** Thank you. Michael Vincent from the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. What's the U.S. response to the Australian Government's rejection of the U.S. company Archer Daniels Midland's bid for GrainCorp?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we are disappointed by the Government of Australia's decision to reject Archer Daniels Midland's proposed acquisition of GrainCorp. We do not – we do note that the Australian Treasurer Joe Hockey has expressed openness to approving an increase in ADM's current share in GrainCorp. The United States is the largest foreign investor – foreign direct investor in Australia, with 132 billion in investment projects to date, and we look forward to working closely with Australia's government to build stronger ties and investment – stronger trade and investment ties.

**QUESTION:** Just a quick follow-up.

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

**QUESTION:** Did – unrelated matter, but has the U.S. Government accepted private medical, legal, or religious information on Australian citizens as offered by Australian intelligence agencies?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have anything further or anything for you on a range of reports. I'm certainly not going to comment on any of them. As you know, we're undergoing our own review of these processes, which we expect to conclude by the end of the year.

**QUESTION:** Jen, back to ADM for a second.

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

**QUESTION:** Did – was this issue, this proposed sale, bid by ADM raised at the AUSMIN ministerial meetings?

**MS. PSAKI:** It's a good question, Matt. I'd have to check. It wasn't one raised while I was there, but let me check and see if it was.

**QUESTION:** And if it was, did – was – were you given any indication that this is the way your closest antipodal ally was going to go?

**MS. PSAKI:** I will check and see if it was even raised.

Okay, let's do one more. Go ahead, Samir.

**QUESTION:** Do you have a reaction to the draft constitution in Egypt today?

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** Can I throw a Bahrain question at the end of that?

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure. Why not?

Well, we continue to track the constitutional process with interest, and we'll examine the document carefully once it is finalized and sent to President Mansour, which we understand will occur tomorrow. The Egyptian people, of course, will decide the fate of the draft constitution in a referendum. We will continue to support a transition process that leads to an inclusive civilian government selected through free, fair, and transparent elections, and civilian government based on the rule of law, fundamental freedoms, accountability, and an open and competitive economy. So we will see when it is transferred, and we will take a close look at it.

Bahrain.

**QUESTION:** Yeah. Do you have any view on the government --

**QUESTION:** A quick one on Egypt. Hold on. I'm sorry, Matt. You don't have any comment on the prohibition of religious parties in Egypt?

**MS. PSAKI:** Again, we'll wait to comment on it until it's been officially transferred. Obviously, there are steps in there we may be complimentary of and others we may not be.

**QUESTION:** Yes, please.

**QUESTION:** Does the decision of the – not to release this human rights campaigner when he was eligible to be released? It was yesterday or today.

**MS. PSAKI:** Let me see. I think I have something on this. One moment, Matt.

**QUESTION:** Mm-hmm. You can get it – if you just want to make it a TQ, that's fine.

**MS. PSAKI:** Yeah, that's fine. I believe I have something on it for you. Let's see. We continue to encourage Bahrain to take the necessary steps to promote reconciliation among Bahrainis, including permitting all sectors of society to voice their political views in a peaceful manner. We have seen reports that the head of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights Nabeel Rajab – is that who you're talking about – okay --

**QUESTION:** (Inaudible.)

**MS. PSAKI:** -- was denied early release today in Bahrain. We understand that he has served 18 months of his two-year prison sentence and is scheduled to be released in May of next year. We remain deeply concerned about the three-year prison sentence for leading illegal gatherings. We urge the Government of Bahrain to protect the universal rights of freedom of expression and assembly, just as we urge all elements of Bahraini society to engage in peaceful expressions of political opinion.

**QUESTION:** Do you think that he should've been released as was -- as he could've been today?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I believe we are concerned about his -- we were concerned about his three-year prison sentence, I believe. Let me check and see, but I believe that's what we're implying here.

**QUESTION:** I mean, this is not the first. I mean, there have been several other opposition activists and so forth that have been detained. I mean, does this cast doubt on your encouraging words earlier in the year about Bahrain's commitment to political reforms?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we certainly are encouraging them to take some step -- to take necessary steps to promote reconciliation. And obviously, each time that there is a case like this, we have expressed concern. So I don't have any analysis as to what that will mean longer-term or about the overall relationship, but each time there has been an incident, we have certainly expressed our concern.

**QUESTION:** Well, but each time -- you say each time that there's been an incident. I mean, there's a pattern of incidents. I mean, does that say something about their actual commitment to reforms?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I don't have any more analysis on it for you.

Thanks, everyone.

**QUESTION:** Thank you.

(The briefing was concluded at 3:18 p.m.)

**DPB # 196**

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**Subject:** FW: Updated: State Department Satellite Feed: State Department Satellite Feed: State Department Satellite Feed

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PART B5

B5

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**Subject:** Updated: State Department Satellite Feed: State Department Satellite Feed: State Department Satellite Feed

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12/03/2013 08:31 AM EST

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December 2, 2013 Duration: 19:00

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December 2, 2013 Duration: 01:13:17

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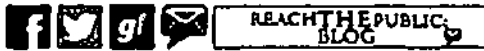
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**Sent:** Monday, December 02, 2013 5:47 PM  
**To:** (U) Schachter, Andrew N; PA FO Core; PA OBS\_BS&P; (U) PA Press (PACE); PA SPOX; (U) PA Stenos (PACE); PA-IME Staff  
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**From:** Schachter, Andrew N (PACE)  
**Sent:** Monday, December 02, 2013 5:47 PM  
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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
DAILY PRESS BRIEFING

DPB # 196

MONDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2013  
(ON THE RECORD UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED)

**\*\*UNEDITED/DRAFT\*\***

1:54 p.m. EST

MS. PSAKI: Hi, everyone. Happy --

QUESTION: Happy belated birthday.

MS. PSAKI: Thank you. Thank you very much. Twenty-two. It's glorious. (Laughter.)

QUESTION: And you will be 22 for the next --

MS. PSAKI: I will be.

QUESTION: What, 10, 15 years?

MS. PSAKI: At least, at least. Well, I have nothing at the top, so Matt, let's go to what's on your mind.

QUESTION: Let's see. I have a lot --

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

**QUESTION:** -- but nothing is really worth starting with, so let's just start with the Secretary's trip.

**MS. PSAKI:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** Both -- excluding the middle stop at Moldova, at the beginning, how much of the NAC do you expect is going to be concentrated on Afghanistan and then talking about the BSA? Will there be any Afghan officials there to talk with? And then -- well, that'll be that one question for --

**MS. PSAKI:** Okay. Well, we'll clearly, as we typically do, be doing a briefing en route about the trip and about our visit to the NATO Ministerial tomorrow, where we will venture to have more specific details about who will be attending. Obviously, Afghanistan and the ongoing presence there post-2014 of the United States and of NATO will certainly be a big topic of discussion. But I will let our briefers outline more specifics en route to Brussels.

**QUESTION:** All right. Well, I was going to ask about the Middle East but -- as well, the stop in Israel and the PA. But if you're just -- are you going to give me the same answer, wait for the briefing on the plane?

**MS. PSAKI:** I likely will, yes.

**QUESTION:** Okay. Well, then never mind.

**MS. PSAKI:** Okay.

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

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure, Lesley.

**QUESTION:** Is -- what further is happening as far as trying to resolve this issue with Afghanistan?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well --.

**QUESTION:** As far as -- is it true that --

**MS. PSAKI:** The BSA.

**QUESTION:** The -- exactly.

**MS. PSAKI:** The signing, I assume.

**QUESTION:** Is it true that Special Envoy Dobbins has gone -- is on his way to Afghanistan?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have any announcements at this point on travel for him or anyone else. Obviously, our team on the ground, Ambassador Cunningham and others, have been in close contact. At this point, we've made our position clear, and so have the Afghan people. Signing the BSA soon is the path forward, as we've said many times, to sustaining a partnership between the United States and Afghanistan to support Afghans in achieving lasting peace, security, and development. That's the message that we're conveying at every level. And as we've said before but important to reiterate here, given it's a week later now: We -- deferring the signature of the agreement until after next year's election is not viable. It would not provide Afghans with the certainty that they deserve regarding their future in the critical months leading to the elections, nor would it provide the United States and NATO allies the clarity necessary for a potential post-2014 military presence.

So we're continuing to convey that. Our team on the ground is certainly hard at work. I don't have any travel announcements. If that changes, we'll certainly let all of you know.

**QUESTION:** Has Secretary spoken to President Karzai in the last couple of days on BSA?

**MS. PSAKI:** He has not spoken with him in the last couple of days.

**QUESTION:** And the Pentagon today said that this is not the end of it; after BSA is signed, the U.S. and Afghanistan have to negotiate and sign their agreement called SOFA, and that would be done by the State Department. Has any process started on SOFA, signing of SOFA with Afghanistan?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'd have to look more specifically at what they said. Maybe you're referring to the NATO SOFA that they may have to negotiate and sign, I believe, as a step? But for our purposes, there's the signing; it goes through parliament, then it would have to be signed again. Obviously, as you all are very familiar with, this doesn't outline a specific number for a troop presence, so there would be a great deal of planning in regards to that that DOD would certainly be very engaged with. But in terms of that, I'd have to look at specifically what they said. I'm not familiar with that --

**QUESTION:** Is December 21<sup>st</sup> the redline, the deadline for signing of BSA, after which you will begin preparing for all troops pull out from Afghanistan post 2014.

**MS. PSAKI:** I am not going to get into new redlines or deadlines today, I will say. But on the trip question, well, as you all know, a decision hasn't been made. You would know if it had been. It's not our preference, but no troops is certainly a potential outcome for Afghanistan if there is no BSA. So that is, again, not our preference, but natural that planning would have to take place for all different options.

**QUESTION:** Have you tried to understand why President Karzai is doing what he's doing or conducting himself the way he has? Do you have a clearer picture than we do, for instance?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't know that I have any further insight than you do. Obviously, the Secretary spoke with him last week, as you all well know. We continue to press our case for why this should be signed as quickly as possible, but I don't have any analysis of particular actions or comments in Afghanistan.

**QUESTION:** So you think that he's perhaps more concerned about his personal safety post the elections?

**MS. PSAKI:** I will let you, Said, do your own analysis. I don't have any other analysis on it.

Do we have any more on Afghanistan?

**QUESTION:** Just the trip?

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

**QUESTION:** For those of us who are interested in Moldova --

**MS. PSAKI:** Yes.

**QUESTION:** -- could you just tell us why stop in Moldova? What's the importance? We see the winery, et cetera.

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure. Moldova is a country that has taken a number of important reform steps in recent years. They have – they're taking steps to help grow their economy, and wine is obviously a significant export. But they have a number of exports they also work with. And given the steps they've taken, the Secretary felt it would be an important opportunity to pay a visit. You'd have to check my history and facts here, but I believe he may be if not the first, one of the first Secretaries to pay a bilateral visit to Moldova.

**QUESTION:** And also it comes, obviously, right after Ukraine decided not to sign the agreement with the EU.

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

**QUESTION:** Moldova did. So you could read into this that the Secretary wants to buck them up or give them something, a sign of support.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we had planned this trip – this trip was in the works before that decision was made. But certainly, they have put a number of reforms in place and they're working hard on their economy and the – if – the Secretary felt it was important to highlight that.

**QUESTION:** Following on that --

**QUESTION:** Okay. Can I go over just to Afghanistan for one very briefly?

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure. Okay, and then we'll go to Anne.

**QUESTION:** I was gone last week so I'm – most of last week, so what – did the Secretary speak with Karzai before or after Ambassador Rice was there?

**MS. PSAKI:** Let's see. He spoke with Karzai – President Karzai – I'd have to look back. I believe it was prior to her visit. Let me double check that for you to make sure.

**QUESTION:** So the last senior official to speak with Karzai, as far as you know, was Ambassador Rice.

**MS. PSAKI:** I believe that's correct, yes.

**QUESTION:** Just following on the Moldova for Ukraine substitution, in saying that Secretary Kerry would not, as had been widely expected, attend the OSCE – when you said that, I don't know, about 10 days ago or so --

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

**QUESTION:** -- we were just at the very beginning of this whole episode.

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

**QUESTION:** And at that point you said it was scheduling issues that had – it would force his cancellation. Are you sticking with that? Is that still the case? Or might there be some policy implications to his decision not to go to the OSCE?

**MS. PSAKI:** I am sticking with that. I'm just looking at Lesley here in my – corner of my eye. I am sticking with that. I don't have any new guidance for you on that front. Assistant Secretary Nuland is still planning to attend and travel there after joining us for the first part of the visit.

**QUESTION:** On Syria?

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

**QUESTION:** Is it --

**QUESTION:** Can you tell us the -- oh, sorry.

**QUESTION:** Sorry. Just on this charade -- charade, for Lesley -- of scheduling reasons, is it not the case that not going -- not going on this trip -- not going to Kyiv is a sign of displeasure?

**MS. PSAKI:** I will let you do your own reporting, Matt. I don't have any more analysis or comments on it from here.

**QUESTION:** But there was --

**QUESTION:** And one more quick one on Ukraine.

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

**QUESTION:** Obviously, we're seeing the demonstrations, violent crackdown.

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

**QUESTION:** What's the response from the State Department?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we're of course, naturally, closely monitoring the ongoing demonstrations, not only in Kyiv but in cities around Ukraine. As you know, since the demonstrations began on November 21<sup>st</sup>, there have been an increasing number of violent incidents, including against journalists. We stress there is no room, and we continue to stress there is no room for violence in a country that aspires to a democratic future. We continue to call on all sides to maintain calm, and on Ukrainian authorities to ensure that members of the public and the press are able to safely and peacefully exercise their rights of speech and assembly.

As I mentioned a little bit before, we still have -- Assistant Secretary Nuland is still planning to travel there. The Ukrainian foreign ministry announced that the ministerial is proceeding as planned.

**QUESTION:** But there was -- what's the reaction of --

**QUESTION:** Are you sure that Ukraine is a country that aspires to a democratic future?

**MS. PSAKI:** Any country that may aspire, certainly, these are important values to follow through on.

**QUESTION:** Right. But are you still convinced that Ukraine aspires to a westward-looking, democratic future?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we will see, Matt. Time will tell. Actions speak louder than words.

**QUESTION:** Do you -- does this --

**QUESTION:** Do you still stand by the comments made by Ambassador Nuland in her speech to the Atlantic Council a couple of weeks ago and also comments from this podium that it is your belief that Ukraine should be following the path towards joining some kind of association agreement with the EU?

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure. Our view has not changed on that. Obviously, there have been a lot of events that have happened since then, but --

**QUESTION:** And do you believe that the demonstrations on the streets are actually -- that's what they want? I mean, it seems to be that they're demonstrating because they're angry that the government hasn't taken this path that's laid been laid out for them.

**MS. PSAKI:** I would point you to the comments of the demonstrators, of which there have been many. I don't want to speak on their behalf, but our position hasn't changed on what steps they could take. Obviously, it's up to Ukraine to take those steps.

**QUESTION:** So -- but I mean the United States is -- if you don't want to give your backing to them -- at least sympathetic to what the demonstrators are asking for.

**MS. PSAKI:** Again, I mean, the demonstrators are saying a range of things, so I don't -- beyond what we've stated publicly many times, I don't have any other further public statements on our position, which has been stated by Assistant Secretary Nuland and by other officials in the past several weeks.

**QUESTION:** Given the estimates of some 300,000 people who were demonstrating across the country on Sunday, and given that they all seem, to a person, to be saying that the government is ignoring their wish to be more closely aligned with Europe, isn't it a bit disingenuous for this building to suggest that they need to show any restraint? They're not the ones who are bludgeoning people with battering rams and turning rubber bullets on the police. It seems they're taking the brunt of everything that's been happening.

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't think I took sides. I think I said that it's important for all sides to maintain calm, that there's no place for violence in a country that aspires to a democratic future. So I don't -- I would disagree with the premise of your claims.

**QUESTION:** What does this building think of the prime minister's -- called for his security forces to show restraint and seemingly to be missing in action when on Sunday there was more violence heaped upon the demonstrators, particularly in Kyiv?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I think I just expressed what our view is of violence against demonstrators, so that's what our view is.

**QUESTION:** Can I -- has the Secretary spoken to somebody in Ukraine, his counterpart?

**MS. PSAKI:** He has not in the last several days. I can check if there's been any other calls I'm not aware of.

**QUESTION:** Because one of the big issues for Ukraine is tearing itself away from Russia and looking towards Western Europe for economic support. And one of the big things is that the president of Ukraine is heading to China to look for that. And if -- I was wondering if the U.S. had offered them kind of -- some kind of assurance or reassurance economically that they could be better off by signing these deals and with the support -- and the U.S. would support any kind of reform through the International Monetary Fund.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, aside from public statements we've made, which, as Jo referenced, is -- that our belief is that European integration is the surest course to economic growth and strengthening Ukraine's

democracy. That's still our belief. That's been consistently our belief. But beyond that, I'm not aware of any other discussions. Obviously, there's a lot of -- that's going on with the EU and with Russia, and beyond that we have made our position clear.

**QUESTION:** And what is the building's position on the detention of Yulia Tymoshenko?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we have consistently spoken about this in the past and expressed our concern about her detention. I know this was also a component that was potentially being worked through as an element of Ukraine getting into the EU. So we've consistently expressed concern, encouraged them to take steps forward. Obviously, there hasn't been progress on that on the ground.

**QUESTION:** I'm sorry, what did you say was the surest way to economic growth?

**MS. PSAKI:** I said European integration is the surest course to economic growth and strengthening --

**QUESTION:** Did you give the same advice to the Greeks?

(Laughter.)

**MS. PSAKI:** Matt. Behave.

Do we have any more on Ukraine or Afghanistan, since we touched on that too?

**QUESTION:** Still on Ukraine.

**MS. PSAKI:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** The Russians have proposed that the EU, Ukraine, and Russia get together to discuss some of these problems. Would the United States be in favor of that, some kind of a trilateral discussion to discuss the economic situation and political differences?

**MS. PSAKI:** It wouldn't involve the United States, so I don't have a particular position. I'm happy to talk to our team and see if we have a view on that.

Ukraine or Afghanistan? Okay, should we move on to Syria? Let's go to Margaret.

**QUESTION:** Thank you. Jen, the OPCW said over the past few days that the U.S. has stepped up, that they're going to give operational support, offering up financing. Can you give us some more detail on that?

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm. Well, I don't know if it will be satisfying, but let me try. (Laughter.) Well, as you know, the United States is committed to supporting the international community's efforts to destroy Syria's chemical weapons in the safest, most efficient and effective means possible. We have offered and are currently outfitting a U.S. vessel with field-deployable hydrolysis system technology to support the OPCW's efforts. We are in close contact with the OPCW and our international partners and remain confident that we can meet the milestones for destruction set out by the OPCW. Of course, the OPCW remains -- and the UN remain the lead coordinators on reaching out to countries and coordinating steps forward and any timeline, et cetera.

**QUESTION:** But on the financing, what is it exactly that we're offering? Is that a chunk of change? Is that financing and loans, or --

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we've offered -- we've offered in the -- prior to this, we have offered -- we have given 6 million to the OPCW and the UN Trust Fund, both in financial contributions and in kind, so I think we gave some materials as well. But this, of course, would be a DOD vessel. So I would point you to them on the specific costs. This, at this point, is an offer. So I think that's still being worked through.

**QUESTION:** So -- but beyond the vessel, the OPCW says the cost is going to be between 35 to 40 million euros for the private contractors who would actually be --

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

**QUESTION:** -- be doing the disposal themselves. So is any of that money coming through the State Department, or is the State Department topped out at \$6 million?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we've said we'd be open to exploring additional ways to provide assistance. I don't have any announcements today of additional assistance we're planning to provide, but that certainly is something we're in discussions with the OPCW about.

**QUESTION:** So we can understand correctly, it is a commercial vessel, correct, that they are trying --

**MS. PSAKI:** It is a --

**QUESTION:** -- (inaudible) --

**MS. PSAKI:** -- U.S. Government vessel, not a commercial vessel.

**QUESTION:** Right.

**MS. PSAKI:** But there is a part of this -- and this may be what you're asking about -- which is the OPCW reaching out to commercial companies about the destruction capabilities.

**QUESTION:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** So what -- so DOD is outfitting its own boat, which will be staffed with DOD personnel who will do this?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'd have to check on the specifics of that. I think some of it may still be work -- be going through the process of being worked out, Matt, because they've offered -- but obviously, how it would be staffed and the materials and the money -- I mean, all of those are pieces that are still being discussed.

**QUESTION:** Do you actually have a timeline and the location for where this would happen?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have a location. That's still being discussed. The timeline, as you know, is -- the next deadline is -- not deadline, it's a target -- is December 31<sup>st</sup>. And that is to get all of the chemical weapons out. But in terms of when the next step would be, I don't have a timeline of that.

Anne.

**QUESTION:** I realize part of this is kind of DOD-flavored, but you might know the answer.

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

**QUESTION:** So is it proper to call this a warship, or is it a military-owned, but not non-warship ship?

(Laughter.)

**MS. PSAKI:** That is a very specific ship question. I would hesitate to answer incorrectly. I'd have to check on specifically how we categorize it. I don't believe it is a warship, but let me see if we can get more specification on how we -- what we call it exactly.

**QUESTION:** Okay. And on the policy side, I mean, is there any disappointment here that after casting about to -- for a friend here, it ends up being the U.S. having to essentially do this on its own?

**MS. PSAKI:** I wouldn't categorize it that way. I mean, certainly this is a priority for the U.S., as it is for the international community, to destroy and eliminate the chemical weapons. The OPCW is still talking to countries. There are countries that have made public comments about their willingness to help, so we'll see how that all shakes out. And certainly, we'd welcome the support or contribution of other countries.

**QUESTION:** Well, I'd imagine from your perspective, it should be a shared priority among many nations who would also share the same goal of the ultimate destruction, right? I mean, everybody was waving a flag when that -- when the thing was signed.

**MS. PSAKI:** Certainly, and there are countries, as you know, throughout that have been open to contributing that couldn't for a variety of reasons, whether it's regulations or capacity or resources. But they're still talking to countries about contributing and being a part of this, and certainly we're hopeful of that as well.

**QUESTION:** So if the question is: "Are you surprised that you've been left holding the bag on this once again," --

**MS. PSAKI:** We're not holding the bag yet, Matt.

**QUESTION:** -- the answer would be no, you're not surprised. You expected your friends in Europe to wimp out.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we made clear we were open to contributing from the beginning, Matt. There are other countries that have expressed an openness to contributing in some capacity. They're all going to make their decisions about what that will -- what will -- that will entail, and we'll let the OPCW decide how all of it will work together.

**QUESTION:** What about Russia, who you made this deal with and has been instrumental, as you say, in helping move this towards a resolution? Why can't Russia contribute in a significant way like you can?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not familiar with what they have contributed or what they've committed to contribute or -- what they have not. Obviously, there are financial ways -- there are a number of ways to contribute. We certainly welcome any country's contribution. There are different ways that each country can do that.

**QUESTION:** Are you in touch with the Russians specifically about making an -- a contribution?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not sure. I'd have to check on that and see if it's a discussion that's been a part of the regular discussions with Foreign Minister Lavrov.

**QUESTION:** Jen, still on Syria.

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

**QUESTION:** Yesterday, Mike Rogers, the chair of the Intelligence Committee, warned that there are many jihadis that are Americans and Europeans and Westerners and so on, that they go back and forth and so on. Are you concerned about these jihadis being trained in Syria and now they come back to the United States and perhaps organize terrorist acts?

**MS. PSAKI:** I haven't seen his comments specifically. I know – I believe he may have been on a Sunday show yesterday. I haven't read them fully. We've – we're naturally concerned, as you know, about extremists whether they're going in and certainly and if they're coming out. I talked a little bit, I think it was a week or two ago, about ways that we coordinate with our international partners in the region to kind of track this and efforts we undertake to make sure we're watching, but of course we're concerned. I don't have any other specifics for you.

**QUESTION:** Are you pressing your partners in this case, like the Saudis and the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, that have been supplying arms and money in the past for these extremist groups – are you pressing them not to do so?

**MS. PSAKI:** We have consistently, and all the countries, as you know, have agreed repeatedly to contribute to assistance through the SMC.

**QUESTION:** Finally, yesterday there was a report in the *Telegraph*, *The London Telegraph*, that says basically the Free Syrian Army now is becoming a group of warlords and accumulating money and gangs and so on and have no interest, really, in reaching a settlement. Is that your assessment, or are you still working very closely with General Idris?

**MS. PSAKI:** We are still working very closely with General Idris, we're still working towards a Geneva conference in January, and we still believe there's no military solution, as you know.

More on Syria?

**QUESTION:** Still on Syria.

**MS. PSAKI:** Or – go ahead, Roz.

**QUESTION:** Still on Syria, the Iranian Foreign Minister Zarif did an interview with Al Jazeera this morning. And when it came to Geneva II, he said that while Iran is, quote, not begging to attend the talks in January, it would attend if invited. My first question: Would the U.S. be willing to invite Iran to take part in these talks? And if so, what does the U.S. believe that Iran could bring to this situation to try to end the civil war?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, no decisions have been made about participation yet. There's another trilateral meeting on December 20<sup>th</sup> coming up that we'll be participating in with the UN and the Russians. Our position hasn't changed on Iran's participation or whether we believe they should be invited. They have not endorsed the Geneva communique. That's a condition we feel is necessary, but obviously this will continue to be discussed at the next trilateral meeting.

**QUESTION:** But given the – that the UN is now estimating that upwards of 120-25,000 people may have been killed in the civil war to date --

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

**QUESTION:** -- is there some sort of leverage that Tehran could bring to the table to try to induce the Assad regime to, if nothing else, stop the killing and try to at least put in some sort of ceasefire?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, this goes back to the premise that attendees should be endorsing the Geneva communique, because that is what the purpose and the goal of the conference is. So, I don't have any speculation on what leverage they may or may not have, but the conversations we have had with them in recent weeks have been about their nuclear program and moving towards a first-step agreement on that. They've not been focused on Syria. And our position on whether or not they should attend the Geneva conference in January hasn't changed.

**QUESTION:** But you do feel that if they do endorse Geneva I, there's a great deal of value for Iran's participation --

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we'd have to --

**QUESTION:** -- considering that it is --

**MS. PSAKI:** We'd have to evaluate it, Said. I don't want to get ahead of --

**QUESTION:** But it's a very ally of the regime. It supports other elements that help the regime in its fight, like Hezbollah so on.

**MS. PSAKI:** If that is a step they take, we can have a robust discussion in here about it.

**QUESTION:** Jen, are there any contacts currently between the United States Government and the Syrian regime? I mean, I know Secretary Kerry spoke months and months ago --

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** -- to Foreign Minister Muallem. Is there anything going on at the moment?

**MS. PSAKI:** And we have for some time, as you know, have had different channels, but I don't have anything specific for you. I can check if there have been any recent contacts on any level.

**QUESTION:** So there were reports over the weekend that some European countries are quietly beginning to --

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

**QUESTION:** -- reopen diplomatic conversations or channels with the Syrian regime because, I think, the fear is that this is just so blocked at the moment that they're --

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

**QUESTION:** -- it's not going anywhere.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, let me see if there have been any contacts at any level of the regime. We've -- they have happened in the past, as you mentioned, so I will see if there's more to report on that.

**QUESTION:** Can I go back to the Iranians and taking part in Geneva? I mean, I think over the last week or so, when there's been, like, various bouts of violence in Syria, that the Iranian Government has said that there

needs to be a political solution to the situation in Syria. So don't you think that Iran is making more positive comments? I mean, I don't think the Russians have gone far beyond saying that there needs to be a political solution. They haven't said anything about President Assad leaving (inaudible).

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, the whole premise – I mean the whole goal is to create a transitional governing body. That's the goal of a Geneva conference. So, certainly, they haven't embraced that as the focus of the Geneva communique, and --

**QUESTION:** Well, even though the Russians have agreed to a political transition, your definition of a transition is far different from the – than the Russians' definition of a transition. So if the Iranians were to say, like, okay, we accept a political transition, I mean, does that really mean that they --

**MS. PSAKI:** It's not just about a political transition. It's about embracing the Geneva communique, which they have not done. If they do that, we will evaluate whether or not we'd support their – an invitation to them to attend the conference.

**QUESTION:** Zarif also told us that his country is not interested in aggravating any sectarian tensions between Shiite and Sunni, between Alawite and other major Islamic communities; that they're trying to, in their efforts, promote more harmony, more peace. Does that add any – does that change the complexion at all, particularly in Syria?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't want to speak too specifically to an interview I haven't yet seen yet, and neither has anyone on our team. Broadly speaking, obviously we took a significant step forward with the first-step agreement on their nuclear program, but there are remaining concerns that we have, as you all are familiar with, whether it's their involvement in support of the regime in Syria or humanitarian issues, and so that has not changed that. I can take a closer look once we see the transcript of the interview and see if we have more comments on Foreign Minister Zarif's comments.

**QUESTION:** You're saying your team does not watch Al Jazeera?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, that is not true; we do. However, I believe there's only been a very short clip that has played of this interview that I'm sure will get lots of attention once it all plays.

**QUESTION:** Beyond the interview, he's freely reaching out. He visited Kuwait. He's reaching out to the other Gulf countries. He wants to visit Saudi Arabia. I mean, there is an effort underway to alleviate their fears and actually encourage them towards participating in Geneva II to make it a success. You must have some sort of a reading of this effort.

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have any particular reading of it for you, Said. Our position, I think, has been pretty clear on whether or not they attend the Geneva conference.

**QUESTION:** I have another really quick logistics thing. On the December 20<sup>th</sup> meeting, that's Wendy Sherman and that – it's the same iteration?

**MS. PSAKI:** It is that level. Exactly, yes. Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** Is that new or was that announced last week or something --

**MS. PSAKI:** I believe we talked about it last week as being the next meeting.

**QUESTION:** On China – (inaudible).

**QUESTION:** Please, Jen, can we stay on Iran, please?

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure. Let's stay on Iran and then we can go to China.

**QUESTION:** On the 6<sup>th</sup> of February in this room, I had a very brief exchange with your predecessor, Victoria Nuland --

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

**QUESTION:** -- about Iran. And with your indulgence, I will read it in its entirety for the purpose of the record and so you can respond to it.

*"Rosen: There have been reports that intermittently, and outside of the formal P5+1 mechanisms, the Obama Administration, or members of it, have conducted direct secret bilateral talks with Iran. Is that true or false?"*

*"Nuland: We have made clear, as the Vice President did at Munich, that in the context of the larger P5+1 framework, we would be prepared to talk to Iran bilaterally. But with regard to the kind of thing that you're talking about on a government-to-government level, no."*

That's the entirety of the exchange.

As we now know, senior state department officials had, in fact, been conducting direct, secret bilateral talks with senior officials of the Iranian Government in Oman, perhaps dating back to 2011 by that point.

So the question today is a simple one: When the briefer was asked about those talks and flatly denied them from the podium, that was untrue, correct?

**MS. PSAKI:** I mean, James, I -- that -- you're talking about a February briefing, so 10 months ago. I don't think we've outlined or confirmed contacts or specifics beyond a March meeting. I'm not going to confirm others beyond that at this point. So I don't know that I have any more for you.

**QUESTION:** Do you stand by the accuracy of what Ms. Nuland told me, that there had been no government-to-government contacts, no secret direct bilateral talks with Iran as of the date of that briefing, February 6<sup>th</sup>? Do you stand by the accuracy of that?

**MS. PSAKI:** James, I have no new information for you today on the timing of when there were any discussions with any Iranian officials.

**QUESTION:** Let me try it one last way, Jen --

**MS. PSAKI:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** -- and I appreciate your indulgence.

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** Is it the policy of the State Department, where the preservation or the secrecy of secret negotiations is concerned, to lie in order to achieve that goal?

**MS. PSAKI:** James, I think there are times where diplomacy needs privacy in order to progress. This is a good example of that. Obviously, we have made clear and laid out a number of details in recent weeks about discussions and about a bilateral channel that fed into the P5+1 negotiations, and we've answered questions on it, we've confirmed details. We're happy to continue to do that, but clearly, this was an important component leading up to the agreement that was reached a week ago.

**QUESTION:** Since you, standing at that podium last week, did confirm that there were such talks, at least as far back as March of this year, I don't see what would prohibit you from addressing directly this question: Were there secret direct bilateral talks between the United States and Iranian officials in 2011?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have anything more for you today. We've long had ways to speak with the Iranians through a range of channels, some of which you talked -- you mentioned, but I don't have any other specifics for you today.

**QUESTION:** One more on Iran?

**QUESTION:** *The Los Angeles Times* and *Politico* have reported that those talks were held as far back as 2011. Were those reports inaccurate?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not sure which reports you're talking about. Are you talking about visits that the Secretary and others made to Oman, or are you talking about other reports?

**QUESTION:** I'm talking about U.S. officials meeting directly and secretly with Iranian officials in Oman as far back as 2011. *The Los Angeles Times* and *Politico* have reported those meetings. Were those reports inaccurate?

**MS. PSAKI:** I have nothing more for you on it, James, today.

**QUESTION:** One more on Iran?

**MS. PSAKI:** On Iran? Let's just finish Iran and then we can go to China. Go ahead, Roz.

**QUESTION:** One of -- one more on Iran. Foreign Minister Zarif said, directly contradicting the Obama Administration's contention that sanctions worked, he told our interviewer that when the sanctions were first imposed, Iran had 200 working centrifuges. Today, they have more than 19,000. What is this building's reaction to his comment that sanctions did not work and did not bring Iran to the negotiating table?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, again, I would like to look more closely at the context of the comments. But, just as a reminder, President Rouhani and others have talked about how the impact -- how growing the economy and putting an end -- doing -- bringing an end to the sanctions is something that was a priority for them in order to help the economy and the Iranian people. There's no question, if you look just at the facts of the impact of oil revenues, the impact on their economic growth was large that there was a huge impact of -- that there -- the sanctions had an enormous impact, and that that was a driving factor in bringing the Iranians back to the negotiating table.

In terms of progress made on their efforts to develop a nuclear weapon, whether through centrifuges or at their various facilities, that to me sounds like a separate question. Obviously, there were concerns about steps they were taking and progress they were making, which was why it was so important to come to an acceptable agreement that would halt and roll back the progress of their program.

**QUESTION:** Just to follow up on that, though --

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

**QUESTION:** -- Secretary Kerry, when he did his round robin of interviews after the announcement of the deal in Geneva, more than once stated that when Iran had reached out to the Bush-Cheney Administration in 2003, Iran was only in possession of 164 centrifuges. Now, he would go on to say, they have 19,000, and this therefore represents the best possible deal that could be secured.

Isn't it a fact that since the Obama-Biden Administration took office, 70 percent of Iran's centrifuges have been installed?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I'd have to look at the statistics, James, but we have not questioned the fact that Iran has made progress on enrichment and on developing a nuclear weapon. We have not questioned that. That's one of the reasons why we stepped up sanctions over the past couple of years. The President and Secretary Kerry were big proponents of that. We worked with the international community to do just that to put that necessary pressure in place.

The point I was trying to make to Roz is that -- what she's asking sounds to me like two separate questions, so that was --

**QUESTION:** Right. I'm pursuing the separate one part that she carved out, and that is to say -- and if this is untrue, I'd be grateful to be disabused of the notion -- but the great bulk of Iran's progress in the development of its enrichment program has taken place under President Obama's watch, correct?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'd have to check on the specific numbers. The --

**QUESTION:** You're not prepared to dispute that statement, as --

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, James, I think what we're focused on at this point is the fact that we're now at a point where we are halting and rolling back the progress of their program and we're working towards a comprehensive agreement to bring an end to it. I can't speculate for you what would happen without -- what would have happened without sanctions. I would venture to guess --

**QUESTION:** (Inaudible) sanctions.

**MS. PSAKI:** But they were being paired together, so that's why I'm bringing it into the conversation.

**QUESTION:** But the context of the question was exactly: "The Obama Administration says we showed up because our economy is falling apart. I'm here to tell you that's not the case. We have our own reasons for coming."

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we will take a close look at his comments and we'll have more to say about them once we do.

**QUESTION:** Can I just go back to the Geneva meeting and --

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** -- December 20<sup>th</sup> with Wendy Sherman?

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

**QUESTION:** This is --

**MS. PSAKI:** It's that level -- in terms of specific attendance, I'll have to just double-check that for you.

**QUESTION:** Oh, okay.

**MS. PSAKI:** Yeah.

**QUESTION:** This is going to be the first of the political meetings towards the next -- the comprehensive agreement --

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

**QUESTION:** -- or this is the technical discussions?

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

**QUESTION:** No, this is Syria.

**MS. PSAKI:** This is -- sorry, this is Syria.

**QUESTION:** Oh, I'm sorry.

**MS. PSAKI:** This is Syria.

**QUESTION:** Excuse me. I'm sorry.

**MS. PSAKI:** So this is the pre-Geneva. No, it's okay. It's confusing. Lots of Genevas.

**QUESTION:** Okay. But I did have an Iran question, actually.

**QUESTION:** But is there any new -- I mean --

**QUESTION:** Yeah.

**QUESTION:** -- when is it that you're going to start to negotiate the comprehensive deal with Iran?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, right now, what we're focused on is the technical discussions leading up to the start of the six-month --

**QUESTION:** Right.

**QUESTION:** So do you have a date for those?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't yet have a date on those.

**QUESTION:** Or a place?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't yet have a place. It's being worked through. Hopefully we'll have an update for you all in the coming days.

**QUESTION:** And can I ask -- I don't know if you had seen the reports that the new British envoy to Iran is actually going to visit Tehran tomorrow. I wondered what the --

**MS. PSAKI:** I haven't seen that.

**QUESTION:** Well, I wanted a U.S. reaction to this following on to the question I asked last week about how far along the line you are prepared to go with your new diplomatic relations or not with Iran.

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm. I still don't have any prediction of any step beyond what step we've already taken, which is being a part of the P5+1 agreement on the first step here with Iran. Obviously, different countries are going to make their own decisions, and as with most issues, we certainly support that.

**QUESTION:** Would it be helpful, though? Do you believe it's helpful that the British envoy could be going to Tehran?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't know that I have that level of analysis on it. I don't have all the details on what the purpose of the trip is or what they hope to accomplish. And obviously, every country will make their own decisions about diplomatic relationships.

**QUESTION:** Jen, one more on the --

**QUESTION:** East China Sea?

**QUESTION:** -- secret negotiations with Iran.

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

**QUESTION:** I apologize if you've already addressed this, but there have been reports that the secret negotiations that the U.S. was engaging in with Iran created a feeling of resentment among P5+1 allies such as France, and then that contributed to a rift among the P5+1 and made it difficult to reach consensus within that group. Do you have a reaction to that or a comment on that?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't want to speak to anonymous reports about what may or may not be the feelings by other countries, but I will reiterate for you that this was -- these discussions were fed into the P5+1 process. That is the process that we ultimately all worked through to achieve a first-step agreement here. The P5+1 members, as well as our friends in Israel, were briefed early this fall.

As to the discussions, we have always been clear we've been open to bilateral discussions with Iran; that there are a range of channels to do that through; that if anything got serious, that we would certainly be briefing our important partners on that; and that's exactly what we did in this case.

**QUESTION:** Jen --

**QUESTION:** And when did the talks begin?

**MS. PSAKI:** James, you're so tricky over there. (Laughter.)

**QUESTION:** Can I ask (inaudible) about China?

**MS. PSAKI:** Let me just say one thing, though, for James. It's important here too – and then I promise we'll go to China – it's important here also to note, though, that these really picked up after President Rouhani's election, that in terms of the discussion of specific pieces about how to move forward, what kind of – what an agreement could look like, that's when it picked up. So I understand that's not answering your question, but I felt it was important to --

**QUESTION:** But just on the basis of methodology and removing the specifics of Iran and who's president or who's Secretary of State, if you were able to stand there at the podium last week and say, "Yes, I'm confirming a certain set of talks that occurred in March," explain to me what is it that prohibits you from saying, yes or no, that a certain set of talks occurred two years ago?

**MS. PSAKI:** If I have more details for you, James, I will – happy to share them.

**QUESTION:** I didn't ask you – I'm asking for your thinking about why you're not addressing the question, not the specifics of the meetings. What is it that prohibits you from addressing a question about meetings that are two years old?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not going to do a psychiatrist chair today.

Go ahead. On China?

**QUESTION:** What about the couch? (Laughter.)

**QUESTION:** Thank you, Jen. So as we know, the U.S. Government has already told U.S. carriers to comply with China's requirements before any flights pass through the new air defense zone established by the Chinese Government. So does that mean the U.S. Government has recognized this new air defense zone established by the Chinese Government?

**MS. PSAKI:** So let me be absolutely as clear as I can be here because I know there's been a range of reporting. It has been – some of it has been inaccurate, to no fault of – perhaps it's our fault for not explaining it well enough. So we are not – the State Department is not the point of contact with airlines. The FAA is the point of contact with airlines. There has not been any information that has been put out or confirmed that I am aware of that has conveyed what has or has not been communicated in that capacity to airlines.

There is – for safety and security of passengers, U.S. carriers operate internationally – operate consistently as a process with the notices to airmen issued by foreign countries, as is the case in this case. Their concerns are about the safety and security of passengers. That is different from what the U.S. Government policy is. It is not – this in no way indicates U.S. Government acceptance of China's requirements in the newly declared ADIZ and has absolutely no bearing on the firm and consistent U.S. Government position that we do not accept the legitimacy of China's requirements.

This is a case where China announced this in an uncoordinated fashion. It's inconsistent with standard practice. And their\* requirements for operating exceed internationally accepted practice in this capacity. So I don't know how much more clear that it is, but it does contradict a bit your question, so I wanted --

**QUESTION:** It looks like we received the statement or the Q&A from the State Department, so it looks like it's from the U.S. Government. And also, you are saying --

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, in that statement, which I certainly was well aware of, what was conveyed in there is that for safety and – for the safety and security of passengers, U.S. carriers operate consistently internationally with the notices to airmen issued by foreign governments. It did not convey that – anything specific about what had

been communicated to airlines. It did not convey that the U.S. Government supported this effort. So I'm very familiar with the statement you're referring to, and there were a lot of -- there were some assumptions made.

QUESTION: So (inaudible) --

QUESTION: Okay. It looks like --

QUESTION: -- that the FAA did not instruct airlines to comply with the Chinese regulations?

MS. PSAKI: I would point you to the FAA for what they did or did not communicate to commercial airlines.

QUESTION: Okay. Well, the FAA is part of the U.S. Government, is it not?

MS. PSAKI: They are. They --

QUESTION: Yes.

MS. PSAKI: Certainly, they are not housed in the State Department, however. (Laughter.)

QUESTION: So -- I understand that, but the State Department does have a representative -- you're familiar with the ICAO?

MS. PSAKI: I am not.

QUESTION: Okay. It's in Montreal.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

QUESTION: It's a good excuse to get to Montreal --

MS. PSAKI: Good.

QUESTION: -- if you ever want to go up there.

MS. PSAKI: I will take that advice.

QUESTION: It's the International Civilian -- it's the civilian airline -- the UN agency for airlines. Do you know if the United States is going to use its membership in the ICAO to oppose this Chinese decision?

MS. PSAKI: I don't.

QUESTION: And if you don't know, could you ask?

MS. PSAKI: Yeah, I'm happy to check on that for you, Matt. Absolutely.

QUESTION: And when you say that the U.S. Government does not accept the legitimacy of the Chinese requirements --

MS. PSAKI: Well, it doesn't accept -- yeah, the Chinese requirements, right.

QUESTION: Right. That's what you said.

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

**QUESTION:** Doesn't that – if the FAA has been telling airlines that they have to comply with this, or that they should comply with it, how is that not accepting – the government accepting the legitimacy?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, there's a whole field of regulations and regulatory policy that I am certainly far from an aviation expert, as it evidenced by your Montreal question. So I would point you to them on that.

Evidence of the fact that the U.S. Government does not accept China's requirement is by the fact that the announcement will not change how the United States conducts military operations in the region, which is something DOD announced last week. And that is certainly a U.S. Government decision to make.

**QUESTION:** So does that mean that U.S. Government planes will not obey the – or will not follow the Chinese requirements if they're flying through this airspace?

**MS. PSAKI:** Military planes?

**QUESTION:** Say the Secretary of State flying on an Air Force plane to Seoul or to Tokyo will not notify the --

**MS. PSAKI:** I am not aware of any upcoming Seoul trip coming up.

**QUESTION:** Well, the Vice President is there right now, or in Tokyo, at least. Are you saying that his plane, an Air Force plane, will not follow the requirements of the Chinese?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I am saying military planes would not, and that level of specificity I'd certainly have to check and see where that falls in.

**QUESTION:** What is this episode – what impact is this episode having on U.S.-Sino relations?

**MS. PSAKI:** There are times when we agree and there are times when we disagree, as you know. We've made clear our concerns about not only what was announced but how this was announced, the fact that there was no prior notice. As you also know, Vice President Biden is in the region now on a prior planned trip. He will, of course, be meeting with key leaders to discuss a range of issues. Certainly, this could be a topic of discussion, but there are a number of other issues that we discuss both with China and other partners in the region.

**QUESTION:** And has the pivot to Asia worked? Is this evidence of the pivot working?

**MS. PSAKI:** I wouldn't categorize this into – I wouldn't put this in the evaluation category of whether or not it worked. Our pivot to Asia, or rebalance to Asia, means focusing on Asia and the important partnership we have with Asia, with countries in the region, the economic and strategic partners. And nothing is further evidence of that than the Vice President's trip there, the fact that, as you know, the Secretary will be going back to Asia soon, that he was just there a couple of months ago with Secretary Hagel. So that is evidence of our commitment to the region. And we work with them on a – countries in the region on a broad range of issues.

**QUESTION:** But as we survey the last five years of this Administration, would you say that China is less aggressive in its serial commission of human rights abuses, currency manipulation, cyber warfare against U.S. businesses and government, territorial aggression, or is it better than it used to be?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not going to do an evaluation of that. Obviously, we work with them on economic issues, we work with them on strategic issues. There are still issues, including human rights, including this issue we're

talking about now, that we express concerns about when warranted, and we'll continue to do that. But we know that the relationship is a vital one and one that we need to keep plugging away at even when we disagree.

**QUESTION:** Jen, could I (inaudible) for a second?

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

**QUESTION:** Is it fair to characterize the U.S. position as being that aside from the official policy, for the purposes of safety and avoiding some kind of unfortunate incident, that commercial carriers should abide by the Chinese ADIZ requirements?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have – I'd point you again to the FAA on more specifics than what I just conveyed. There are a range of regulations and policies that, of course, they oversee or are in place, but our general position as a U.S. Government is that we don't accept China's requirements. And obviously, the military – actions of military exercises is evidence of that.

**QUESTION:** Jen, this comes from --

**QUESTION:** Sorry, sorry. Just a quick follow-up on that.

**MS. PSAKI:** Go ahead.

**QUESTION:** It looks like the two main U.S. airlines are complying with – are taking steps to comply. Delta and United are the two that have flight routes through the area, which seems to have kind of created a little bit of confusion/consternation in Japan over a perceived rift with Japanese policy, which is to not allow U.S. commercial airliners to file their flight plans with China. Do you have a – do you have any kind of reassurance or any kind of response to that?

**MS. PSAKI:** We coordinate closely with Japan and with South Korea and all of the countries in the region about a range of issues. And certainly on this issue, we have been in touch with Japan and will continue to be. This is – for specific actions of individual commercial airliners, I would point you to them or the FAA on any regulations.

**QUESTION:** But – so you're not – but you're not afraid for the safety or concerned about the safety of U.S. citizens on flights that are flying through the area?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, certainly safety and security of citizens should be of concern to everyone. Obviously, there are policies in place and regulations in place because of that. But we don't oversee airline regulations. The FAA does, so I would point you to them.

**QUESTION:** (Inaudible.) Did the United States Government – the position has changed toward this ADIZ, or not changed? What is the position to ADIZ now?

**MS. PSAKI:** It has not changed. We – China announced the ADIZ without prior consultations even though the newly-announced ADIZ overlaps with parts of longstanding ADIZs of Japan, the Republic of Korea, and Taiwan, and includes territory administered by Japan. As I mentioned, we – the fact that China's announcement has caused confusion and increased the risk of accidents only further underscores the validity of concerns and the need for China to rescind the procedures. It's consistently been our position and one we have communicated both publicly and privately. I know there was some confusion over the weekend about airlines and specifically.

**QUESTION:** Jen, you said that you are not still— not accepting China's new air defense zone. But I wonder, like, Japan has its own air defense zone, and also part of it covers Taiwan. But it looks like the U.S. doesn't say anything about it. So do you think there is sort of a double standard? Why do you react so strongly to China's air defense zone?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, one of the reasons is that they announced this without prior consultations. It was inconsistent with longstanding procedure and process. And obviously, it overlaps with a number of other longstanding air defense zones of some other neighboring countries.

**QUESTION:** Jen --

**QUESTION:** Jen, you do not contest the ability of China to declare such a identification zone; it's just the manner in which they did it, or the extent?

**MS. PSAKI:** No. I think I have -- I've just consistently said that we believe they should rescind the procedures. I've just -- I've also stated a couple of times that we don't accept China's requirements. So I think I've made that pretty clear.

**QUESTION:** (Inaudible.)

**QUESTION:** Is the first --

**QUESTION:** In response to the -- China's declaration of its own ADIZ, the South Korean Government is poised to expand its own ADIZ, so-called KADIZ, to the South China Sea. What is the position of the United States? Would you encourage it or discourage it?

**MS. PSAKI:** I haven't seen those reports, or I don't even know if they're reports or if there's been an announcement. I haven't seen any announcement, I guess I should say. So let me check into that, and --

**QUESTION:** They say they have already started consultations with the United States.

**MS. PSAKI:** I'd have to check into it and see if we have more to say on that.

**QUESTION:** Is this the first time the U.S. has called --

**QUESTION:** Jennifer, you talk about safety --

**QUESTION:** -- for the zone to be rescinded?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'd have to check on that for you, Roz.

**QUESTION:** Can we change topic?

**QUESTION:** No.

**QUESTION:** You talk about safety. Are you really concerned that the Chinese may down an airliner or something?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not predicting that, but certainly there is -- they created these Air Defense Identification Zones, they've asked for prior flight plans. So of course, the security and safety is part of the regulatory process, and -- but I don't have any predictions. It's just the question of abiding by it.

**QUESTION:** Is it a real concern, downing an airliner?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't think I have any more for you on that question.

**QUESTION:** Jen, when you're taking that question that Roz had --

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** -- could you also check whether the United States actually is directly asking the Chinese to rescind it?

**MS. PSAKI:** Happy to. Sure.

**QUESTION:** Thank you.

**QUESTION:** Well, at least --

**QUESTION:** Apart from the specific concerns about how this was announced without any prior notice, its excessiveness, at least in terms of other regulations, and the safety risks that you say it cause, do you have any -- are there broader concerns about this area being identified as essentially the entire East China Sea? Is the U.S. concerned that the Chinese are looking at anything on a map that has the word "China" in it as all their own?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, part of the concern is certainly that it overlaps with parts of other --

**QUESTION:** Right. But in terms of territorial claims --

**MS. PSAKI:** As well as territory administered by Japan, sure.

**QUESTION:** Right, right. But in terms of China's territorial claims, are you concerned that this is the first step or could be a first step towards actually moving in some kind of forceful way to take control of areas of territory and ocean maritime space that it says that it owns?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I don't want to make a prediction of that.

**QUESTION:** No, but I'm asking if you were concerned --

**MS. PSAKI:** But --

**QUESTION:** -- that this is a step in that direction, apart from the specific problems with the no prior notice and all that other -- the safety concerns.

**MS. PSAKI:** But one of the specific problems is also that this includes area -- territory administered by Japan, it includes overlapping area with other countries in the region. So certainly, that does touch on what your question is here. In terms of a prediction of what it will mean in the future, I certainly wouldn't venture to make that at this point.

**QUESTION:** Right. Well, the Chinese say that they would be well within their rights also to declare one of these zones over the entire -- over the South China Sea. Are you concerned about the possibility of that?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, you're familiar with what our position is on that, and we've long --

**QUESTION:** Well, that's over the territorial disputes over the – it's a question of sovereignty for these little atolls and bits of rock.

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

**QUESTION:** Would you be as opposed as you are to this if the Chinese did it for the South China Sea, or is that a hypothetical question that you will wait to bash the Chinese over the head for once they – if and when they do it?

**MS. PSAKI:** It is a hypothetical question at this stage in time.

**QUESTION:** All right.

**QUESTION:** One more thing. Just one more thing on that. China at the same time has announced they sent a fighter jet against United States and Japanese aircraft last week. Did you comment on that?

**MS. PSAKI:** I am not familiar with that specific report. In – where, exactly?

**QUESTION:** If it's true, are you concerned about these Chinese announcement?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'd have to look at the specific report, and that may be a DOD question.

James.

**QUESTION:** Given that China makes this declaration --

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

**QUESTION:** -- and we regard it as thoroughly problematic, if not illegal, and therefore we have on our hands a dispute with the Chinese --

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

**QUESTION:** -- which is to be adjudicated somehow in a nonviolent way, wasn't it a kind of a provocative act for the United States to fly B-52s through that very zone in a short time thereafter?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I would point you to DOD on that, but I would reiterate the fact that we have made clear that this action, this announcement, is not going to change our military exercises. And that is an example of that.

**QUESTION:** So other than taking – other than the Vice President, are you aware – or has there been at this point any conversations that you're aware of in this – from this building with the Chinese directly? It's kind of on Jill's question. And if not, do you expect them or is this going to be left up to the Vice President when he goes to --

**MS. PSAKI:** Let me check. I know we have expressed concerns. I mentioned this last week, Matt, so let me just make sure you have it.

**QUESTION:** Jen, the – Secretary Kerry did meet on Wednesday with a senior Chinese official?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'd have to --

**QUESTION:** On Wednesday, the vice premier.

**QUESTION:** Lu.

**QUESTION:** Yeah.

**MS. PSAKI:** I'd have to look back at that. It seems like a long time ago.

**QUESTION:** I know it does. And it was happening on Wednesday.

**MS. PSAKI:** Deputy Secretary Burns met last week with a Chinese official where this was a topic of discussion. Also, Assistant Secretary Russel spoke with the ambassador about a week ago, and Ambassador Locke has also been in touch, of course, on the ground. In terms of specific contacts over the last couple of days, I'm happy to check and see what else we can read out for all of you.

**QUESTION:** Are you taking this to the UN in any forum there?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have any prediction of that, James, at this point in time.

**QUESTION:** New topic?

**QUESTION:** So it's strictly a bilateral or a multilateral thing, but outside the auspices of the UN is how you're going to seek to resolve it?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I don't have anything for you on it at this point. We're taking this day by day. I conveyed for you what we've done and what we've communicated. But obviously, we're taking steps day by day.

**QUESTION:** But is that a kind of -- is that a consideration?

**MS. PSAKI:** Not that I'm aware of, Elise. But obviously, we're taking this day by day.

**QUESTION:** Can we change --

**QUESTION:** New subject?

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure, Jill. Go ahead.

**QUESTION:** I'm still on China. Can you actually clarify this? China's argument is that we institute the ADIZ that other countries have already instituted. If you're saying that China does not have a right to do that, they can say, well, what's good for the goose is good for the gander. And it doesn't seem like you have a legal foot to stand on. If you're opposed to the way in which they did it or the extent of it, these can be a subject of debate. And China has said we can get rid of our ADIZ if the Japanese get rid of theirs. I mean, something like that could happen. But somehow -- are you really saying that you do not accept -- you do not give China the right to declare a defense identification zone?

**MS. PSAKI:** I think I've thoroughly outlined what our concerns are, so I'm not sure I have much more to add to your question.

**QUESTION:** Just on another topic, Jen -- sorry.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we were going to go to Jill next, and then I'm happy to go to you.

**QUESTION:** North Korea?

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** Merrill Newman.

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

**QUESTION:** You've seen probably, or read at least, his so-called confession. Do you have any comments about that, any reaction? And what is the latest on his status?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, the latest is – and let me do this first and then I'll do the second part. On November 30<sup>th</sup>, North Korea permitted the Embassy of Sweden, our protecting power, to consular access to Merrill Newman. It – and given his advanced age and health conditions, we continue to urge North Korea to release him so he may return home and reunite with his family.

We, of course, have seen the Korean Central News Agency report regarding Mr. Newman's detention. According to the report, he apologized for the misunderstanding that led him – led to his detention. We don't have any other further information regarding the reason for his detention. But again, given his age and health, we continue to call for North Korea to release him as quickly as possible.

**QUESTION:** Do you believe that the North Korean – that that apology was – that he wrote and that was released by the North Koreans – do you believe that he wrote that of his own volition and that he – and do you have reason to believe that all of those things in that apology are true?

**MS. PSAKI:** We just don't have any other further analysis. We've seen the same reports all of you have seen, of course, about his interview and the publication of that, but I don't have any other further analysis on it.

**QUESTION:** Are you aware if that – the subject of his quote, unquote "confession" came up in the meeting with the Swedes?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have anything more on it, but I'm happy to check and see if there's more detail we can outline for all of you.

**QUESTION:** Did the Swedes as for and did Mr. Newman sign a PAW?

**MS. PSAKI:** A Privacy Act waiver?

**QUESTION:** Correct.

**MS. PSAKI:** Yes, he did. That is why I am able to talk about him now.

**QUESTION:** Okay. So then if – since he has signed the waiver, would you take it back to your – whoever it is that liaises with the Swedes on this --

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

**QUESTION:** I assume it's EAP, but I guess it could also be EUR -- and find out if Mr. Newman, in his discussions with the Swedes, talked at all about or said that he had freely made this alleged confession and when it was that he recorded this or when it --

**MS. PSAKI:** I am happy to take that and see if there's more we can share.

Go ahead, Lesley.

**QUESTION:** Also, did the Swedes report back in what condition he is in? Has he been tortured? Anything today? And how long did they meet with him, and was it in a jail? Was it in a --

**QUESTION:** Guest house.

**QUESTION:** -- government -- a guest house?

**QUESTION:** A jailhouse\* guest house.

**MS. PSAKI:** A guest house. I don't have many specifics on that. I'm happy to also check with Matt's questions and to see if there's more we can share on that as well.

**QUESTION:** But didn't it include a --

**QUESTION:** But they did say -- the Swedes did say that he --

**QUESTION:** -- physical examination of him?

**QUESTION:** The Swedes did, I think, say that he was --

**MS. PSAKI:** I believe they've spoken publicly about it.

**QUESTION:** -- that he was treated -- that's he's being treated (inaudible), right?

**MS. PSAKI:** Right. I've seen those comments as well. So I don't have any other specifics on it, but if there's more we share beyond what they've said publicly, I'm happy --

**QUESTION:** Including whether or not there was a physical examination of him during this consular access?

**QUESTION:** I just want to get back to his confession. I mean, it is kind of written in language that kind of fits the narrative that North Korea has been saying, and I'm just wondering if you think that he wrote this. Are you -- I mean, there's often times that you would say, like, oh this person seemed under duress --

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

**QUESTION:** -- or something like that. So I mean, I'm just -- about this particular confession, do you have any reason to believe that he did not confess to all of those things?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't -- I certainly understand why you're asking. I don't have any particular analysis on it at this stage. I will see if this is something that our team is looking into, and if there's more we can say about it specifically.

**QUESTION:** And what is this building doing to secure his release beyond calling for his release from imprisonment? I mean, Ambassador King had tried months ago to go --

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

**QUESTION:** -- for the other American under detention, Kenneth Bae. What's actually being done to get them out?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, our Swedish protecting power just visited with him two days ago, and obviously that's an important component of reaching out to citizens who are detained in North Korea. We certainly do continue to call for his release. I don't have any other predictions or announcements on travel or visits of other officials at this point to tell you about.

**QUESTION:** But beyond those consular visits, I mean, is there any outreach to the Chinese specially on behalf of Mr. Newman?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have more I can outline for all of you, but I can check and see if there is any more to tell.

**QUESTION:** Have they been helpful the past with Kenneth Bae or with others? The Chinese (inaudible)?

**MS. PSAKI:** They have been helpful, but there's not more specifics I can outline.

**QUESTION:** Through the Swedes are elsewhere, has North Korea communicated any demands or requests of the United States that have to do with Newman or -- as a prelude to his possible release?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have any more specifics on the contact with the Swedes and kind of what the discussion entailed beyond confirming --

**QUESTION:** Well, any -- in any forum, have they asked for anything from the United States?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have any details on it. I am happy to check if there's any more to share with all of you.

**QUESTION:** But you guys are in touch with the North Koreans directly, just to confirm?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we -- as you know, we've long had a channel, but we've been working in this case through our Swedish protective -- protecting power.

**QUESTION:** But you have been in touch with the North Koreans specifically on his matter?

**MS. PSAKI:** On this specific case, not that I'm aware of, but I'm happy to check if there's anything more on that.

**QUESTION:** Are you in touch with Mr. Newman's family?

**MS. PSAKI:** We are. We have been. Let me see if I have the detail of when we last spoke with him -- with his family. I don't have that detail for you. I'm happy to put that in the pocket of things I'm going to check on.

**QUESTION:** And have they asked for you to help facilitate any kind of visit by them to North Korea, given that this gentleman's actually -- I mean, he's quite elderly --

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

**QUESTION:** -- so you would imagine that if -- there would be concern enough to try and travel to visit him.

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm. I'm not aware of a request that they've made about that specifically, but we can see.

**QUESTION:** So all the attention, really, is on this Mr. Newman. But as we've said, Kenneth Bae has been held for quite a long time.

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm. You're right.

**QUESTION:** So in your efforts working with the Swedes or working to try and get the release, I mean, are you emphasizing because of Mr. Newman's age and health that you need to get him out right away, or are they part of a package that you think that they --

**MS. PSAKI:** I mean, we'd certainly like to see them both released as quickly as possible. In terms of that level of detail, I just don't have that.

**QUESTION:** These American citizens being held against their will in a rogue state, they're hostages, right?

**MS. PSAKI:** I mean, they're being held by the governments. The governments have confirmed that, so I don't know that I need to categorize it further, James.

**QUESTION:** You don't regard them as hostages?

**MS. PSAKI:** Do we have another topic?

**QUESTION:** Yes. Could I move onto the --

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

**QUESTION:** -- the Secretary's trip.

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

**QUESTION:** Okay. The portion to the West Bank and to Israel..

**MS. PSAKI:** Yeah.

**QUESTION:** Yes. If you have more to share with us -- today or yesterday, President Abbas, the president of the Palestinian Authority, was so impressed with the Geneva success, now he's suggesting a format, perhaps another Geneva, where the Palestinian-Israeli issue could be resolved. Would you look kindly at this suggestion?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I haven't seen those comments from him specifically. I know this has been an idea floated out there. Our focus remains on the direct negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians. We're a facilitator in that effort. There are certainly a number of countries who have a great investment and great interest in the success -- in a successful outcome here, including the Arab League, including many other countries that want to contribute to growing the Palestinian economy. But that's our focus, not on planning yet another conference.

**QUESTION:** And a Palestinian member of the Israeli Knesset, Mr. Ahmed Tibi, claims that the 20,000 housing that the Israelis announced and they put on hold were actually not put on hold, that there is – construction is ongoing. Do you have any information on that?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have anything new on that. I'd have to look into that for you.

Scott?

**QUESTION:** (Inaudible.)

**MS. PSAKI:** Oh.

**QUESTION:** Can we stay on stay on that?

**MS. PSAKI:** Yeah.

**QUESTION:** Just on this idea of not necessarily a Geneva-type conference for the peace process, but just the idea of internationalizing the process, would the United States – would the Administration object to an internationalization of the peace process?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, it's hard to know exactly what that means. Obviously, as you all are well aware, there's direct negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians now. That's what our focus is on, so certainly that's not a path we're pursuing.

**QUESTION:** Well, I think that the point that – right, it's not a path that you're pursuing --

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

**QUESTION:** -- but the point that people who are suggesting that this might be a way to go, the point that they make is that the United States has been the sole and unique arbiter, mediator, facilitator, whatever you want to call it, of Israeli-Palestinian peace talks going back decades.

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

**QUESTION:** And you haven't gotten anything out of it. There's been no success. It's been one failure after another. Is it perhaps not time to try something new, is the argument that these people would make.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, Matt, obviously, many people are going to make different arguments about how it should proceed. We're less than halfway through the nine-month timeline here. There are a number of countries that are engaged and invested, including, of course, the Arab League, who, as you know, are in very close contact with the Palestinians and engaged in this effort. There are many who are engaged with the Israelis in this effort. So our focus remains on the direct negotiations, and I don't think we're at this point speculating on a different alternative forum.

**QUESTION:** Well, let me – okay. Well, let me put it this way: Is it still the position of the Administration that the United States has unique leverage and influence with both sides that makes it the only logical or capable, competent, credible mediator for peace between Israel and the Palestinians?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't know that we've ever stated it exactly like that. We're playing a facilitator role which both sides are comfortable with. There are other countries engaged with this effort and certainly in touch with

the Israelis and the Palestinians. I expect that will continue. But in the meantime, we'll continue to play the facilitator role as long as it's productive.

**QUESTION:** Do you believe, does the Administration believe that the United States still has leverage and influence with Israel or the Palestinians? I mean, you say, in reference to other questions about, say, Mr. Newman or Mr. Bae in North Korea --

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

**QUESTION:** -- that the Chinese have influence with the North Koreans and you would like to go through them, maybe after you're done yelling at them about their air defense zone. But do you still think that the United States -- does the Administration believe that it has influence and leverage with either Israel or the Palestinians?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I think we have a close relationship with both. And obviously, we're at this point because both sides decided to come to the table. I don't think it's about leverage. There's -- it's in the interest of both sides to come to an agreement on the final status issues, and that's what they're working to do at this point.

**QUESTION:** Jen, could I just ask -- there was an agreement --

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** -- reached last week between the EU and Israel which will allow Israel to actually touch some funding for scientific research. There have been some problems because the EU wanted to bar all research in areas of -- in the West Bank --

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

**QUESTION:** -- settlement areas in the West Bank. Is there an -- I mean, does the American -- do America -- does America believe that this is a good agreement for the EU and Israel, given that Secretary Kerry has always mentioned that he fears an increasing isolation of Israel on the international stage?

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm. I haven't talked to our team about it, so I'd have to talk to them and see if we have any particular view on the agreement last week.

**QUESTION:** And is -- what is the message that Secretary Kerry's going to be bringing with him when he visits Israel later on this week?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I think he'll be talking to both sides about the importance of staying firm with the timeline and working through the tough and difficult issues that they're doing at the negotiating table, and reiterating the importance of coming to a peaceful end to the final negotiations. And of course, when he's meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu, they'll certainly be discussing the recent P5+1 agreement with Iran and having an ongoing dialogue about that as well.

**QUESTION:** And have there been any meetings, direct talks between the Israelis and Palestinians, since the resignation of the Palestinian team?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have any updates on meetings at this point. I'll see if there's any more we want to provide to all of you in terms of specific meetings and timing of that.

**QUESTION:** But I mean, since the last time the Secretary's been there, there's been another announcement of new settlement construction.

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

**QUESTION:** There's been the resignation of the Palestinian – it just seems that without him actually physically there holding their hand for hours at a time, that they're not able to sustain it on their own.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, they've had many meetings when he has not been there. So obviously, we didn't expect this to be easy. We certainly are aware of some bumps in the road of late, but both sides have also reaffirmed their commitment to seeing this through.

**QUESTION:** Would you really call those bumps in the road, though? I mean, particularly on the – actually, on either side, whether it's the Israelis continuing to announce settlement construction or the Palestinians' full negotiating team just giving up, it just doesn't seem as if --

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, when they're negotiating – and that's a good example. The negotiating team – President Abbas reaffirmed his own commitment to seeing this through --

**QUESTION:** But it just --

**MS. PSAKI:** -- whether it was them or whether it was other officials in their place. So they're continuing to move forward.

**QUESTION:** It just doesn't seem like they have the – while they may have the desire and the dream that there'll be a peace deal. The motivation to actually do the hard work day in and day out doesn't seem to be there. And so it does seem as if Secretary Kerry is the one holding this together personally, and isn't there, like, a limit to how much he can do?

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure. That's why he has a team to help work through it every day.

**QUESTION:** Well, I meant more the parties themselves.

**MS. PSAKI:** You're right, but there also is a long timeframe we still have left. One of the reasons committing to the nine-month timeframe was so important is because we knew there would be challenging periods throughout the process. But both sides remain committed to that, and so we'll continue to work through it.

**QUESTION:** But it doesn't sound like – unless you could disabuse us of the notion, it doesn't sound like since Secretary Kerry's last trip in early November that there have actually been any direct talks.

**MS. PSAKI:** I wouldn't jump to that conclusion. We just have always said we wouldn't confirm every meeting.

**QUESTION:** Sure.

**MS. PSAKI:** So let me see if I can confirm any meetings since that point for all of you.

**QUESTION:** Jen, could you tell us if Ambassador Indyk is there now? Is he there? Is he in the region? Is he – Ambassador Indyk, where --

**MS. PSAKI:** He's here. I saw him this morning.

**QUESTION:** He's here. Okay.

**MS. PSAKI:** Okay. Let's just do one or two more here.

Scott.

**QUESTION:** What is the U.S. view of what's going on in Thailand right now?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we certainly deeply regret the loss of life in Bangkok due to politically motivated violence. We condemn violence as a means to achieve political objectives and urge all sides to exercise restraint and respect the rule of law. We are concerned about the continuing political tension in Thailand, and we are following the situation closely.

Peaceful protest and freedom of expression are important aspects of democracy, of course. Violence and seizure of public or private property, however, are not acceptable means of resolving political differences. We firmly believe all parties should work together to resolve differences through peaceful dialogue in ways that strengthen democracy and rule of law.

Ambassador Kenney spoke with the prime minister and – has spoken with the prime minister and opposition leaders to also encourage restraint and peaceful dialogue. You may have also seen that the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok issued a security message for U.S. citizens in Thailand explaining that large political demonstrations may continue in coming day – in the coming days, including at government facilities, in and outside of central Bangkok, and is advising them to avoid areas of demonstration and to exercise caution.

**QUESTION:** Following his talk with the prime minister, one of the main opposition leaders said that he would accept nothing short of her resignation. Is that a responsible position in the eyes of the United States?

**MS. PSAKI:** We just continue to encourage all parties to work together to resolve their differences. We, of course, have seen his comments, but I don't think we're going to weigh in further at this point, aside from encouraging restraint on the ground.

**QUESTION:** Would you weigh in on the general amnesty bill that the ruling party failed to get through parliament, which was one of the instigations for this?

**MS. PSAKI:** I know – I don't know if I've spoken to that in the past, Scott. I'd have to – I don't have anything for you on it at this particular moment, but I'm happy to follow up post-briefing.

Okay, let's do two more here. In the back, you've been very patient.

**QUESTION:** Thank you. Michael Vincent from the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. What's the U.S. response to the Australian Government's rejection of the U.S. company Archer Daniels Midland's bid for GrainCorp?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we are disappointed by the Government of Australia's decision to reject Archer Daniels Midland's proposed acquisition of GrainCorp. We do not – we do note that the Australian Treasurer Joe Hockey has expressed openness to approving an increase in ADM's current share in GrainCorp. The United States is the largest foreign investor – foreign direct investor in Australia, with 132 billion in investment projects to date, and we look forward to working closely with Australia's government to build stronger ties and investment – stronger trade and investment ties.

**QUESTION:** Just a quick follow-up.

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

**QUESTION:** Did – unrelated matter, but has the U.S. Government accepted private medical, legal, or religious information on Australian citizens as offered by Australian intelligence agencies?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have anything further or anything for you on a range of reports. I'm certainly not going to comment on any of them. As you know, we're undergoing our own review of these processes, which we expect to conclude by the end of the year.

**QUESTION:** Jen, back to ADM for a second.

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

**QUESTION:** Did – was this issue, this proposed sale, bid by ADM raised at the AUSMIN ministerial meetings?

**MS. PSAKI:** It's a good question, Matt. I'd have to check. It wasn't one raised while I was there, but let me check and see if it was.

**QUESTION:** And if it was, did – was – were you given any indication that this is the way your closest antipodal ally was going to go?

**MS. PSAKI:** I will check and see if it was even raised.

Okay, let's do one more. Go ahead, Samir.

**QUESTION:** Do you have a reaction to the draft constitution in Egypt today?

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** Can I throw a Bahrain question at the end of that?

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure. Why not?

Well, we continue to track the constitutional process with interest, and we'll examine the document carefully once it is finalized and sent to President Mansour, which we understand will occur tomorrow. The Egyptian people, of course, will decide the fate of the draft constitution in a referendum. We will continue to support a transition process that leads to an inclusive civilian government selected through free, fair, and transparent elections, and civilian government based on the rule of law, fundamental freedoms, accountability, and an open and competitive economy. So we will see when it is transferred, and we will take a close look at it.

Bahrain.

**QUESTION:** Yeah. Do you have any view on the government --

**QUESTION:** A quick one on Egypt. Hold on. I'm sorry, Matt. You don't have any comment on the prohibition of religious parties in Egypt?

**MS. PSAKI:** Again, we'll wait to comment on it until it's been officially transferred. Obviously, there are steps in there we may be complimentary of and others we may not be.

**QUESTION:** Yes, please.

**QUESTION:** Does the decision of the -- not to release this human rights campaigner when he was eligible to be released? It was yesterday or today.

**MS. PSAKI:** Let me see. I think I have something on this. One moment, Matt.

**QUESTION:** Mm-hmm. You can get it -- if you just want to make it a TQ, that's fine.

**MS. PSAKI:** Yeah, that's fine. I believe I have something on it for you. Let's see. We continue to encourage Bahrain to take the necessary steps to promote reconciliation among Bahrainis, including permitting all sectors of society to voice their political views in a peaceful manner. We have seen reports that the head of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights Nabeel Rajab -- is that who you're talking about -- okay --

**QUESTION:** (Inaudible.)

**MS. PSAKI:** -- was denied early release today in Bahrain. We understand that he has served 18 months of his two-year prison sentence and is scheduled to be released in May of next year. We remain deeply concerned about the three-year prison sentence for leading illegal gatherings. We urge the Government of Bahrain to protect the universal rights of freedom of expression and assembly, just as we urge all elements of Bahraini society to engage in peaceful expressions of political opinion.

**QUESTION:** Do you think that he should've been released as was -- as he could've been today?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I believe we are concerned about his -- we were concerned about his three-year prison sentence, I believe. Let me check and see, but I believe that's what we're implying here.

**QUESTION:** I mean, this is not the first. I mean, there have been several other opposition activists and so forth that have been detained. I mean, does this cast doubt on your encouraging words earlier in the year about Bahrain's commitment to political reforms?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we certainly are encouraging them to take some step -- to take necessary steps to promote reconciliation. And obviously, each time that there is a case like this, we have expressed concern. So I don't have any analysis as to what that will mean longer-term or about the overall relationship, but each time there has been an incident, we have certainly expressed our concern.

**QUESTION:** Well, but each time -- you say each time that there's been an incident. I mean, there's a pattern of incidents. I mean, does that say something about their actual commitment to reforms?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I don't have any more analysis on it for you.

Thanks, everyone.

**QUESTION:** Thank you.

(The briefing was concluded at 3:18 p.m.)

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**Andy Schachter**  
**PA/PRS Transcription Unit, Room 1119A**  
**Diversified Reporting Services, Inc., Supervisory Contractor**

RELEASE IN FULL

**Fischer, Kyle G**

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**From:** Whelan, Moira  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 11, 2016 9:08 PM  
**To:** Stevenson, Susan N; Trudeau, Elizabeth K  
**Cc:** Forgerson, Luke A; Brown, Cynthia A  
**Subject:** Video

After you all huddle in the am, I would like to be dialed in please.

I have written all of the messaging on this in every official document for 3 years. Thanks!

Sent from my BlackBerry 10

**Fischer, Kyle G**

**From:** Harf, Marie E  
**Sent:** Monday, December 02, 2013 2:47 PM  
**To:** Psaki, Jennifer R (PsakiJR@state.gov)  
**Subject:** FW: State Department Daily Press Briefing by Deputy Spokesperson Marie Harf - July 18, 2013

<b>RELEASE IN PART</b> <b>B5</b>
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B5

**QUESTION:** And has there been any outreach either by Iran or by the U.S. to one another privately through private channels?

**MS. HARF:** Not to my knowledge, no.

**QUESTION:** So to your knowledge, since the election of Rohani, we have not reached out to them, they have not reached out to us --

**MS. HARF:** That is correct.

**QUESTION:** -- on a bilateral basis?

**MS. HARF:** That is correct.

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

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**From:** State Department Press Office [mailto:Press@state.gov]  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 18, 2013 4:57 PM  
**To:** State Department Press Office  
**Subject:** State Department Daily Press Briefing by Deputy Spokesperson Marie Harf - July 18, 2013

**On-Camera Daily Press Briefing Index**  
**Thursday, July 18, 2013 ,**  
**1:18 p.m. EDT**  
**Briefer: Marie Harf, Deputy Spokesperson**

**~CHINA~**

**^^ Xu Zhiyong Taken into Custody / U.S. Concern**

**~DEPARTMENT~**

**^^ Cuts in Aid / Working with Congress / Embassy Security**

**~DPRK/PANAMA~****^^ Seized Ship / U.S. Assistance / Sanctions****~CUBA~****^^ U.S. Relations****~JORDAN~****^^ Secretary Kerry's Visit to a Refugee Camp****~MEPP~****^^ Resumption of Talks / Narrowing the Gaps****~BAHRAIN~****^^ Condemnation of Bombing****~RUSSIA~****^^ Conviction and Sentencing of Opposition Leader Alexei Navalny and Pyotr Ofitserov****~EGYPT~****^^ Arbitrary Arrests****~BULGARIA/ISRAEL~****^^ One-Year Anniversary of Terrorist Attack****~EGYPT~****^^ Muslim Brotherhood / EU****^^ Attack in the Sinai****~CHINA~****^^ U.S. Relations****~EGYPT~****^^ Ambassador Patterson****^^ Working with Interim Government / Broad Relationship****^^ Deputy Secretary Burns' Efforts****~IRAN~****^^ Engagement with Iran / P-5+1****~DEPARTMENT~****^^ Cuts in Aid / Working with Congress****~SYRIA~****^^ Geneva 2 / Political Solution / SOC Elections****~ZIMBABWE~****^^ Bilateral Relationship / Elections / Clear about Concerns**

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
DAILY PRESS BRIEFING

DPB # 121

THURSDAY, JULY 18, 2013  
(ON THE RECORD UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED)

1:18 p.m. EDT

**MS. HARF:** Hello, everyone. Welcome to the daily briefing. I'm happy to be back for day two. I have a statement to read at the top, and I'm happy to open it up to questions.

The United States is concerned over reports that prominent Chinese legal scholar and rights advocate Xu Zhiyong was taken into police custody July 16<sup>th</sup> for, quote, "assembling a crowd to disrupt order in a public place," unquote, and is now being held at a detention center in Beijing. Xu, who reportedly spent over three months under extrajudicial house arrest prior to his detention, is a leading public advocate for fiscal transparency and fighting official corruption.

The United States Government is concerned that he is being prosecuted as retribution for his public campaign to expose official malfeasance and for the peaceful expression of his views. We call on Chinese authorities to release Xu immediately, cease any restrictions on his freedom of movement, and guarantee him the protections and freedoms to which he is entitled under China's international human rights commitments.

And with that, I am happy to open it up to questions. Deb.

**QUESTION:** Hi, let's talk about what's going on on the Hill.

**MS. HARF:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** The House Republicans want to cut billions of dollars from U.S. foreign operations, I think taking it down around 20 percent, severe cuts to USAID and foreign government operations – foreign government assistance programs. Is this disconcerting to you all, and how are you all weighing in on this?

**MS. HARF:** Well, first I'd say that this is just the start of the process. We're looking forward to working with Congress on this issue going forward, but that being said, we are very concerned. Our concern is that these proposed cuts, which we would consider would be devastating if put into effect, would hurt our ability to stand up for American interests and values around the world. The U.S. can't lead if we retreat in this way.

And there are a couple of specific cuts that I'd like – proposed cuts that I'd like to highlight: for example, a 41 percent cut to economic and development assistance. This would dramatically reduce our assistance to countries like Afghanistan, Pakistan, Mexico, Colombia, South Sudan, Somalia, and Burma. It would also force us to scale back the Feed the Future program, setting back progress to reduce poverty in Africa by improving agricultural productivity. Also, the bill zeroes out voluntary funding for our contributions to UN organizations, including organizations like UNICEF.

So these are just some examples. Again, we're looking forward to working closely with Congress on the appropriations process going forward.

**QUESTION:** I think they're leaving the embassy security alone?

**MS. HARF:** I did see that. Clearly, embassy security is a huge part of what we're focused on here, but what we do overseas is about more than just security. Obviously, that's of key concern, but we need to be able to go out overseas, promote American interests, and promote American values, and the only way to do that is through these programs.

**QUESTION:** Will the Secretary be going to the Hill to talk to --

**MS. HARF:** Well, I don't have anything specific to announce, but needless to say, the Secretary is very engaged with the Hill on a wide variety of issues, having spent so many years there himself.

**QUESTION:** You said that it would cut off aid and contributions to UN agencies. Does that include, to the best of your knowledge, cutting off aid to UNRWA, the United Nations Relief Work Agency for the Palestinians?

**MS. HARF:** I don't have all the specifics. All I know is that the bill would zero out all voluntary funding for our contributions to UN organizations. So anything that falls under that would fall into that category.

**QUESTION:** Thank you. Can we change topics?

**QUESTION:** Can I change topics?

**MS. HARF:** Yes.

**QUESTION:** I'd like to just go back to the North Korean ship. Any update on whether the U.S. has actually sent a team down there? What -- whether you support the UN sanctions -- whether you would support UN sanctions or further tightening of sanctions against Cuba on this?

**MS. HARF:** Well, I don't have any update for you. As we said yesterday, we stand ready to assist. As you also know, the ship is still being offloaded. And this process, just to set expectations here, will probably be a lengthy one. So we can talk about every day where the process is, but I just want to set expectations that this will take some time.

In terms of the sanctions, there is a process in place. We are supportive of that process because the bottom line remains that any alleged violation of UN Security Council resolutions and sanctions on North Korea is incredibly concerning to us, as we've said many times. And so we're just going to let that process play out. I don't want to speculate on how that might end or what actions might come out of that.

**QUESTION:** You said yesterday that Panama had asked for U.S. assistance. What is that assistance?

**MS. HARF:** I don't have details for you on what that might look like.

**QUESTION:** Can we change topics?

**MS. HARF:** Anything else on the ship?

**QUESTION:** One more. Is the U.S. going to -- that assistance that was just raised, is that going to be with the U.S. bilaterally or is that going to take place through the UN?

**MS. HARF:** I don't have any other details on what that assistance might look like.

**QUESTION:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** I'm sorry but had the U.S. been tracking this? The ship has had a history of smuggling narcotics.

**MS. HARF:** Right.

**QUESTION:** Had the U.S. been tracking this ship prior to it going through the Panama Canal?

**MS. HARF:** I don't have any details for you on that question.

**QUESTION:** Could you come back to me on any --

**MS. HARF:** If I have anything else I can share, I would be happy to do so.

**QUESTION:** And yesterday you mentioned that you would be discussing the issue with Cuba. Do you have any more details on that, like what channels that it's going to take place through?

**MS. HARF:** I don't. I would underscore that the issue of the ship isn't a U.S.-Cuba issue -- it's really an issue that we're focused on in terms of the UN and the sanctions that we have through the UN on North Korea. We said we would raise it with them at some point. I don't have any update for you on that.

**QUESTION:** But the UN -- but the U.S. can push through the UN what is going on, so therefore you have a view on how that process should be --

**MS. HARF:** Well, we certainly have a role to play in that process. We welcome Panama's commitment to cooperate fully with the panel of experts that assists the DPRK Sanctions Committee that monitors UN member-state implementation. So we fully support their commitment to working with that panel and we'll continue to do so going forward.

**QUESTION:** Can we change topics?

**MS. HARF:** Yes.

**QUESTION:** I'm sorry --

**MS. HARF:** Oh, one more on the ship?

**QUESTION:** The Secretary --

**QUESTION:** I have one more, sorry.

**MS. HARF:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** Senator Rubio has sent a letter to Secretary Kerry requesting that not only this be brought to the UN Security Council for sanctions but also that the State Department retake a look at its people-to-people exchange program. Do you know if Secretary Kerry -- if you all have received the letter? I know he's not here. And do you have any response to it or when he will be issuing a response?

**MS. HARF:** I haven't seen the letter so I don't have any details on that for you. What we've said broadly speaking in terms of our relation -- or excuse me, our contacts with the Cubans is that we will work with them,

like we did yesterday at the migration talks, on issues that are in our national security interests. That hasn't changed. But again, I haven't seen the letter and wouldn't want to comment on it right now.

**QUESTION:** At what stage does the U.S. talk to the Cubans about this? I mean, yesterday was a one-off – a one-day talk discussion on migration. When do you actually plan to –

**MS. HARF:** I don't have a timeline for you on that. Again, this isn't – we're not viewing this as a U.S.-Cuba issue; we're viewing this as a potential violation of UN Security Council resolutions on North Korea. That's really the lens through which we're viewing it. Of course, any allegation that there has been a violation is incredibly concerning to us.

Yes. New topic.

**QUESTION:** Can we talk about the Secretary's trip?

**MS. HARF:** We can.

**QUESTION:** Yeah. Could you update us on the latest – on the status of his trip currently?

**MS. HARF:** Absolutely. So as you may have seen, the Secretary visited a Syrian refugee camp in Jordan today. He did this because he obviously personally cares about this issue very much and understands how dire the situation is for the Syrian people. We've been clear about the horrific behavior of the Assad regime and the impact that it's had on the Syrian people. And I would underscore that he thought it was very important to see the situation on the ground, particularly in light of the fact that next week, on Tuesday, he will be meeting with representatives of international humanitarian agencies on Syria specifically.

So as you know, the U.S. remains the leading donor of humanitarian assistance in Syria. We will continue pressing other countries to increase their contributions as well.

**QUESTION:** On the other aspect of the trip --

**MS. HARF:** Yes.

**QUESTION:** -- as far as the negotiations between --

**MS. HARF:** Correct.

**QUESTION:** -- Palestinians and Israelis are concerned, now the Palestinians were saying that today there was going to be an announcement probably made by Secretary Kerry about the resumption of the talks. Could you update us on this? And he's also staying a day or two longer?

**MS. HARF:** Well, I just got off the phone with the team, so I have some updates. We're still determining whether there is more work to be done. We're really working it hour by hour, so it's a very fluid situation.

Jen Psaki, the Spokesperson, put out an on-the-record comment saying that there – tonight there wasn't likely to be some announcement. That's not a commentary on the behind-the-scenes discussions; it was more of a planning statement.

But the Secretary is there because he believes progress can be made. And we're on the ground, again, taking it hour to hour to determine when they'll leave, what further meetings might be necessary, but I don't have any other updates to add at this point.

**QUESTION:** Okay. And Israeli sources say that Prime Minister Netanyahu rejected to begin negotiations on the premise of the 1967 borders, as was articulated by the President's speech in Jerusalem last spring. Do you have a comment on that? Has the Secretary of State been in touch with the Israelis on this very issue?

**MS. HARF:** Well, I think one thing that we've underscored and that's important to keep in mind is that there are a lot of rumors floating out there about this process, about these discussions. Secretary Kerry has been clear that all three sides have agreed not to litigate, not to talk through, not to play out these discussions in public. So on specific questions like that, I'm going to refer to the Secretary's comments that these discussions are private for a reason, and we're just not going to comment on those kinds of rumors.

**QUESTION:** And lastly, do you know that if the inclination, as far as the Secretary is concerned, is to have these talks resumed, once they are resumed, in Washington or in Amman?

**MS. HARF:** I wouldn't want to even venture a hypothetical about location. But we've been clear that our overall goal going forward at some point will be -- needs to be the resumption of talks. But in terms of location, no, nothing to talk about on that.

Yes.

**QUESTION:** There are some reports -- media reports saying that the PA, the Palestinian Authority, accepted or agreed on starting the negotiations without stopping the settlements.

**MS. HARF:** Again, I'm not going to comment on specific rumors, specific lines like that out there in the public except to say that the three sides are talking privately. But this is why Secretary Kerry is engaging with both sides privately, and we're just not going to comment on all of those rumors out there.

**QUESTION:** Some of the Palestinians have called for another special committee meeting. Is that a good sign or a bad sign?

**MS. HARF:** I wouldn't want to characterize it either way. Obviously, our team is still on the ground and they're going to remain there as long as they think work can still be done. So we're doing -- again, managing it on an hour-to-hour basis. The Secretary is continuing his discussions with both sides, so I think we'll just wait and see. I don't want to get ahead of any kind of meeting.

**QUESTION:** Will there be any conflict between Secretary Kerry and Susan Rice, since she's taking some side of this issue, like the peace process between the Israelis and the Palestinians?

**MS. HARF:** Well, I'm not exactly sure what you're referring to, but Secretary Kerry and Susan Rice have a long history of working together. They work very well and closely together on the whole host of national security issues that they're both dealing with.

**QUESTION:** Is it your sense from where you stand in Washington that the Secretary is closer than he was just a month ago when he was in Amman, that he's now made enough progress to say that there has been enough progress or he's close to making a deal?

**MS. HARF:** Well, I think you heard him yesterday say, again, that he feels like we continue narrowing the gaps. And that's really important because obviously there needs to continue to be progress for us to engage, and he feels like there has been. He also said yesterday that he feels like both sides are working with him in good faith, that they both want to get to the same place, but again, these are very tricky issues. So he did -- I

would point you to his comments yesterday where he did reference the fact that we feel like we are bridging the gaps even further, but clearly, there is more work to be done.

**QUESTION:** I wanted to ask you about the status of the Special Envoy David Hale. What is the status of the Special Envoy? Or is Mr. Lowenstein now conduct – doing the responsibilities, conducting the responsibilities of the staff?

**MS. HARF:** Well, as you know, Frank Lowenstein is in the region. He's been there working with both sides since, actually, the last trip – when we returned from the last trip. I don't have any further personnel updates for you other than that Frank is on the ground now with the Secretary working.

**QUESTION:** Thank you.

**MS. HARF:** Yes.

**QUESTION:** Can we change topic?

**MS. HARF:** New topic, yes.

**QUESTION:** Change the topic, can I? I'm Tomas Miglierina from Swiss Television. There are reports from Panama that a former head of CIA stationed in Milan by the name of Robert Lady has been arrested. He was involved in the case of a Muslim cleric that was kidnapped in Milan, Abu Omar. Do you have any information on that? Do you have any details?

**MS. HARF:** I haven't seen those reports and I don't have anything for you on it.

Yes.

**QUESTION:** Do you have a reaction to the bombing today of a mosque in Bahrain?

**MS. HARF:** I do. We strongly condemn the recent attacks that deliberately targeted a mosque in Riffa and other locations during the Holy Month of Ramadan. There is no place for such violence in Bahrain. Those responsible for these senseless acts of violence are clearly trying to inflame the situation and, for Bahrain's sake, must stop.

**QUESTION:** Thank you.

**QUESTION:** Can I change the subject?

**MS. HARF:** Yes.

**QUESTION:** I was going to ask you about the Russian opposition leader that was found guilty and jailed for five years. The Germans say they were shocked at this news. Do you have any reaction?

**MS. HARF:** We do. And just so you know, I think – I believe we'll have a statement coming later in the day, but I'm happy to give our position on this as well from here.

We are very disappointed by the conviction and sentencing of opposition leader Alexei – excuse me – Navalny and his co-defendant Pyotr Ofitserov to lengthy prison terms for alleged embezzlement by a court in the city of Kirov. Throughout the case, we have expressed our concern about its apparent political motivation. We are troubled about the abuse of due process and the rule of law, as exemplified by the conduct of this trial, where

the judge interfered with the defense's cross-examination and dismissed several of the defense's own witnesses. Their harsh prison sentences are the latest example of a disturbing trend in the Russian Federation of legislation, prosecutions, and government actions aimed at suppressing dissent in civil society.

**QUESTION:** Does the U.S. plan to raise this officially with Russia?

**MS. HARF:** I don't have any details for you on that. I think we may – I just made our position very clear, but I don't have any additional details.

**QUESTION:** On Egypt?

**MS. HARF:** Egypt? Yeah.

**QUESTION:** Lady Catherine Ashton was in Cairo yesterday, and she failed to meet Mr. Morsy. Does anyone know anything about his whereabouts, his status, his health, or any of these things?

**MS. HARF:** I don't have any updates for you on any of that, other than to say that we've made our position clear and will continue to do so.

**QUESTION:** Okay. So do you consider him to be a political prisoner at the present time?

**MS. HARF:** Well, we have called repeatedly for an end to all arbitrary politically motivated imprisonments, including his, and our position on that has not changed. I don't want to put labels beyond that on it.

**QUESTION:** So short of releasing him, do you call on those in authority in Egypt to treat him as a political prisoner and accord him all the benefits that come with a prisoner of conscience?

**MS. HARF:** We have called on the interim government to end arbitrary arrests, to uphold the rule of law, and we will continue to make that point publicly and privately.

**QUESTION:** And you're still pressing for his release, correct?

**MS. HARF:** Our position on that has not changed.

**QUESTION:** (Inaudible) government issued a letter saying that Hezbollah is involved in the attack of Burgas, I guess.

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

**QUESTION:** Do you have any statement on that? Do you have any --

**MS. HARF:** I do. Well, as you know, on July 18<sup>th</sup> marks the one-year anniversary of the terrorist attack that claimed the lives of six innocent civilians. We continue to extend our condolences to the people of Bulgaria and Israel for the tragic loss of life, and call for the perpetrators of these attacks to be brought to justice.

**QUESTION:** I have a follow-up on Egypt.

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

**QUESTION:** You still on Egypt?

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

**MS. HARF:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** On Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood said today – told us that they proposed an EU go-between to try to resolve this political crisis in Egypt. Do you know anything about this proposal?

**MS. HARF:** Well, I'd have to refer you to the EU for that question. Again, broadly speaking, the point I've made from here is that we support a process going forward that is inclusive, that includes all parties and all groups as Egypt moves back towards a sustainable, inclusive democracy.

**QUESTION:** But do you think that this would help? I mean, it seems that some kind of mediation on this would be helpful.

**MS. HARF:** Well, I don't want to speculate on what that inclusive process might look like. Obviously, again, I'd point you to the EU specifically for that question. But our goal has been and will continue to be that this process needs to be inclusive, it needs to include all parties and all groups, and that eventually Egypt needs to get back to a place of a sustainable, inclusive democracy.

**QUESTION:** Sorry. Just – I wonder if you could comment on the confrontation in Sinai between the Egyptian army and some militants that resulted in the death, apparently, of 12 militants.

**MS. HARF:** Of 12 what? I'm sorry.

**QUESTION:** Of 12 armed persons.

**MS. HARF:** Well, we strongly condemn the recent attack that deliberately targeted security forces in the Sinai. We've made clear, and will continue to make clear, that there is no place in Egypt for that kind of violence. We remain concerned about the security situation in the Sinai, and more broadly, continue to believe that securing the Sinai is vital to Egypt's future as well as to regional security.

**QUESTION:** Can we just turn, then, to Asia quickly?

**MS. HARF:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** There's a new Pew (inaudible) poll about growing --

**MS. HARF:** We'll go back to Egypt.

**QUESTION:** Sorry.

**MS. HARF:** We'll come back.

**QUESTION:** -- I'll be quick – growing distrust of China by U.S. citizens. Now, I understand that State Department officials were briefed on the report by Pew. Have you seen it, and what's the reaction? What's your general reaction to a growing distrust of U.S. citizens of China?

**MS. HARF:** I actually haven't seen the report. I'm happy to look into it and get back to you specifically. Broadly speaking, as we've said many times, we have a broad relationship with the Chinese Government. We've worked together on a host of issues. We're clear when we disagree, but I think it was

clear from the recent Security and Economic Dialogue that we will continue working together when it's in our interest to do so. Again, I can look into the specific report and get back to you.

Do you want to go back to Egypt?

**QUESTION:** Yes, please.

**MS. HARF:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** Protesters, like, from both sides in Egypt, they are asking for U.S. Ambassador Patterson to leave the country. How would you like to react on that?

**MS. HARF:** Ambassador Patterson, who is a longtime, decorated Foreign Service officer here, has the complete support of the State Department and the Administration, and beyond that I have nothing further.

Yes.

**QUESTION:** Going back to the 10 jihadists that were killed yesterday, during the past two days, by the Egyptian security forces, a few others were arrested. It appeared that they -- it was reported that they are linked to Ramzi Mowafi, who is a former physician of Usama bin Ladin. Do you have any information on --

**MS. HARF:** I actually haven't seen those reports. I'm happy to look into that specific incident and get back to you on that.

**QUESTION:** Okay.

**MS. HARF:** Yes. Egypt still?

**QUESTION:** Yes, please.

**MS. HARF:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** I mean, talking about inclusiveness and what was mentioned before about the possibility or readiness of EU to mediate a forum of reconciliation, or put together inclusiveness forum of -- do you as U.S. consider this is a good proposal? Are you ready to do similar thing or not?

**MS. HARF:** I wouldn't even want to address that hypothetical. Again, we support working with the interim government, and our partners working with the interim government, in helping get them back to an inclusive, sustainable democracy, but I don't want to comment specifically on that proposal one way or the other.

**QUESTION:** Yes, I understand that there is no need to speculate or label what you want to say. But as a principle, is it accepted or not?

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

**QUESTION:** The principle of playing a role to mediate those people together.

**MS. HARF:** Well, the United States clearly has a broad relationship with Egypt. We will continue to do so. We've said that we will work with all sides and all parties to encourage them to get back to the table. So clearly, we have a role we believe we can play, but I wouldn't want to speculate on what that role might look like.

**QUESTION:** The other question, which is related to the contact, still it's puzzling people, not just in Egypt, all -- even in United States regarding the phone call that took place between Assistant Secretary -- I mean, Deputy Secretary Burns and representative of Muslim Brothers. Meanwhile, the Ashton -- Lady Ashton met two people of the leadership. I mean, do you have contact with people or just relying on phone calls?

**MS. HARF:** Again -- I think you asked this yesterday -- we will engage with all parties and all groups on the ground from the Embassy. Deputy Secretary Burns had a phone call. But going forward, I expect our diplomats on the ground to continue their engagement in a variety of ways with the Muslim Brotherhood.

**QUESTION:** You say you're ready to engage with all sides, yet when Deputy Secretary Burns goes to Egypt, he doesn't meet with the Muslim Brotherhood.

**MS. HARF:** Well, he did have a trip -- or a call.

**QUESTION:** Yet here Lady Ashton does. Well, according to sources in the Brotherhood, the U.S. did not ask for a meeting.

**MS. HARF:** We have been clear that Deputy Secretary Burns had a phone call with a representative of the Muslim Brotherhood, that there was a discussion about the possibility of a meeting, but for logistical reasons, it just didn't make sense to do a face-to-face meeting.

**QUESTION:** Who was that representative? Was it high enough or was it just a clerk on the other side?

**MS. HARF:** Unfortunately, I don't have any additional details for you on that.

**QUESTION:** So --

**MS. HARF:** Egypt?

**QUESTION:** -- could we assume, then, that the diplomats in the Embassy are actually meeting with members of the Brotherhood?

**MS. HARF:** I'd have to check on what the latest is on that. I would certainly make that assumption, but I don't want to say that if I'm not 100 percent sure what has taken place in terms of meetings. But I would assume that they will do so as part of our broad engagement going forward. But I'd have to get specifics for you just to double-check on that.

Egypt still?

**QUESTION:** No, different subject.

**MS. HARF:** Egypt? Yes.

**QUESTION:** No, this is Iran.

**MS. HARF:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** I want to get an update on what is happening with the possibility of engagement with Iran now that it's got a new president. Lady Ashton came out with her statement a couple of days ago after talking to political directors. So what is the updated position from the U.S.?

**MS. HARF:** Well, we also – Wendy Sherman, as you know, was at the P-5+1 meeting as well. It was a productive meeting. We felt like it was – the P-5+1 remains unified, has a sense of urgency about this issue. We are still, as we have been, waiting for a substantive response from the Iranians in order to move forward. As the President and others have said, we are open to discussions with Iran both through the P-5+1 and through potential bilateral talks if there is a serious and substantive discussion to be had.

**QUESTION:** And has there been any outreach either by Iran or by the U.S. to one another privately through private channels?

**MS. HARF:** Not to my knowledge, no.

**QUESTION:** So to your knowledge, since the election of Rohani, we have not reached out to them, they have not reached out to us --

**MS. HARF:** That is correct.

**QUESTION:** -- on a bilateral basis?

**MS. HARF:** That is correct.

**QUESTION:** On the proposed cuts in --

**MS. HARF:** Yes.

**QUESTION:** -- international assistance on Capitol Hill --

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

**QUESTION:** -- can you tell us if the Administration and the -- and Congress are not able to reach a compromise, who has the final authority on providing foreign assistance to -- international assistance to foreign countries?

**MS. HARF:** I'm sorry. If we can't come to an agreement on this, who --

**QUESTION:** Yes.

**MS. HARF:** -- in the U.S. Government has that authority?

**QUESTION:** Right.

**MS. HARF:** Well, our position is that the State Department is uniquely situated to continue with the programs, the assistance, the engagement on the development and economic side that we've been doing. So I wouldn't want to speculate on where that might come from if this bill goes through, other than to say that we believe these cuts would be devastating to our ability to work all around the world in places where we have been doing so for decades.

**QUESTION:** And are you confident of proceeding ahead with this, and that Congress will be able to accommodate your concerns and approve this?

**MS. HARF:** Well, it's the start of the process, so we are looking forward to working with Congress to get to a place that we feel is more acceptable and in the U.S. interests to be able to continue promoting our security, our interests, and our values overseas.

**QUESTION:** And can I take to South Asia?

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

**QUESTION:** There is a pending case in the Indian Supreme Court wherein a former Indian Foreign Ministry official, he has submitted a statement with the Indian Supreme Court saying that Indian Government was complicit in Mumbai 2008 and parliamentary bombings in 2001. Do you have any reaction to that?

**MS. HARF:** I actually haven't seen that. I'm happy to look into it and get back to you if I have anything to share.

**QUESTION:** Yeah. I mean, in Mumbai bombing, six Americans were also killed, and this statement has started a big controversy in South Asia.

**MS. HARF:** Absolutely. Again, I'm happy to look into it and get back to you.

**QUESTION:** Thank you.

**MS. HARF:** Deb.

**QUESTION:** Is there any progress to report on the effort to set up a Geneva 2?

**MS. HARF:** I don't have any update for you on that. We've been clear that we're not just going to have a conference to have a conference, that the conditions need to be right, that we need to be able to make progress there, but I don't have anything new for you on that.

**QUESTION:** So where are we with that right now?

**MS. HARF:** We're where we are, that we remain committed to working with the UN and the Russians. We've been having these dialogues, as you know. I don't have any new dialogues to update you on, but to set the conditions to get everybody to the table at a Geneva 2 conference moving forward. But again, separate and apart from any specific conference, our position remains that there's no military solution here, that there needs to be a political solution to the situation in Syria.

**QUESTION:** I'm sorry. You said there's no military solution, but the Joint Chiefs of Staff just said that there is potentially a military solution in Congress.

**MS. HARF:** I'm sorry. I didn't see his comments. I know that our position remains the same, that there is no military solution that will end this conflict in Syria. The best thing to do for the Syrian people is for us – for them, excuse me, to get a political solution where they can end the violence, where they can move forward towards a government that respects the rights of its people. Secretary Kerry has spoken to this repeatedly, and our position on that has not changed.

**QUESTION:** But there are military options being discussed by the White House right now? That was conceded in Congress this morning, so I'm just concerned that you think it's just a peaceful option, but the White House is considering military options still.

**MS. HARF:** Well, we – no, we’ve repeatedly said the Administration is considering a broad range of options in dealing with the situation on the ground in Syria. That is true; that has not changed. I know Jen has said from this podium that all options are on the table except for boots on the ground. That also hasn’t changed.

**QUESTION:** Still confusing.

**QUESTION:** (Inaudible) and sort of having a date and time and so on for Geneva 2 remains to be caused by lack of understanding or different understanding to the points of Geneva 1 between the United States and Russia? Is that how you see it?

**MS. HARF:** Well, it’s a very complicated process. Getting all the parties that need to be there to the table is an ongoing dialogue. With – we’ve made clear our disagreements with the Russians on Syria. That’s why we’re talking to them and the UN about how to convene a conference that has the best chance of success. So those discussions are ongoing. We’ve talked about some of those issues in here, but I don’t have anything new for you on where that stands.

**QUESTION:** So do you believe that the call for Assad to step aside first by the opposition and, in fact, by the Government of the United States and so on, to be – not to be wise because it seems to hold back this process instead of putting it forward?

**MS. HARF:** Well, we’ve been very clear about Assad, that he has lost all legitimacy to lead his country, that he must go. That’s been clear. Nothing changes that. In terms of the discussions around a Geneva 2 convention --

**QUESTION:** Right.

**MS. HARF:** -- we’ve been clear about the issues that we’re going to discuss going forward, but our position on Assad remains unchanged and is a very strong one.

**QUESTION:** So it is the person of Bashar al-Assad who is sort of vetoed from the process, but not the regime itself. Correct?

**MS. HARF:** I don’t want to get into the details of the ongoing discussions about how we get to Geneva other than to say that they continue to be ongoing.

**QUESTION:** So on the other side, do you believe that you have a homogenous group in the opposition that can negotiate on behalf of the Syrian people with the regime?

**MS. HARF:** Well, that’s obviously been something that we’ve discussed from here. We were – that was a positive step that the SOC held elections and now has elected leaders. So one of the things we’ve been doing with our assistance has been to further – help further coalesce, help the SMC, help the SOC further coalesce. Because that is the best way, if they’re unified, to get them to the table as well to move forward in that process. So that’s an ongoing process. We’ve been encouraged by some things we’ve seen, specifically the elections, and we’ll continue to help them do that going forward.

**QUESTION:** And finally, since August seems to be out in terms of a timetable for holding the conference, do you expect this issue, organizing Geneva 2, to take a major portion of the 68<sup>th</sup> session of the UNGA this year in September?

**MS. HARF:** I wouldn't want to speculate on that. Again, we've said for a long time that there's no timeline on when we are going to have Geneva 2. So I wouldn't want to speculate how it will play into UNGA other than to say I'm sure the issue will be discussed quite a bit.

**QUESTION:** Thank you.

**MS. HARF:** Other subjects? Yes.

**QUESTION:** Zimbabwe?

**MS. HARF:** Yes.

**QUESTION:** A few days ago, Lesley asked about a letter that Secretary Kerry wrote to President Mugabe that was delivered by Andrew Young. Do you have any update on the contents or readout of that letter and whether there's been any response from the Zimbabwe Government?

**MS. HARF:** I do. Secretary Kerry made it clear in his letter that the United States is prepared to revisit our bilateral relationship with Zimbabwe, but only if Zimbabwe implements needed political reforms, allows civil society organizations to operate freely, and holds elections that are peaceful, credible, and represent the will of the Zimbabwean people. I don't have any update for you on whether there's been a response or not.

**QUESTION:** Today, the SADC had said that the – it was the first time that President Zuma's actually spoken out and said that the Zimbabwe election looked like it wasn't going to be a credible, free one. Is your sense that the Zimbabweans have got the message that unless they act now, that none of those sanctions are going to be lifted?

**MS. HARF:** Well, we've made it clear that this is a critical moment – and I spoke to this, I believe; I know Patrick has – and that we have expressed our deep concerns about parts of this process, including the lack of transparency in electoral preparations, the continued partisan behavior by state security institutions, and some of the technical and logistical issues that are hampering the administration of a credible and transparent election.

So we've been clear about our concerns, but we also believe there is still time to get things back on track. We've also – our sanctions policy has not changed, to my knowledge, and we've made clear to the Government of Zimbabwe that further reductions in sanctions will only occur if the next elections are credible, transparent, and again, reflect the will of the people.

**QUESTION:** Given that there's only two weeks left for the election, I mean, do you think that the election should be delayed until those preparations are in order?

**MS. HARF:** I don't have anything for you on that. Again, we've made our concerns known, but we do believe that there is still time for some of these concerns to be alleviated.

Anything else? Thank you all. See you tomorrow.

(The briefing was concluded at 1:51 p.m.)

###

**Fischer, Kyle G**

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**From:** Toner, Mark C  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 10, 2016 12:15 AM  
**To:** Beechem, Stephanie  
**Cc:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K; Werberg, Samuel; Harf, Marie E; Hickey, Lauren A; Kirby, John; Norris, Emily Y  
**Subject:** Re: Urgent

Coming back on line after 14 hour flight [REDACTED]

B5

Sent from my iPhone

On May 10, 2016, at 2:28 AM, Beechem, Stephanie <BeechemS@state.gov> wrote:

Here's the segment if anyone missed.

<http://mms.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=5f9dfbcd-c932-40b2-a16b-ee84fb818897>

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

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**From:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K  
**Sent:** Monday, May 09, 2016 6:24 PM  
**To:** Werberg, Samuel; Harf, Marie E; Hickey, Lauren A; Beechem, Stephanie; Kirby, John; Toner, Mark C  
**Cc:** Norris, Emily Y  
**Subject:** RE: Urgent

B5

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**From:** Werberg, Samuel  
**Sent:** Monday, May 09, 2016 6:24 PM  
**To:** Harf, Marie E; Trudeau, Elizabeth K; Hickey, Lauren A; Beechem, Stephanie; Kirby, John; Toner, Mark C  
**Cc:** Norris, Emily Y  
**Subject:** Re: Urgent

He just did the report on Fox and ended it with a mention of the edited clip.

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**From:** Harf, Marie E  
**Sent:** Monday, May 9, 2016 6:08 PM  
**To:** Werberg, Samuel; Trudeau, Elizabeth K; Hickey, Lauren A; Beechem, Stephanie; Kirby, John; Toner, Mark C  
**Cc:** Norris, Emily Y

~~Subject: Re: Ilment~~

I reached out to him, will see if he gets back to me.

B5

B5

**From:** Werberg, Samuel

**Sent:** Monday, May 9, 2016 6:07 PM

**To:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K; Harf, Marie E; Hickey, Lauren A; Beechem, Stephanie; Kirby, John; Toner, Mark C

**Cc:** Norris, Emily Y

**Subject:** Re: Urgent

B5

**From:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K

**Sent:** Monday, May 9, 2016 6:01 PM

**To:** Harf, Marie E; Hickey, Lauren A; Werberg, Samuel; Beechem, Stephanie; Kirby, John; Toner, Mark C

**Cc:** Norris, Emily Y

**Subject:** RE: Urgent

Just spoke to him.

B5

**From:** Harf, Marie E

**Sent:** Monday, May 09, 2016 5:59 PM

**To:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K; Hickey, Lauren A; Werberg, Samuel; Beechem, Stephanie; Kirby, John; Toner, Mark C

**Cc:** Norris, Emily Y

**Subject:** Re: Urgent

I'm also happy to talk to James about the timeline here

B5

**From:** Harf, Marie E

**Sent:** Monday, May 9, 2016 5:43 PM

**To:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K; Hickey, Lauren A; Werberg, Samuel; Beechem, Stephanie; Kirby, John; Toner, Mark C

**Cc:** Norris, Emily Y

**Subject:** Re: Urgent

And if needed, here's Jen in dpb on Nov 23, 2013:

**QUESTION:** *The Boston Globe* was reporting today that then-Senator Kerry was a part of the talks in Oman, so I wanted to know if you do have any general comment on that. And also, given the time in advance of the P5+1 talks that occurred, does that give any indication of how complicated and challenging this next round of talks is going to be, given that there was so much of a preamble before the P5+1 talks started?

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure. Well, let me just give you – I know there have been a range of reports over the last couple of days, so let me just give you a quick overview, for those who are interested. So Secretary Kerry, when he was Senator and Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, did travel to Oman in coordination with the White House and with the Administration to meet with the Sultan and explore whether Oman could be a channel for engaging with the Iranians.

There – we have long had many channels to communicate bilaterally with the Iranians, including exchanges of high-level letters, bilateral discussions on the margins of the P5+1, passing messages through the Swiss protecting power in Tehran, passing messages through the UN missions in New York. And the Omanis, as many of you may remember, helped facilitate the release of hikers – of the hikers, as well, several years ago. So that was a trip he took when he was Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee.

There also have been, through that same line of communication, meetings in Oman – I know they've been reported – that – with the Iranians to discuss whether there was a channel for moving forward. These have been closely coordinated or we've briefed our P5+1 partners on those. We've consistently told P5+1 partners and our Israeli friends that if things developed substantively we'd – of course, it would be fed into the overall process, which is exactly what happened. So that's just a quick overview, but certainly I can confirm the Secretary's trip there when he was – to Oman when he was a senator, and the importance of that as a channel leading up.

But one last thing and then I'll go to you, Chris. Obviously, the election, as we predicted last spring – the election of President Rouhani, the new administration, the exchange of letters with the President, the openness to pursuing a channel moving forward was when things really picked up, and that's really what led, through the P5+1 process, to the agreement this weekend.

**QUESTION:** What was the timeline for this when you said that the Secretary was in the Senate?

**MS. PSAKI:** He went to Oman in December of 2011.

**QUESTION:** Thank you

**From:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K  
**Sent:** Monday, May 9, 2016 5:42 PM  
**To:** Hickey, Lauren A; Harf, Marie E; Werberg, Samuel; Beechem, Stephanie; Kirby, John; Toner, Mark C  
**Cc:** Norris, Emily Y  
**Subject:** RE: Urgent

[REDACTED] Lauren, Beechem, can you call?

B5

**From:** Hickey, Lauren A  
**Sent:** Monday, May 09, 2016 5:41 PM  
**To:** Harf, Marie E; Trudeau, Elizabeth K; Werberg, Samuel; Beechem, Stephanie; Kirby, John; Toner, Mark C  
**Cc:** Norris, Emily Y  
**Subject:** RE: Urgent

Trudeau - I assume you are calling James? His deadline is 545.

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

**From:** Harf, Marie E  
**Sent:** Monday, May 09, 2016 5:41 PM  
**To:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K; Werberg, Samuel; Hickey, Lauren A; Beechem, Stephanie; Kirby, John; Toner, Mark C  
**Cc:** Norris, Emily Y  
**Subject:** Re: Urgent

Thank the lord

**From:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K  
**Sent:** Monday, May 9, 2016 5:40 PM  
**To:** Harf, Marie E; Werberg, Samuel; Hickey, Lauren A; Beechem, Stephanie; Kirby, John; Toner, Mark C  
**Cc:** Norris, Emily Y  
**Subject:** RE: Urgent

Success - fully available on DVIDS [REDACTED]

B5

<https://www.dvidshub.net/video/310829/daily-state-department-briefing#.VzEDFnR-1s>

**From:** Harf, Marie E  
**Sent:** Monday, May 09, 2016 5:39 PM  
**To:** Werberg, Samuel; Hickey, Lauren A; Trudeau, Elizabeth K; Beechem, Stephanie; Kirby, John; Toner, Mark C  
**Cc:** Norris, Emily Y  
**Subject:** Re: Urgent

I was here then and don't remember any editing at all [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

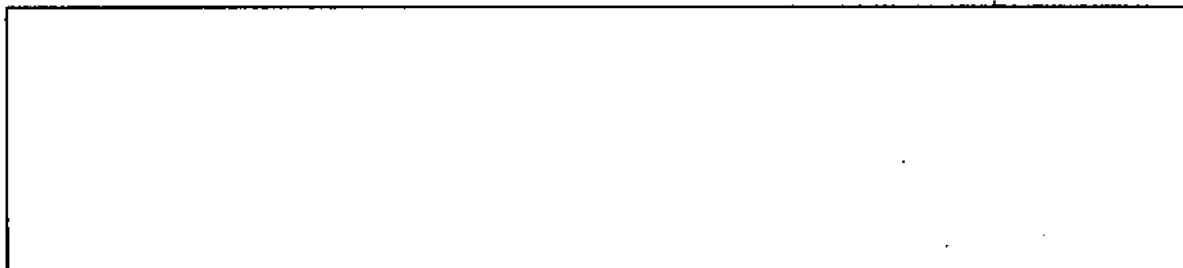
B5

B5

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**From:** Werberg, Samuel  
**Sent:** Monday, May 9, 2016 5:37 PM  
**To:** Hickey, Lauren A; Trudeau, Elizabeth K; Harf, Marie E; Beechem, Stephanie; Kirby, John; Toner, Mark C  
**Cc:** Norris, Emily Y  
**Subject:** Re: Urgent

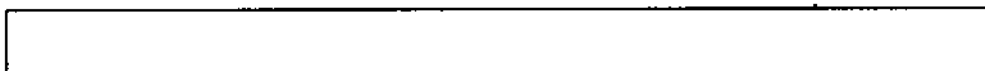
+Emily in case I go out of service area again.



B5

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**From:** Hickey, Lauren A  
**Sent:** Monday, May 9, 2016 5:35 PM  
**To:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K; Harf, Marie E; Beechem, Stephanie; Kirby, John; Toner, Mark C; Werberg, Samuel  
**Subject:** RE: Urgent



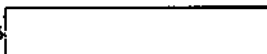
B5

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

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**From:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K  
**Sent:** Monday, May 09, 2016 5:34 PM  
**To:** Harf, Marie E; Hickey, Lauren A; Beechem, Stephanie; Kirby, John; Toner, Mark C; Werberg, Samuel  
**Subject:** RE: Urgent

Bringing together threads:



B5



B5

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**From:** Harf, Marie E  
**Sent:** Monday, May 09, 2016 5:32 PM  
**To:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K; Hickey, Lauren A; Beechem, Stephanie; Kirby, John; Toner, Mark C; Werberg, Samuel  
**Subject:** Re: Urgent

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] By the time of that press briefing, it was all  
out.

B5

B5

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**From:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K  
**Sent:** Monday, May 9, 2016 5:30 PM  
**To:** Hickey, Lauren A; Beechem, Stephanie; Harf, Marie E; Kirby, John; Toner, Mark C; Werberg, Samuel  
**Subject:** RE: Urgent

Luke Forgeson from ODE looking into it now. I told him we need answer in 20 minutes.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Hickey, Lauren A  
**Sent:** Monday, May 09, 2016 5:30 PM  
**To:** Beechem, Stephanie; Harf, Marie E; Kirby, John; Toner, Mark C; Trudeau, Elizabeth K; Werberg, Samuel  
**Subject:** RE: Urgent

B5

[REDACTED]

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

B5

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**From:** Beechem, Stephanie  
**Sent:** Monday, May 09, 2016 5:29 PM  
**To:** Hickey, Lauren A; Harf, Marie E; Kirby, John; Toner, Mark C; Trudeau, Elizabeth K; Werberg, Samuel  
**Subject:** RE: Urgent

Adding Sam here - he says he hasn't heard of it

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

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**From:** Hickey, Lauren A  
**Sent:** Monday, May 09, 2016 5:27 PM  
**To:** Harf, Marie E; Kirby, John; Toner, Mark C; Trudeau, Elizabeth K  
**Cc:** Beechem, Stephanie  
**Subject:** FW: Urgent

Marie - Any insight here?

[REDACTED]

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

B5

B5

**From:** Rosen, James [mailto: ]  
**Sent:** Monday, May 09, 2016 5:21 PM  
**To:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K; Kirby, John  
**Cc:** Toner, Mark C; Beechem, Stephanie; Hickey, Lauren A  
**Subject:** RE: Urgent

At the 12/2/13 briefing, I confronted Jen Psaki with the false statement made to me by Toria Nuland at the 2/6/13 briefing. That earlier exchange went like this:

**ROSEN:** There have been reports that intermittently, and outside of the formal P-5+1 mechanisms the Obama Administration, or members of it, have conducted direct, secret, bilateral talks with Iran. Is that true or false?

**NULAND:** We have made clear, as the Vice President did at Munich, that in the context of the larger P-5+1 framework, we would be prepared to talk to Iran bilaterally. *But with regard to the kind of thing that you're talking about on a government-to-government level, no.*

Of course, the secret Iran talks had begun eight months before that exchange.

The transcript for the 12/2/13 briefing is below, with the yellow part signifying the part that has been edited out of DOS's video of the briefing on its website and YT channel.

We want to know why and when DOS inserted a white-flash into the 12/2/13 video to censor the part where I asked Jen Psaki about Toria Nuland's false statement on the Iran talks (and Psaki in essence said the administration needed "privacy").

All of this is obviously relevant in light of the NYTM questions about whether Rhodes/DOS et al misled the people, and the press, about the origins and timing of the Iran talks.

If we don't hear back by 5:45p - we just discovered this act of censorship - we are going to report it as such in our 6p show.

James Rosen  
 Chief Washington Correspondent  
 Host, "The Foxhole"  
 Twitter: @JamesRosenFNC

(office)  
 (mobile)

Author, *Cheney One on One*

B6

B6

**From:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K [mailto: ]  
**Sent:** Monday, May 09, 2016 5:13 PM  
**To:** Rosen, James; Kirby, John  
**Cc:** Toner, Mark C; Beechem, Stephanie; Hickey, Lauren A  
**Subject:** RE: Urgent

James, I am solo in town today - Kirby and Toner on road. Adding Beechem and Hickey on this.  
 Not sure I understand Q.

---

**From:** Rosen, James (<http://redirect.state.sbu/?url=mailto:James.Rosen@FOXNEWS.COM>)

**Sent:** Monday, May 09, 2016 5:10 PM

**To:** Kirby, John

**Cc:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K; Toner, Mark C

**Subject:** Urgent

Need a call from one of you in the next thirty minutes or so. We are going to go to air with the information below, in the context of the whole Ben Rhodes controversy, at 6p, and we'd like to give DOS a chance to clear it up. My contact info is below. The relevant info is also below, courtesy of one of our video librarians in the Fox News Washington bureau. The basic question is why – and when – DOS censored its video of the highlighted portion of the 12/2/13 briefing (26:58 into the clip) with a white flash, on both the DOS web page and the DOS YT channel.

Yours cordially, James

-----  
James Rosen

Chief Washington Correspondent

Host, "The Foxhole"

Twitter: @JamesRosenFNC

202-824-6541 (office)

202-549-6756 (mobile)

[james.rosen@foxnews.com](mailto:james.rosen@foxnews.com)

Author, *Cheney One on One*

Highlighted below. The video posted online here

(<http://redirect.state.sbu/?url=http://redirect.state.sbu/?url=http://redirect.state.sbu/?url=http://video.state.gov/en/video/2886914568001>) ends with Psaki responding to Roz's question saying "....and so that has not changed that." White flash on screen at 26:58 and then it picks up with Roz talking again.

**TRANSCRIPT:**

1:54 p.m. EST

MS. PSAKI: Hi, everyone. Happy --

QUESTION: Happy belated birthday.

MS. PSAKI: Thank you. Thank you very much. Twenty-two. It's glorious. (Laughter.)

QUESTION: And you will be 22 for the next --

MS. PSAKI: I will be.

QUESTION: What, 10, 15 years?

MS. PSAKI: At least, at least. Well, I have nothing at the top, so Matt, let's go to what's on your mind.

QUESTION: Let's see. I have a lot --

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

QUESTION: -- but nothing is really worth starting with, so let's just start with the Secretary's trip.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

QUESTION: Both -- excluding the middle stop in Moldova, at the beginning, how much of the NAC do you expect is going to be concentrated on Afghanistan and then talking about the BSA? Will there be any Afghan officials there to talk with? And then -- well, that'll be that one question for --

MS. PSAKI: Okay. Well, we'll clearly, as we typically do, be doing a briefing en route about the trip and about our visit to the NATO Ministerial tomorrow, where we will venture to have more specific details about who will be attending. Obviously, Afghanistan and the ongoing presence there post-2014 of the United States and of NATO will certainly be a big topic of discussion. But I will let our briefers outline more specifics en route to Brussels.

**QUESTION:** All right. Well, I was going to ask about the Middle East but – as well, the stop in Israel and the PA. But if you're just – are you going to give me the same answer, wait for the briefing on the plane?

**MS. PSAKI:** I likely will, yes.

**QUESTION:** Okay. Well, then never mind.

**MS. PSAKI:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** And then quickly on Afghanistan --

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure, Lesley.

**QUESTION:** Is – what further is happening as far as trying to resolve this issue with Afghanistan?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well --

**QUESTION:** As far as – is it true that --

**MS. PSAKI:** The BSA.

**QUESTION:** The – exactly.

**MS. PSAKI:** The signing, I assume.

**QUESTION:** Is it true that Special Envoy Dobbins has gone – is on his way to Afghanistan?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have any announcements at this point on travel for him or anyone else. Obviously, our team on the ground, Ambassador Cunningham and others, have been in close contact. At this point, we've made our position clear, and so have the Afghan people. Signing the BSA soon is the path forward, as we've said many times, to sustaining a partnership between the United States and Afghanistan to support Afghans in achieving lasting peace, security, and development. That's the message that we're conveying at every level. And as we've said before but important to reiterate here, given it's a week later now: We – deferring the signature of the agreement until after next year's election is not viable. It would not provide Afghans with the certainty that they deserve regarding their future in the critical months leading to the elections, nor would it provide the United States and NATO allies the clarity necessary for a potential post-2014 military presence.

So we're continuing to convey that. Our team on the ground is certainly hard at work. I don't have any travel announcements. If that changes, we'll certainly let all of you know.

**QUESTION:** Has Secretary spoken to President Karzai in the last couple of days on BSA?

**MS. PSAKI:** He has not spoken with him in the last couple of days.

**QUESTION:** And the Pentagon today said that this is not the end of it; after BSA is signed, the U.S. and Afghanistan have to negotiate and sign their agreement called SOFA, and that would be done by the State Department. Has any process started on SOFA, signing of SOFA with Afghanistan?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'd have to look more specifically at what they said. Maybe you're referring to the NATO SOFA that they may have to negotiate and sign, I believe, as a step? But for our purposes, there's the signing; it goes through parliament, then it would have to be signed again. Obviously, as you all are very familiar with, this doesn't outline a specific number for a troop presence, so there would be a great deal of planning in regards to that that DOD would certainly be very engaged with. But in terms of that, I'd have to look at specifically what they said. I'm not familiar with that --

**QUESTION:** Is December 21<sup>st</sup> the redline, the deadline for signing of BSA, after which you will begin preparing for all troops pull out from Afghanistan post 2014.

**MS. PSAKI:** I am not going to get into new redlines or deadlines today, I will say. But on the trip question, well, as you all know, a decision hasn't been made. You would know if it had been. It's not our preference, but no troops is certainly a potential outcome for Afghanistan if there is no BSA. So that is, again, not our preference, but natural that planning would have to take place for all different options.

**QUESTION:** Have you tried to understand why President Karzai is doing what he's doing or conducting himself the way he has? Do you have a clearer picture than we do, for instance?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't know that I have any further insight than you do. Obviously, the Secretary spoke with him last week, as you all well know. We continue to press our case for why this should be signed as quickly as possible, but I don't have any analysis of particular actions or comments in Afghanistan.

**QUESTION:** So you think that he's perhaps more concerned about his personal safety post the elections?

**MS. PSAKI:** I will let you, Said, do your own analysis. I don't have any other analysis on it.

**QUESTION:** Do we have any more on Afghanistan?

**QUESTION:** Just the trip?

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: For those of us who are interested in Moldova --

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

QUESTION: -- could you just tell us why stop in Moldova? What's the importance? We see the winery, et cetera.

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Moldova is a country that has taken a number of important reform steps in recent years. They have -- they're taking steps to help grow their economy, and wine is obviously a significant export. But they have a number of exports they also work with. And given the steps they've taken, the Secretary felt it would be an important opportunity to pay a visit. You'd have to check my history and facts here, but I believe he may be, if not the first, one of the first Secretaries to pay a bilateral visit to Moldova.

QUESTION: And also it comes, obviously, right after Ukraine decided not to sign the agreement with the EU.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Moldova did. So you could read into this that the Secretary wants to buck them up or give them something, a sign of support.

MS. PSAKI: Well, we had planned this trip -- this trip was in the works before that decision was made. But certainly, they have put a number of reforms in place and they're working hard on their economy and the -- if -- the Secretary felt it was important to highlight that.

QUESTION: Following on that --

QUESTION: Okay. Can I go over just to Afghanistan for one very briefly?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Okay, and then we'll go to Anne.

QUESTION: I was gone last week so I'm -- most of last week, so what -- did the Secretary speak with Karzai before or after Ambassador Rice was there?

MS. PSAKI: Let's see. He spoke with Karzai -- President Karzai -- I'd have to look back. I believe it was prior to her visit. Let me double check that for you to make sure.

QUESTION: So the last senior official to speak with Karzai, as far as you know, was Ambassador Rice.

MS. PSAKI: I believe that's correct, yes.

QUESTION: Just following on the Moldova for Ukraine substitution, in saying that Secretary Kerry would not, as had been widely expected, attend the OSCE -- when you said that, I don't know, about 10 days ago or so --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- we were just at the very beginning of this whole episode.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: And at that point you said it was scheduling issues that had -- it would force his cancellation. Are you sticking with that? Is that still the case? Or might there be some policy implications to his decision not to go to the OSCE?

MS. PSAKI: I am sticking with that. I'm just looking at Lesley here in my -- corner of my eye. I am sticking with that. I don't have any new guidance for you on that front. Assistant Secretary Nuland is still planning to attend and travel there after joining us for the first part of the visit.

QUESTION: On Syria?

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Is it --

QUESTION: Can you tell us the -- oh, sorry.

QUESTION: Sorry. Just on this charade -- charade, for Lesley -- of scheduling reasons, is it not the case that not doing -- not going on this trip -- not going to Kyiv is a sign of displeasure?

MS. PSAKI: I will let you do your own reporting, Matt. I don't have any more analysis or comments on it from here.

QUESTION: But there was --

QUESTION: And one more quick one on Ukraine.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Obviously, we're seeing the demonstrations, violent crackdown.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: What's the response from the State Department?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we're of course, naturally, closely monitoring the ongoing demonstrations, not only in Kyiv but in cities around Ukraine. As you know, since the demonstrations began on November 21<sup>st</sup>, there have been an increasing number of violent incidents, including against journalists. We stress there is no room, and we continue to stress there is no room for violence in a country that aspires to a democratic future. We continue to call on all sides to maintain calm, and on Ukrainian authorities to ensure that members of the public and the press are able to safely and peacefully exercise their rights of speech and assembly.

As I mentioned a little bit before, we still have – Assistant Secretary Nuland is still planning to travel there. The Ukrainian foreign ministry announced that the ministerial is proceeding as planned.

QUESTION: But there was –

QUESTION: Are you sure that Ukraine is a country that aspires to a democratic future?

MS. PSAKI: Any country that may aspire, certainly, these are important values to follow through on.

QUESTION: Right. But are you still convinced that Ukraine aspires to a westward-looking, democratic future?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we will see, Matt. Time will tell. Actions speak louder than words.

QUESTION: Do you – does this –

QUESTION: Do you still stand by the comments made by Ambassador Nuland in her speech to the Atlantic Council a couple of weeks ago and also comments from this podium that it is your belief that Ukraine should be following the path towards joining some kind of association agreement with the EU?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Our view has not changed on that. Obviously, there have been a lot of events that have happened since then, but --

QUESTION: And do you believe that the demonstrations on the streets are actually – that's what they want? I mean, it seems to be that they're demonstrating because they're angry that the government hasn't taken this path that's been laid out for them.

MS. PSAKI: I would point you to the comments of the demonstrators, of which there have been many. I don't want to speak on their behalf, but our position hasn't changed on what steps they could take. Obviously, it's up to Ukraine to take those steps.

QUESTION: So – but, I mean, the United States is – if you don't want to give your backing to them – at least sympathetic to what the demonstrators are asking for.

MS. PSAKI: Again, the demonstrators are saying a range of things, so I don't – beyond what we've stated publicly many times, I don't have any other further public statements on our position, which has been stated by Assistant Secretary Nuland and by other officials in the past several weeks.

QUESTION: Given the estimates of some 300,000 people who were demonstrating across the country on Sunday, and given that they all seem, to a person, to be saying that the government is ignoring their wish to be more closely aligned with Europe, isn't it a bit disingenuous for this building to suggest that they need to show any restraint? They're not the ones who are bludgeoning people with battering rams and turning rubber bullets on the police. It seems they're taking the brunt of everything that's been happening.

MS. PSAKI: I don't think I took sides. I think I said that it's important for all sides to maintain calm, that there's no place for violence in a country that aspires to a democratic future. So I don't – I would disagree with the premise of your claims.

QUESTION: What does this building think of the prime minister's – call for his security forces to show restraint and seemingly to be missing in action when on Sunday there was more violence heaped upon the demonstrators, particularly in Kyiv?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think I just expressed what our view is of violence against demonstrators, so that's what our view is.

QUESTION: Can I – has the Secretary spoken to somebody in Ukraine, his counterpart?

MS. PSAKI: He has not in the last several days. I can check if there's been any other calls I'm not aware of.

**QUESTION:** Because one of the big issues for Ukraine is tearing itself away from Russia and looking towards Western Europe for economic support. And one of the big things is that the president of Ukraine is heading to China to look for that. And if – I was wondering if the U.S. had offered them kind of – some kind of assurance or reassurance economically that they could be better off by signing these deals and with the support – and the U.S. would support any kind of reform through the International Monetary Fund.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, aside from public statements we've made, which, as Jo referenced, is – that our belief is that European integration is the surest course to economic growth and strengthening Ukraine's democracy. That's still our belief. That's been consistently our belief. But beyond that, I'm not aware of any other discussions. Obviously, there's a lot of – that's going on with the EU and with Russia, and beyond that we have made our position clear.

**QUESTION:** And what is the building's position on the detention of Yulia Tymoshenko?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we have consistently spoken about this in the past and expressed our concern about her detention. I know this was also a component that was potentially being worked through as an element of Ukraine getting into the EU. So we've consistently expressed concern, encouraged them to take steps forward. Obviously, there hasn't been progress on that on the ground.

**QUESTION:** I'm sorry, what did you say was the surest way to economic growth?

**MS. PSAKI:** I said European integration is the surest course to economic growth and strengthening –

**QUESTION:** Did you give the same advice to the Greeks?

(Laughter.)

**MS. PSAKI:** Matt. Behave.

Do we have any more on Ukraine or Afghanistan, since we touched on that too?

**QUESTION:** Still on Ukraine.

**MS. PSAKI:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** The Russians have proposed that the EU, Ukraine, and Russia get together to discuss some of these problems. Would the United States be in favor of that; some kind of a trilateral discussion to discuss the economic situation and political differences?

**MS. PSAKI:** It wouldn't involve the United States, so I don't have a particular position. I'm happy to talk to our team and see if we have a view on that.

Ukraine or Afghanistan? Okay, should we move on to Syria? Let's go to Margaret.

**QUESTION:** Thank you. Jen, the OPCW said over the past few days that the U.S. has stepped up, that they're going to give operational support, offering up financing. Can you give us some more detail on that?

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm. Well, I don't know if it will be satisfying, but let me try. (Laughter.) Well, as you know, the United States is committed to supporting the international community's efforts to destroy Syria's chemical weapons in the safest, most efficient and effective means possible. We have offered and are currently outfitting a U.S. vessel with field-deployable hydrolysis system technology to support the OPCW's efforts. We are in close contact with the OPCW and our international partners and remain confident that we can meet the milestones for destruction set out by the OPCW. Of course, the OPCW remains – and the UN – remain the lead coordinators on reaching out to countries and coordinating steps forward and any timeline, et cetera.

**QUESTION:** But on the financing, what is it exactly that we're offering? Is that a chunk of change? Is that financing and loans, or --

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we've offered – we've offered in the – prior to this, we have offered – we have given 6 million to the OPCW and the UN Trust Fund, both in financial contributions and in kind, so I think we gave some materials as well. But this, of course, would be a DOD vessel. So I would point you to them on the specific costs. This, at this point, is an offer. So I think that's still being worked through.

**QUESTION:** So – but beyond the vessel, the OPCW says the cost is going to be between 35 to 40 million euros for the private contractors who would actually be --

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

**QUESTION:** -- be doing the disposal themselves. So is any of that money coming through the State Department, or is the State Department topped out at \$6 million?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we've said we'd be open to exploring additional ways to provide assistance. I don't have any announcements today of additional assistance we're planning to provide, but that certainly is something we're in discussions with the OPCW about.

QUESTION: So we can understand correctly, it is a commercial vessel, correct, that they are trying --

MS. PSAKI: It is a --

QUESTION: -- (inaudible) --

MS. PSAKI: -- U.S. Government vessel, not a commercial vessel.

QUESTION: Right.

MS. PSAKI: But there is a part of this -- and this may be what you're asking about -- which is the OPCW reaching out to commercial companies about the destruction capabilities.

QUESTION: Okay.

QUESTION: So what -- so DOD is outfitting its own boat, which will be staffed with DOD personnel who will do this?

MS. PSAKI: I'd have to check on the specifics of that. I think some of it may still be work -- be going through the process of being worked out, Matt, because they've offered -- but obviously, how it would be staffed and the materials and the money -- I mean, all of those are pieces that are still being discussed.

QUESTION: Do you actually have a timeline and the location for where this would happen?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have a location. That's still being discussed. The timeline, as you know, is -- the next deadline is -- not deadline, it's a target -- is December 31<sup>st</sup>. And that is to get all of the chemical weapons out. But in terms of when the next step would be, I don't have a timeline of that.

Anne.

QUESTION: I realize part of this is kind of DOD-flavored, but you might know the answer.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: So is it proper to call this a warship, or is it a military-owned, but not non-warship ship?

(Laughter.)

MS. PSAKI: That is a very specific ship question. I would hesitate to answer incorrectly. I'd have to check on specifically how we categorize it. I don't believe it is a warship, but let me see if we can get more specification on how we -- what we call it exactly.

QUESTION: Okay. And on the policy side, I mean, is there any disappointment here that after casting about to -- for a friend here, it ends up being the U.S. having to essentially do this on its own?

MS. PSAKI: I wouldn't categorize it that way. I mean, certainly this is a priority for the U.S., as it is for the international community, to destroy and eliminate the chemical weapons. The OPCW is still talking to countries. There are countries that have made public comments about their willingness to help, so we'll see how that all shakes out. And certainly, we'd welcome the support or contribution of other countries.

QUESTION: Well, I'd imagine from your perspective, it should be a shared priority among many nations who would also share the same goal of the ultimate destruction, right? I mean, everybody was waving a flag when that -- when the thing was signed.

MS. PSAKI: Certainly, and there are countries, as you know, throughout that have been open to contributing that couldn't for a variety of reasons, whether it's regulations or capacity or resources. But they're still talking to countries about contributing and being a part of this, and certainly we're hopeful of that as well.

QUESTION: So if the question is: "Are you surprised that you've been left holding the bag on this, once again," --

MS. PSAKI: We're not holding the bag yet, Matt.

QUESTION: -- the answer would be no, you're not surprised. You expected your friends in Europe to wimp out.

MS. PSAKI: Well, we made clear we were open to contributing from the beginning, Matt. There are other countries that have expressed an openness to contributing in some capacity. They're all going to make their decisions about what that will -- what will -- that will entail, and we'll let the OPCW decide how all of it will work together.

**QUESTION:** What about Russia, who you made this deal with and has been instrumental, as you say, in helping move this towards a resolution? Why can't Russia contribute in a significant way like you can?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not familiar with what they have contributed or what they've committed to contribute or what they have not. Obviously, there are financial ways – there are a number of ways to contribute. We certainly welcome any country's contribution. There are different ways that each country can do that.

**QUESTION:** Are you in touch with the Russians specifically about making an – a contribution?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not sure. I'd have to check on that and see if it's a discussion that's been a part of the regular discussions with Foreign Minister Lavrov.

**QUESTION:** Jen, still on Syria.

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

**QUESTION:** Yesterday, Mike Rogers, the chair of the Intelligence Committee, warned that there are many jihadis that are Americans and Europeans and Westerners and so on, that they go back and forth and so on. Are you concerned about these jihadis being trained in Syria and now they come back to the United States and perhaps organize terrorist acts?

**MS. PSAKI:** I haven't seen his comments specifically. I know – I believe he may have been on a Sunday show yesterday. I haven't read them fully. We've – we're naturally concerned, as you know, about extremists whether they're going in and certainly and if they're coming out. I talked a little bit, I think it was a week or two ago, about ways that we coordinate with our international partners in the region to kind of track this and efforts we undertake to make sure we're watching, but of course we're concerned. I don't have any other specifics for you.

**QUESTION:** Are you pressing your partners in this case, like the Saudis and the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, that have been supplying arms and money in the past for these extremist groups – are you pressing them not to do so?

**MS. PSAKI:** We have consistently, and all the countries, as you know, have agreed repeatedly to contribute assistance through the SMC.

**QUESTION:** Finally, yesterday there was a report in the *Telegraph*, *The London Telegraph*, that says basically the Free Syrian Army now is becoming a group of warlords and accumulating money and gangs and so on and have no interest, really, in reaching a settlement. Is that your assessment, or are you still working very closely with General Idris?

**MS. PSAKI:** We are still working very closely with General Idris, we're still working towards a Geneva conference in January, and we still believe there's no military solution, as you know.

More on Syria?

**QUESTION:** Still on Syria.

**MS. PSAKI:** Or – go ahead, Roz.

**QUESTION:** Still on Syria, the Iranian Foreign Minister Zarif did an interview with Al Jazeera this morning. And when it came to Geneva II, he said that while Iran is, quote: not begging to attend the talks in January, it would attend if invited. My first question: Would the U.S. be willing to invite Iran to take part in these talks? And if so, what does the U.S. believe that Iran could bring to this situation to try to end the civil war?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, no decisions have been made about participation yet. There's another trilateral meeting on December 20<sup>th</sup> coming up that we'll be participating in with the UN and the Russians. Our position hasn't changed on Iran's participation or whether we believe they should be invited. They have not endorsed the Geneva communique. That's a condition we feel is necessary, but obviously this will continue to be discussed at the next trilateral meeting.

**QUESTION:** But given the – that the UN is now estimating that upwards of 120-25,000 people may have been killed in the civil war to date --

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

**QUESTION:** -- Is there some sort of leverage that Tehran could bring to the table to try to induce the Assad regime to, if nothing else, stop the killing and try to at least put in some sort of ceasefire?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, this goes back to the premise that attendees should be endorsing the Geneva communique, because that is what the purpose and the goal of the conference is. So, I don't have any

speculation on what leverage they may or may not have, but the conversations we have had with them in recent weeks have been about their nuclear program and moving towards a first-step agreement on that. They've not been focused on Syria. And our position on whether or not they should attend the Geneva conference in January hasn't changed.

QUESTION: But you do feel that if they do endorse Geneva I, there's a great deal of value for Iran's participation --

MS. PSAKI: Well, we'd have to --

QUESTION: -- considering that it is --

MS. PSAKI: We'd have to evaluate it, Said. I don't want to get ahead of --

QUESTION: But it's a very ally of the regime. It supports other elements that help the regime in its fight, like Hezbollah so on.

MS. PSAKI: If that is a step they take, we can have a robust discussion in here about it.

QUESTION: Jen, are there any contacts currently between the United States Government and the Syrian regime? I mean, I know Secretary Kerry spoke months and months ago --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

QUESTION: -- to Foreign Minister Muallem. Is there anything going on at the moment?

MS. PSAKI: And we have for some time, as you know, have had different channels, but I don't have anything specific for you. I can check if there have been any recent contacts on any level.

QUESTION: So there were reports over the weekend that some European countries are quietly beginning to --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- reopen diplomatic conversations or channels with the Syrian regime because, I think, the fear is that this is just so blocked at the moment that they're --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- it's not going anywhere.

MS. PSAKI: Well, let me see if there have been any contacts at any level of the regime. We've -- they have happened in the past, as you mentioned, so I will see if there's more to report on that.

QUESTION: Can I go back to the Iranians and taking part in Geneva? I mean, I think over the last week or so, when there's been, like, various bouts of violence in Syria, that the Iranian Government has said that there needs to be a political solution to the situation in Syria. So don't you think that Iran is making more positive comments? I mean, I don't think the Russians have gone far beyond saying that there needs to be a political solution. They haven't said anything about President Assad leaving (inaudible).

MS. PSAKI: Well, the whole premise -- I mean the whole goal is to create a transitional governing body. That's the goal of a Geneva conference. So, certainly, they haven't embraced that as the focus of the Geneva communique, and --

QUESTION: Well, even though the Russians have agreed to a political transition, your definition of a transition is far different from the -- than the Russians' definition of a transition. So if the Iranians were to say, like, okay, we accept a political transition, I mean, does that really mean that they --

MS. PSAKI: It's not just about a political transition. It's about embracing the Geneva communique, which they have not done. If they do that, we will evaluate whether or not we'd support their -- an invitation to them to attend the conference.

QUESTION: Zarif also told us that his country is not interested in aggravating any sectarian tensions between Shiite and Sunni, between Alawite and other major Islamic communities; that they're trying to, in their efforts, promote more harmony, more peace. Does that add any -- does that change the complexion at all, particularly in Syria?

MS. PSAKI: I don't want to speak too specifically to an interview I haven't yet seen yet, and neither has anyone on our team. Broadly speaking, obviously we took a significant step forward with the first-step agreement on their nuclear program, but there are remaining concerns that we have, as you all are familiar with, whether it's their involvement in support of the regime in Syria or humanitarian issues, and so that has not changed that. I can take a closer look once we see the transcript of the interview and see if we have more comments on Foreign Minister Zarif's comments.

QUESTION: You're saying your team does not watch Al Jazeera?

MS. PSAKI: Well, that is not true; we do. However, I believe there's only been a very short clip that has played of this interview that I'm sure will get lots of attention once it all plays.

QUESTION: Beyond the interview, he's freely reaching out. He visited Kuwait. He's reaching out to the other Gulf countries. He wants to visit Saudi Arabia. I mean, there is an effort underway to alleviate their fears and actually encourage them towards participating in Geneva II to make it a success. You must have some sort of a reading of this effort.

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any particular reading of it for you, said. Our position, I think, has been pretty clear on whether or not they attend the Geneva conference.

QUESTION: I have another, really quick logistics thing. On the December 20<sup>th</sup> meeting, that's Wendy Sherman and that -- it's the same iteration?

MS. PSAKI: It is that level. Exactly, yes. Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Is that new or was that announced last week or something --

MS. PSAKI: I believe we talked about it last week as being the next meeting.

QUESTION: On China -- (inaudible).

QUESTION: Please, Jen, can we stay on Iran, please?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Let's stay on Iran and then we can go to China.

QUESTION: On the 6<sup>th</sup> of February in this room, I had a very brief exchange with your predecessor Victoria Nuland --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- about Iran. And with your indulgence, I will read it in its entirety for the purpose of the record and so you can respond to it.

*"Rosen: There have been reports that intermittently, and outside of the formal P5+1 mechanisms, the Obama Administration, or members of it, have conducted direct secret bilateral talks with Iran. Is that true or false?"*

*"Nuland: We have made clear, as the Vice President did at Munich, that in the context of the larger P5+1 framework, we would be prepared to talk to Iran bilaterally. But with regard to the kind of thing that you're talking about on a government-to-government level, no."*

That's the entirety of the exchange.

As we now know, senior state department officials had, in fact, been conducting direct, secret bilateral talks with senior officials of the Iranian Government in Oman, perhaps dating back to 2011 by that point.

So the question today is a simple one: When the briefer was asked about those talks and flatly denied them from the podium, that was untrue, correct?

MS. PSAKI: I mean, James, I -- that -- you're talking about a February briefing, so 10 months ago. I don't think we've outlined or confirmed contacts or specifics beyond a March meeting. I'm not going to confirm others beyond that at this point. So I don't know that I have any more for you.

QUESTION: Do you stand by the accuracy of what Ms. Nuland told me, that there had been no government-to-government contacts, no secret direct bilateral talks with Iran as of the date of that briefing, February 6<sup>th</sup>? Do you stand by the accuracy of that?

MS. PSAKI: James, I have no new information for you today on the timing of when there were any discussions with any Iranian officials.

QUESTION: Let me try it one last way, Jen --

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

QUESTION: -- and I appreciate your indulgence.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

QUESTION: Is it the policy of the State Department, where the preservation or the secrecy of secret negotiations is concerned, to lie in order to achieve that goal?

MS. PSAKI: James, I think there are times where diplomacy needs privacy in order to progress. This is a good example of that. Obviously, we have made clear and laid out a number of details in recent weeks about discussions and about a bilateral channel that fed into the P5+1 negotiations, and we've answered questions on it, we've confirmed details. We're happy to continue to do that, but clearly, this was an important component leading up to the agreement that was reached a week ago.

QUESTION: Since you, standing at that podium last week, did confirm that there were such talks, at least as far back as March of this year, I don't see what would prohibit you from addressing directly this question: Were there secret direct bilateral talks between the United States and Iranian officials in 2011?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything more for you today. We've long had ways to speak with the Iranians through a range of channels, some of which you talked – you mentioned, but I don't have any other specifics for you today.

QUESTION: One more on Iran?

QUESTION: *The Los Angeles Times* and *Politico* have reported that those talks were held as far back as 2011. Were those reports inaccurate?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not sure which reports you're talking about. Are you talking about visits that the Secretary and others made to Oman, or are you talking about other reports?

QUESTION: I'm talking about U.S. officials meeting directly and secretly with Iranian officials in Oman as far back as 2011. *The Los Angeles Times* and *Politico* have reported those meetings. Were those reports inaccurate?

MS. PSAKI: I have nothing more for you on it, James, today.

QUESTION: One more on Iran?

MS. PSAKI: On Iran? Let's just finish Iran and then we can go to China. Go ahead, Roz.

QUESTION: One of – one more on Iran. Foreign Minister Zarif said, directly contradicting the Obama Administration's contention that sanctions worked, he told our interviewer that when the sanctions were first imposed, Iran had 200 working centrifuges. Today, they have more than 19,000. What is this building's reaction to his comment that sanctions did not work and did not bring Iran to the negotiating table?

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, I would like to look more closely at the context of the comments. But, just as reminder, President Rouhani and others have talked about how the impact – how growing the economy and putting an end – doing – bringing an end to the sanctions is something that was a priority for them in order to help the economy and the Iranian people. There's no question, if you look just at the facts of the impact of oil revenues, the impact on their economic growth writ large that there was a huge impact of – that there – the sanctions had an enormous impact, and that that was a driving factor in bringing the Iranians back to the negotiating table.

In terms of progress made on their efforts to develop a nuclear weapon, whether through centrifuges or at their various facilities, that to me sounds like a separate question. Obviously, there was concerns about steps they were taking and progress they were making, which was why it was so important to come to an acceptable agreement that would halt and roll back the progress of their program.

QUESTION: Just to follow up on that, though –

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: – Secretary Kerry, when he did his round robin of interviews after the announcement of the deal in Geneva, more than once stated that when Iran had reached out to the Bush-Cheney Administration in 2003, Iran was only in possession of 164 centrifuges. Now, he would go on to say, they have 19,000, and this therefore represents the best possible deal that could be secured. Isn't it a fact that since the Obama-Biden Administration took office, 70 percent of Iran's centrifuges have been installed?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I'd have to look at the statistics, James, but we have not questioned the fact that Iran has made progress on enrichment and on developing a nuclear weapon. We have not questioned that. That's one of the reasons why we stepped up sanctions over the past couple of years. The President and Secretary Kerry were big proponents of that. We worked with the international community to do just that to put that necessary pressure in place.

The point I was trying to make to Roz is that – what she's asking sounds to me like two separate questions, so that was –

QUESTION: Right. I'm pursuing the separate one part that she carved out, and that is to say – and if this is untrue, I'd be grateful to be disabused of the notion – but the great bulk of Iran's progress in the development of its enrichment program has taken place under President Obama's watch, correct?

MS. PSAKI: I'd have to check on the specific numbers. The --

QUESTION: You're not prepared to dispute that statement, as --

MS. PSAKI: Well, James, I think what we're focused on at this point is the fact that we're now at a point where we are halting and rolling back the progress of their program and we're working towards a comprehensive agreement to bring an end to it. I can't speculate for you what would happen without -- what would have happened without sanctions. I would venture to guess --

QUESTION: (Inaudible) sanctions.

MS. PSAKI: But they were being paired together, so that's why I'm bringing it into the conversation.

QUESTION: But the context of the question was exactly: "The Obama Administration says we showed up because our economy is falling apart. I'm here to tell you that's not the case. We have our own reasons for coming."

MS. PSAKI: Well, we will take a close look at his comments and we'll have more to say about them once we do.

QUESTION: Can I just go back to the Geneva meeting and --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

QUESTION: -- December 20<sup>th</sup> with Wendy Sherman?

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: This is --

MS. PSAKI: It's that level -- in terms of specific attendance, I'll have to just double-check that for you.

QUESTION: Oh, okay.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

QUESTION: This is going to be the first of the political meetings towards the next -- the comprehensive agreement --

MS. PSAKI: Well, they also --

QUESTION: -- or this is the technical discussions?

MS. PSAKI: No, no, no.

QUESTION: No, this is Syria.

MS. PSAKI: This is -- sorry, this is Syria.

QUESTION: Oh, I'm sorry.

MS. PSAKI: This is Syria.

QUESTION: Excuse me. I'm sorry.

MS. PSAKI: So this is the pre-Geneva. No, it's okay. It's confusing. Lots of Genevas.

QUESTION: Okay. But I did have an Iran question, actually.

QUESTION: But is there any new -- I mean --

QUESTION: Yeah.

QUESTION: -- when is it that you're going to start to negotiate the comprehensive deal with Iran?

MS. PSAKI: Well, right now, what we're focused on is the technical discussions leading up to the start of the six-month --

QUESTION: Right.

QUESTION: So do you have a date for those?

MS. PSAKI: I don't yet have a date on those.

QUESTION: Or a place?

MS. PSAKI: I don't yet have a place. It's being worked through. Hopefully we'll have an update for you all in the coming days.

QUESTION: And can I ask -- I don't know if you had seen the reports that the new British envoy to Iran is actually going to visit Tehran tomorrow. I wondered what the --

MS. PSAKI: I haven't seen that.

QUESTION: Well, I wanted a U.S. reaction to this following on to the question I asked last week about how far along the line you are prepared to go with your new diplomatic relations or not with Iran.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm. I still don't have any prediction of any step beyond what step we've already taken, which is being a part of the P5+1 agreement on the first step here with Iran. Obviously, different countries are going to make their own decisions, and as with most issues, we certainly support that.

**QUESTION:** Would it be helpful, though? Do you believe it's helpful that the British envoy could be going to Tehran?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't know that I have that level of analysis on it. I don't have all the details on what the purpose of the trip is or what they hope to accomplish. And obviously, every country will make their own decisions about diplomatic relationships.

**QUESTION:** Jen, one more on the --

**QUESTION:** East China Sea?

**QUESTION:** -- secret negotiations with Iran.

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

**QUESTION:** I apologize if you've already addressed this, but there have been reports that the secret negotiations that the U.S. was engaging in with Iran created a feeling of resentment among P5+1 allies such as France, and then that contributed to a rift among the P5+1 and made it difficult to reach consensus within that group. Do you have a reaction to that or a comment on that?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't want to speak to anonymous reports about what may or may not be the feelings by other countries, but I will reiterate for you that this was -- these discussions were fed into the P5+1 process. That is the process that we ultimately all worked through to achieve a first-step agreement here. The P5+1 members, as well as our friends in Israel, were briefed early this fall.

As to the discussions, we have always been clear we've been open to bilateral discussions with Iran; that there are a range of channels to do that through; that if anything got serious, that we would certainly be briefing our important partners on that; and that's exactly what we did in this case.

**QUESTION:** Jen --

**QUESTION:** And when did the talks begin?

**MS. PSAKI:** James, you're so tricky over there. (Laughter.)

**QUESTION:** Can I ask about China?

**MS. PSAKI:** Let me just say one thing, though, for James. It's important here too -- and then I promise we'll go to China -- it's important here also to note, though, that these really picked up after President Rouhani's election, that in terms of the discussion of specific pieces about how to move forward, what kind of -- what an agreement could look like, that's when it picked up. So I understand that's not answering your question, but I felt it was important to --

**QUESTION:** But just on the basis of methodology and removing the specifics of Iran and who's president or who's Secretary of State, if you were able to stand there at the podium last week and say, "Yes, I'm confirming a certain set of talks that occurred in March," explain to me what is it that prohibits you from saying, yes or no, that a certain set of talks occurred two years ago?

**MS. PSAKI:** If I have more details for you, James, I will -- happy to share them.

**QUESTION:** I didn't ask you -- I'm asking for your thinking about why you're not addressing the question, not the specifics of the meetings. What is it that prohibits you from addressing a question about meetings that are two years old?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not going to do a psychiatrist chair today.

Go ahead. On China?

**QUESTION:** What about the couch? (Laughter.)

**QUESTION:** Thank you, Jen. So as we know, the U.S. Government has already told U.S. carriers to comply with China's requirements before any flights pass through the new air defense zone established by the Chinese Government. So does that mean the U.S. Government has recognized this new air defense zone established by the Chinese Government?

**MS. PSAKI:** So let me be absolutely as clear as I can be here because I know there's been a range of reporting. It has been -- some of it has been inaccurate, to no fault of -- perhaps it's our fault for not explaining it well enough. So we are not -- the State Department is not the point of contact with airlines. The FAA is the point of contact with airlines. There has not been any information that has been put out or confirmed that I am aware of that has conveyed what has or has not been communicated in that capacity to airlines.

There is -- for safety and security of passengers, U.S. carriers operate internationally -- operate consistently as a process with the notices to airmen issued by foreign countries, as is the case in this

case. Their concerns are about the safety and security of passengers. That is different from what the U.S. Government policy is. It is not – this in no way indicates U.S. Government acceptance of China's requirements in the newly declared ADIZ and has absolutely no bearing on the firm and consistent U.S. Government position that we do not accept the legitimacy of China's requirements.

This is a case where China announced this in an uncoordinated fashion. It's inconsistent with standard practice. And their requirements for operating exceed internationally accepted practice in this capacity. So I don't know how much more clear that it is, but it does contradict a bit your question, so I wanted –

**QUESTION:** It looks like we received the statement or the Q&A from the State Department, so it looks like it's from the U.S. Government. And also, you are saying --

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, in that statement, which I certainly was well aware of, what was conveyed in there is that for safety and – for the safety and security of passengers, U.S. carriers operate consistently internationally with the notices to airmen issued by foreign governments. It did not convey that – anything specific about what had been communicated to airlines. It did not convey that the U.S. Government supported this effort. So I'm very familiar with the statement you're referring to, and there were a lot of – there were some assumptions made.

**QUESTION:** So (inaudible) --

**QUESTION:** Okay. It looks like --

**QUESTION:** -- that the FAA did not instruct airlines to comply with the Chinese regulations?

**MS. PSAKI:** I would point you to the FAA for what they did or did not communicate to commercial airlines.

**QUESTION:** Okay. Well, the FAA is part of the U.S. Government, is it not?

**MS. PSAKI:** They are. They --

**QUESTION:** Yes.

**MS. PSAKI:** Certainly, they are not housed in the State Department, however. (Laughter.)

**QUESTION:** So – I understand that, but the State Department does have a representative – you're familiar with the ICAO?

**MS. PSAKI:** I am not.

**QUESTION:** Okay. It's in Montreal.

**MS. PSAKI:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** It's a good excuse to get to Montreal --

**MS. PSAKI:** Good.

**QUESTION:** -- if you ever want to go up there.

**MS. PSAKI:** I will take that advice.

**QUESTION:** It's the International Civilian – it's the civilian airline – the UN agency for airlines. Do you know if the United States is going to use its membership in the ICAO to oppose this Chinese decision?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't.

**QUESTION:** And if you don't know, could you ask?

**MS. PSAKI:** Yeah, I'm happy to check on that for you, Matt. Absolutely.

**QUESTION:** And when you say that the U.S. Government does not accept the legitimacy of the Chinese requirements --

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, it doesn't accept -- yeah, the Chinese requirements, right.

**QUESTION:** Right. That's what you said.

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

**QUESTION:** Doesn't that – if the FAA has been telling airlines that they have to comply with this, or that they should comply with it, how is that not accepting – the government accepting the legitimacy?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, there's a whole field of regulations and regulatory policy that I am certainly far from an aviation expert, as it evidenced by your Montreal question. So I would point you to them on that.

Evidence of the fact that the U.S. Government does not accept China's requirement is by the fact that the announcement will not change how the United States conducts military operations in the region, which is something DOD announced last week. And that is certainly a U.S. Government decision to make.

**QUESTION:** So does that mean that U.S. Government planes will not obey the – or will not follow the Chinese requirements if they're flying through this airspace?

**MS. PSAKI:** Military planes?

**QUESTION:** Say the Secretary of State flying on an Air Force plane to Seoul or to Tokyo will not notify the

**MS. PSAKI:** I am not aware of any upcoming Seoul trip coming up.

**QUESTION:** Well, the Vice President is there right now, or in Tokyo, at least. Are you saying that his plane, an Air Force plane, will not follow the requirements of the Chinese?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I am saying military planes would not, and that level of specificity I'd certainly have to check and see where that falls in.

**QUESTION:** What is this episode – what impact is this episode having on U.S.-Sino relations?

**MS. PSAKI:** There are times when we agree and there are times when we disagree, as you know. We've made clear our concerns about not only what was announced but how this was announced, the fact that there was no prior notice. As you also know, Vice President Biden is in the region now on a prior planned trip. He will, of course, be meeting with key leaders to discuss a range of issues. Certainly, this could be a topic of discussion, but there are a number of other issues that we discuss both with China and other partners in the region.

**QUESTION:** And has the pivot to Asia worked? Is this evidence of the pivot working?

**MS. PSAKI:** I wouldn't categorize this into – I wouldn't put this in the evaluation category of whether or not it worked. Our pivot to Asia, or rebalance to Asia, means focusing on Asia and the important partnership we have with Asia, with countries in the region, the economic and strategic partners. And nothing is further evidence of that than the Vice President's trip there, the fact that, as you know, the Secretary will be going back to Asia soon, that he was just there a couple of months ago with Secretary Hagel. So that is evidence of our commitment to the region. And we work with them on a – countries in the region on a broad range of issues.

**QUESTION:** But as we survey the last five years of this Administration, would you say that China is less aggressive in its serial commission of human rights abuses, currency manipulation, cyber warfare against U.S. businesses and government, territorial aggression, or is it better than it used to be?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not going to do an evaluation of that. Obviously, we work with them on economic issues, we work with them on strategic issues. There are still issues, including human rights, including this issue we're talking about now, that we express concerns about when warranted, and we'll continue to do that. But we know that the relationship is a vital one and one that we need to keep plugging away at even when we disagree.

**QUESTION:** Jen, could I (inaudible) for a second?

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

**QUESTION:** Is it fair to characterize the U.S. position as being that aside from the official policy, for the purposes of safety and avoiding some kind of unfortunate incident, that commercial carriers should abide by the Chinese ADIZ requirements?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have – I'd point you again to the FAA on more specifics than what I just conveyed. There are a range of regulations and policies that, of course, they oversee or are in place, but our general position as a U.S. Government is that we don't accept China's requirements. And obviously, the military – actions of military exercises is evidence of that.

**QUESTION:** Jen, this comes from --

**QUESTION:** Sorry, sorry. Just a quick follow-up on that.

**MS. PSAKI:** Go ahead.

**QUESTION:** It looks like the two main U.S. airlines are complying with – are taking steps to comply. Delta and United are the two that have flight routes through the area, which seems to have kind of created a little bit of confusion/consternation in Japan over a perceived rift with Japanese policy, which is to not allow U.S. commercial airliners to file their flight plans with China. Do you have a – do you have any kind of reassurance or any kind of response to that?

**MS. PSAKI:** We coordinate closely with Japan and with South Korea and all of the countries in the region about a range of issues. And certainly on this issue, we have been in touch with Japan and will continue

to be. This is – for specific actions of individual commercial airliners, I would point you to them or the FAA on any regulations.

QUESTION: But – so you're not – but you're not afraid for the safety or concerned about the safety of U.S. citizens on flights that are flying through the area?

MS. PSAKI: Well, certainly safety and security of citizens should be of concern to everyone. Obviously, there are policies in place and regulations in place because of that. But we don't oversee airline regulations. The FAA does, so I would point you to them.

QUESTION: (Inaudible.) Did the United States Government – the position has changed toward this ADIZ, or not changed? What is the position to ADIZ now?

MS. PSAKI: It has not changed. We – China announced the ADIZ without prior consultations even though the newly-announced ADIZ overlaps with parts of longstanding ADIZs of Japan, the Republic of Korea, and Taiwan, and includes territory administered by Japan. As I mentioned, we – the fact that China's announcement has caused confusion and increased the risk of accidents only further underscores the validity of concerns and the need for China to rescind the procedures. It's consistently been our position and one we have communicated both publicly and privately. I know there was some confusion over the weekend about airlines and specifically.

QUESTION: Jen, you said that you are not still – not accepting China's new air defense zone. But I wonder, like, Japan has its own air defense zone, and also part of it covers Taiwan. But it looks like the U.S. doesn't say anything about it. So do you think there is sort of a double standard? Why do you react so strongly to China's air defense zone?

MS. PSAKI: Well, one of the reasons is that they announced this without prior consultations. It was inconsistent with longstanding procedure and process. And obviously, it overlaps with a number of other longstanding air defense zones of some other neighboring countries.

QUESTION: Jen --

QUESTION: Jen, you do not contest the ability of China to declare such a identification zone; it's just the manner in which they did it, or the extent?

MS. PSAKI: No. I think I have – I've just consistently said that we believe they should rescind the procedures. I've just – I've also stated a couple of times that we don't accept China's requirements. So I think I've made that pretty clear.

QUESTION: (Inaudible.)

QUESTION: Is the first --

QUESTION: In response to the – China's declaration of its own ADIZ, the South Korean Government is poised to expand its own ADIZ, so-called KADIZ, to the South China Sea. What is the position of the United States? Would you encourage it or discourage it?

MS. PSAKI: I haven't seen those reports, or I don't even know if they're reports or if there's been an announcement. I haven't seen any announcement, I guess I should say. So let me check into that, and --

QUESTION: They say they have already started consultations with the United States.

MS. PSAKI: I'd have to check into it and see if we have more to say on that.

QUESTION: Is this the first time the U.S. has called --

QUESTION: Jennifer, you talk about safety --

QUESTION: -- for the zone to be rescinded?

MS. PSAKI: I'd have to check on that for you, Roz.

QUESTION: Can we change topic?

QUESTION: No.

QUESTION: You talk about safety. Are you really concerned that the Chinese may down an airliner or something?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not predicting that, but certainly there is – they created these Air Defense Identification Zones, they've asked for prior flight plans. So of course, the security and safety is part of the regulatory process, and – but I don't have any predictions. It's just the question of abiding by it.

QUESTION: Is it a real concern, downing an airliner?

MS. PSAKI: I don't think I have any more for you on that question.

QUESTION: Jen, when you're taking that question that Roz had --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

QUESTION: -- could you also check whether the United States actually is directly asking the Chinese to rescind it?

MS. PSAKI: Happy to. Sure.

QUESTION: Thank you.

QUESTION: Well, at least --

QUESTION: Apart from the specific concerns about how this was announced without any prior notice, its excessiveness, at least in terms of other regulations, and the safety risks that you say it cause, do you have any -- are there broader concerns about this area being identified as essentially the entire East China Sea? Is the U.S. concerned that the Chinese are looking at anything on a map that has the word "China" in it as all their own?

MS. PSAKI: Well, part of the concern is certainly that it overlaps with parts of other --

QUESTION: Right. But in terms of territorial claims --

MS. PSAKI: As well as territory administered by Japan, sure.

QUESTION: Right, right. But in terms of China's territorial claims, are you concerned that this is the first step or could be a first step towards actually moving in some kind of forceful way to take control of areas of territory and ocean maritime space that it says that it owns?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I don't want to make a prediction of that.

QUESTION: No, but I'm asking if you were concerned --

MS. PSAKI: But --

QUESTION: -- that this is a step in that direction, apart from the specific problems with the no prior notice and all that other -- the safety concerns.

MS. PSAKI: But one of the specific problems is also that this includes area -- territory administered by Japan, it includes overlapping area with other countries in the region. So certainly, that does touch on what your question is here. In terms of a prediction of what it will mean in the future, I certainly wouldn't venture to make that at this point.

QUESTION: Right. Well, the Chinese say that they would be well within their rights also to declare one of these zones over the entire -- over the South China Sea. Are you concerned about the possibility of that?

MS. PSAKI: Well, you're familiar with what our position is on that, and we've long --

QUESTION: Well, that's over the territorial disputes over the -- it's a question of sovereignty for these little atolls and bits of rock.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Would you be as opposed as you are to this if the Chinese did it for the South China Sea, or is that a hypothetical question that you will wait to bash the Chinese over the head for once they -- if and when they do it?

MS. PSAKI: It is a hypothetical question at this stage in time.

QUESTION: All right.

QUESTION: One more thing. Just one more thing on that. China at the same time has announced they sent a fighter jet against United States and Japanese aircraft last week. Did you comment on that?

MS. PSAKI: I am not familiar with that specific report. In -- where, exactly?

QUESTION: If it's true, are you concerned about these Chinese announcement?

MS. PSAKI: I'd have to look at the specific report, and that may be a DOD question.

James.

QUESTION: Given that China makes this declaration --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- and we regard it as thoroughly problematic, if not illegal, and therefore we have on our hands a dispute with the Chinese --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- which is to be adjudicated somehow in a nonviolent way, wasn't it a kind of a provocative act for the United States to fly B-52s through that very zone in a short time thereafter?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would point you to DOD on that, but I would reiterate the fact that we have made clear that this action, this announcement, is not going to change our military exercises. And that is an example of that.

QUESTION: So other than taking – other than the Vice President, are you aware – or has there been at this point any conversations that you're aware of in this – from this building with the Chinese directly? It's kind of on Jill's question. And if not, do you expect them or is this going to be left up to the Vice President when he goes to --

MS. PSAKI: Let me check. I know we have expressed concerns. I mentioned this last week, Matt, so let me just make sure you have it.

QUESTION: Jen, the – Secretary Kerry did meet on Wednesday with a senior Chinese official?

MS. PSAKI: I'd have to --

QUESTION: On Wednesday, the vice premier.

QUESTION: Lu.

QUESTION: Yeah.

MS. PSAKI: I'd have to look back at that. It seems like a long time ago.

QUESTION: I know it does. And it was happening on Wednesday.

MS. PSAKI: Deputy Secretary Burns met last week with a Chinese official where this was a topic of discussion. Also, Assistant Secretary Russel spoke with the ambassador about a week ago, and Ambassador Locke has also been in touch, of course, on the ground. In terms of specific contacts over the last couple of days, I'm happy to check and see what else we can read out for all of you.

QUESTION: Are you taking this to the UN in any forum there?

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

QUESTION: New topic?

QUESTION: So it's strictly a bilateral or a multilateral thing, but outside the auspices of the UN is how you're going to seek to resolve it?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I don't have anything for you on it at this point. We're taking this day by day. I conveyed for you what we've done and what we've communicated. But obviously, we're taking steps day by day.

QUESTION: But is that a kind of – is that a consideration?

MS. PSAKI: Not that I'm aware of, Elise. But obviously, we're taking this day by day.

QUESTION: Can we change --

QUESTION: New subject?

MS. PSAKI: Sure, Jill. Go ahead.

QUESTION: I'm still on China. Can you actually clarify this? China's argument is that we institute the ADIZ that other countries have already instituted. If you're saying that China does not have a right to do that, they can say, well, what's good for the goose is good for the gander. And it doesn't seem like you have a legal foot to stand on. If you're opposed to the way in which they did it or the extent of it, these can be a subject of debate. And China has said we can get rid of our ADIZ if the Japanese get rid of theirs. I mean, something like that could happen. But somehow – are you really saying that you do not accept – you do not give China the right to declare a defense identification zone?

MS. PSAKI: I think I've thoroughly outlined what our concerns are, so I'm not sure I have much more to add to your question.

QUESTION: Just on another topic, Jen – sorry.

MS. PSAKI: Well, we were going to go to Jill next, and then I'm happy to go to you.

QUESTION: North Korea?

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

QUESTION: Merrill Newman.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: You've seen probably, or read at least, his so-called confession. Do you have any comments about that, any reaction? And what is the latest on his status?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the latest is – and let me do this first and then I'll do the second part. On November 30<sup>th</sup>, North Korea permitted the Embassy of Sweden, our protecting power, to consular access to Merrill

Newman. It – and given his advanced age and health conditions, we continue to urge North Korea to release him so he may return home and reunite with his family.

We, of course, have seen the Korean Central News Agency report regarding Mr. Newman's detention. According to the report, he apologized for the misunderstanding that led him – led to his detention. We don't have any other further information regarding the reason for his detention. But again, given his age and health, we continue to call for North Korea to release him as quickly as possible.

QUESTION: Do you believe that the North Korean – that that apology was – that he wrote and that was released by the North Koreans – do you believe that he wrote that of his own volition and that he – and do you have reason to believe that all of those things in that apology are true?

MS. PSAKI: We just don't have any other further analysis. We've seen the same reports all of you have seen, of course, about his interview and the publication of that, but I don't have any other further analysis on it.

QUESTION: Are you aware if that – the subject of his quote, unquote "confession" came up in the meeting with the Swedes?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything more on it, but I'm happy to check and see if there's more detail we can outline for all of you.

QUESTION: Did the Swedes as for and did Mr. Newman sign a PAW?

MS. PSAKI: A Privacy Act waiver?

QUESTION: Correct.

MS. PSAKI: Yes, he did. That is why I am able to talk about him now.

QUESTION: Okay. So then if – since he has signed the waiver, would you take it back to your – whoever it is that liaises with the Swedes on this --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: I assume it's EAP, but I guess it could also be EUR – and find out if Mr. Newman, in his discussions with the Swedes, talked at all about or said that he had freely made this alleged confession and when it was that he recorded this or when it --

MS. PSAKI: I am happy to take that and see if there's more we can share.

Go ahead, Lesley.

QUESTION: Also, did the Swedes report back in what condition he is in? Has he been tortured? Anything today? And how long did they meet with him, and was it in a jail? Was it in a --

QUESTION: Guest house.

QUESTION: -- government – a guest house?

QUESTION: A jailhouse guest house.

MS. PSAKI: A guest house. I don't have many specifics on that. I'm happy to also check with Matt's questions and to see if there's more we can share on that as well.

QUESTION: But didn't it include a --

QUESTION: But they did say – the Swedes did say that he --

QUESTION: -- physical examination of him?

QUESTION: The Swedes did, I think, say that he was --

MS. PSAKI: I believe they've spoken publicly about it.

QUESTION: -- that he was treated – that's he's being treated (inaudible), right?

MS. PSAKI: Right. I've seen those comments as well. So I don't have any other specifics on it, but if there's more we share beyond what they've said publicly, I'm happy --

QUESTION: Including whether or not there was a physical examination of him during this consular access?

QUESTION: I just want to get back to his confession. I mean, it is kind of written in language that kind of fits the narrative that North Korea has been saying, and I'm just wondering if you think that he wrote this. Are you – I mean, there's often times that you would say, like, oh this person seemed under duress --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- or something like that. So I mean, I'm just – about this particular confession, do you have any reason to believe that he did not confess to all of those things?

MS. PSAKI: I don't -- I certainly understand why you're asking. I don't have any particular analysis on it at this stage. I will see if this is something that our team is looking into, and if there's more we can say about it specifically.

QUESTION: And what is this building doing to secure his release beyond calling for his release from imprisonment? I mean, Ambassador King had tried months ago to go --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- for the other American under detention, Kenneth Bae. What's actually being done to get them out?

MS. PSAKI: Well, our Swedish protecting power just visited with him two days ago, and obviously that's an important component of reaching out to citizens who are detained in North Korea. We certainly do continue to call for his release. I don't have any other predictions or announcements on travel or visits of other officials at this point to tell you about.

QUESTION: But beyond those consular visits, I mean, is there any outreach to the Chinese specially on behalf of Mr. Newman?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have more I can outline for all of you, but I can check and see if there is any more to tell.

QUESTION: Have they been helpful the past with Kenneth Bae or with others? The Chinese (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: They have been helpful, but there's not more specifics I can outline.

QUESTION: Through the Swedes are elsewhere, has North Korea communicated any demands or requests of the United States that have to do with Newman or -- as a prelude to his possible release?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any more specifics on the contact with the Swedes and kind of what the discussion entailed beyond confirming --

QUESTION: Well, any -- in any forum, have they asked for anything from the United States?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any details on it. I am happy to check if there's any more to share with all of you.

QUESTION: But you guys are in touch with the North Koreans directly, just to confirm?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we -- as you know, we've long had a channel, but we've been working in this case through our Swedish protective -- protecting power.

QUESTION: But you have been in touch with the North Koreans specifically on his matter?

MS. PSAKI: On this specific case, not that I'm aware of, but I'm happy to check if there's anything more on that.

QUESTION: Are you in touch with Mr. Newman's family?

MS. PSAKI: We are. We have been. Let me see if I have the detail of when we last spoke with him -- with his family. I don't have that detail for you. I'm happy to put that in the pocket of things I'm going to check on.

QUESTION: And have they asked for you to help facilitate any kind of visit by them to North Korea, given that this gentleman's actually -- I mean, he's quite elderly --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- so you would imagine that if -- there would be concern enough to try and travel to visit him.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm. I'm not aware of a request that they've made about that specifically, but we can see.

QUESTION: So all the attention, really, is on this Mr. Newman. But as we've said, Kenneth Bae has been held for quite a long time.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm. You're right.

QUESTION: So in your efforts working with the Swedes or working to try and get the release, I mean, are you emphasizing because of Mr. Newman's age and health that you need to get him out right away, or are they part of a package that you think that they --

MS. PSAKI: I mean, we'd certainly like to see them both released as quickly as possible. In terms of that level of detail, I just don't have that.

QUESTION: These American citizens being held against their will in a rogue state, they're hostages, right?

MS. PSAKI: I mean, they're being held by the governments. The governments have confirmed that, so I don't know that I need to categorize it further, James.

QUESTION: You don't regard them as hostages?

MS. PSAKI: Do we have another topic?

QUESTION: Yes. Could I move onto the --

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

QUESTION: -- the Secretary's trip.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Okay. The portion to the West Bank and to Israel.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

QUESTION: Yes. If you have more to share with us -- today or yesterday, President Abbas, the president of the Palestinian Authority, was so impressed with the Geneva success, now he's suggesting a format, perhaps another Geneva, where the Palestinian-Israeli issue could be resolved. Would you look kindly at this suggestion?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I haven't seen those comments from him specifically. I know this has been an idea floated out there. Our focus remains on the direct negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians. We're a facilitator in that effort. There are certainly a number of countries who have a great investment and great interest in the success -- in a successful outcome here, including the Arab League, including many other countries that want to contribute to growing the Palestinian economy. But that's our focus, not on planning yet another conference.

QUESTION: And a Palestinian member of the Israeli Knesset, Mr. Ahmed Tibi, claims that the 20,000 housing that the Israelis announced and they put on hold were actually not put on hold, that there is -- construction is ongoing. Do you have any information on that?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything new on that. I'd have to look into that for you.

Scott?

QUESTION: (Inaudible.)

MS. PSAKI: Oh.

QUESTION: Can we stay on stay on that?

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

QUESTION: Just on this idea of not necessarily a Geneva-type conference for the peace process, but just the idea of internationalizing the process, would the United States -- would the Administration object to an internationalization of the peace process?

MS. PSAKI: Well, it's hard to know exactly what that means. Obviously, as you all are well aware, there's direct negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians now. That's what our focus is on, so certainly that's not a path we're pursuing.

QUESTION: Well, I think that the point that -- right, it's not a path that you're pursuing --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- but the point that people who are suggesting that this might be a way to go, the point that they make is that the United States has been the sole and unique arbiter, mediator, facilitator, whatever you want to call it, of Israeli-Palestinian peace talks going back decades.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: And you haven't gotten anything out of it. There's been no success. It's been one failure after another. Is it perhaps not time to try something new, is the argument that these people would make.

MS. PSAKI: Well, Matt, obviously, many people are going to make different arguments about how it should proceed. We're less than halfway through the nine-month timeline here. There are a number of countries that are engaged and invested, including, of course, the Arab League, who, as you know, are in very close contact with the Palestinians and engaged in this effort. There are many who are engaged with the Israelis in this effort. So our focus remains on the direct negotiations, and I don't think we're at this point speculating on a different alternative forum.

**QUESTION:** Well, let me -- okay. Well, let me put it this way: Is it still the position of the Administration that the United States has unique leverage and influence with both sides that makes it the only logical or capable, competent, credible mediator for peace between Israel and the Palestinians?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't know that we've ever stated it exactly like that. We're playing a facilitator role which both sides are comfortable with. There are other countries engaged with this effort and certainly in touch with the Israelis and the Palestinians. I expect that will continue. But in the meantime, we'll continue to play the facilitator role as long as it's productive.

**QUESTION:** Do you believe, does the Administration believe that the United States still has leverage and influence with Israel or the Palestinians? I mean, you say, in reference to other questions about, say, Mr. Newman or Mr. Bae in North Korea --

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

**QUESTION:** -- that the Chinese have influence with the North Koreans and you would like to go through them, maybe after you're done yelling at them about their air defense zone. But do you still think that the United States -- does the Administration believe that it has influence and leverage with either Israel or the Palestinians?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I think we have a close relationship with both. And obviously, we're at this point because both sides decided to come to the table. I don't think it's about leverage. There's -- it's in the interest of both sides to come to an agreement on the final status issues, and that's what they're working to do at this point.

**QUESTION:** Jen, could I just ask -- there was an agreement --

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** -- reached last week between the EU and Israel which will allow Israel to actually touch some funding for scientific research. There have been some problems because the EU wanted to bar all research in areas of -- in the West Bank --

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

**QUESTION:** -- settlement areas in the West Bank. Is there an -- I mean, does the American -- do America -- does America believe that this is a good agreement for the EU and Israel, given that Secretary Kerry has always mentioned that he fears an increasing isolation of Israel on the international stage?

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm. I haven't talked to our team about it, so I'd have to talk to them and see if we have any particular view on the agreement last week.

**QUESTION:** And is -- what is the message that Secretary Kerry's going to be bringing with him when he visits Israel later on this week?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I think he'll be talking to both sides about the importance of staying firm with the timeline and working through the tough and difficult issues that they're doing at the negotiating table, and reiterating the importance of coming to a peaceful end to the final negotiations. And of course, when he's meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu, they'll certainly be discussing the recent P5+1 agreement with Iran and having an ongoing dialogue about that as well.

**QUESTION:** And have there been any meetings, direct talks between the Israelis and Palestinians, since the resignation of the Palestinian team?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have any updates on meetings at this point. I'll see if there's any more we want to provide to all of you in terms of specific meetings and timing of that.

**QUESTION:** But I mean, since the last time the Secretary's been there, there's been another announcement of new settlement construction.

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

**QUESTION:** There's been the resignation of the Palestinian -- it just seems that without him actually physically there holding their hand for hours at a time, that they're not able to sustain it on their own.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, they've had many meetings when he has not been there. So obviously, we didn't expect this to be easy. We certainly are aware of some bumps in the road of late, but both sides have also reaffirmed their commitment to seeing this through.

**QUESTION:** Would you really call those bumps in the road, though? I mean, particularly on the -- actually, on either side, whether it's the Israelis continuing to announce settlement construction or the Palestinians' full negotiating team just giving up, it just doesn't seem as if --

MS. PSAKI: Well, when the negotiating – and that's a good example. The negotiating team – President Abbas reaffirmed his own commitment to seeing this through --

QUESTION: But it just --

MS. PSAKI: -- whether it was them or whether it was other officials in their place. So they're continuing to move forward.

QUESTION: It just doesn't seem like they have the -- while they may have the desire and the dream that there'll be a peace deal. The motivation to actually do the hard work day in and day out doesn't seem to be there. And so it does seem as if Secretary Kerry is the one holding this together personally, and isn't there, like, a limit to how much he can do?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. That's why he has a team to help work through it every day.

QUESTION: Well, I meant more the parties themselves.

MS. PSAKI: You're right, but there also is a long timeframe we still have left. One of the reasons committing to the nine-month timeframe was so important is because we knew there would be challenging periods throughout the process. But both sides remain committed to that, and so we'll continue to work through it.

QUESTION: But it doesn't sound like -- unless you could disabuse us of the notion, it doesn't sound like since Secretary Kerry's last trip in early November that there have actually been any direct talks.

MS. PSAKI: I wouldn't jump to that conclusion. We just have always said we wouldn't confirm every meeting.

QUESTION: Sure.

MS. PSAKI: So let me see if I can confirm any meetings since that point for all of you.

QUESTION: Jen, could you tell us if Ambassador Indyk is there now? Is he there? Is he in the region? Is he -- Ambassador Indyk, where --

MS. PSAKI: He's here. I saw him this morning.

QUESTION: He's here. Okay.

MS. PSAKI: Okay. Let's just do one or two more here.

Scott.

QUESTION: What is the U.S. view of what's going on in Thailand right now?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we certainly deeply regret the loss of life in Bangkok due to politically motivated violence. We condemn violence as a means to achieve political objectives and urge all sides to exercise restraint and respect the rule of law. We are concerned about the continuing political tension in Thailand, and we are following the situation closely.

Peaceful protest and freedom of expression are important aspects of democracy, of course. Violence and seizure of public or private property, however, are not acceptable means of resolving political differences. We firmly believe all parties should work together to resolve differences through peaceful dialogue in ways that strengthen democracy and rule of law.

Ambassador Kenney spoke with the prime minister and -- has spoken with the prime minister and opposition leaders to also encourage restraint and peaceful dialogue. You may have also seen that the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok issued a security message for U.S. citizens in Thailand explaining that large political demonstrations may continue in coming days -- in the coming days, including at government facilities, in and outside of central Bangkok, and is advising them to avoid areas of demonstration and to exercise caution.

QUESTION: Following his talk with the prime minister, one of the main opposition leaders said that he would accept nothing short of her resignation. Is that a responsible position in the eyes of the United States?

MS. PSAKI: We just continue to encourage all parties to work together to resolve their differences. We, of course, have seen his comments, but I don't think we're going to weigh in further at this point, aside from encouraging restraint on the ground.

QUESTION: Would you weigh in on the general amnesty bill that the ruling party failed to get through parliament, which was one of the instigations for this?

MS. PSAKI: I know -- I don't know if I've spoken to that in the past, Scott. I'd have to -- I don't have anything for you on it at this particular moment, but I'm happy to follow up post-briefing.

Okay, let's do two more here. In the back, you've been very patient.

**QUESTION:** Thank you. Michael Vincent from the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. What's the U.S. response to the Australian Government's rejection of the U.S. company Archer Daniels Midland's bid for GrainCorp?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we are disappointed by the Government of Australia's decision to reject Archer Daniels Midland's proposed acquisition of GrainCorp. We do not -- we do note that the Australian Treasurer Joe Hockey has expressed openness to approving an increase in ADM's current share in GrainCorp. The United States is the largest foreign investor -- foreign direct investor in Australia, with 132 billion in investment projects to date, and we look forward to working closely with Australia's government to build stronger ties and investment -- stronger trade and investment ties.

**QUESTION:** Just a quick follow-up.

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

**QUESTION:** Did -- unrelated matter, but has the U.S. Government accepted private medical, legal, or religious information on Australian citizens as offered by Australian Intelligence agencies?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have anything further or anything for you on a range of reports. I'm certainly not going to comment on any of them. As you know, we're undergoing our own review of these processes, which we expect to conclude by the end of the year.

**QUESTION:** Jen, back to ADM for a second.

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

**QUESTION:** Did -- was this issue, this proposed sale, bid by ADM raised at the AUSMIN ministerial meetings?

**MS. PSAKI:** It's a good question, Matt. I'd have to check. It wasn't one raised while I was there, but let me check and see if it was.

**QUESTION:** And if it was, did -- was -- were you given any indication that this is the way your closest antipodal ally was going to go?

**MS. PSAKI:** I will check and see if it was even raised.

Okay, let's do one more. Go ahead, Samir.

**QUESTION:** Do you have a reaction to the draft constitution in Egypt today?

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** Can I throw a Bahrain question at the end of that?

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure. Why not?

Well, we continue to track the constitutional process with interest, and we'll examine the document carefully once it is finalized and sent to President Mansour, which we understand will occur tomorrow. The Egyptian people, of course, will decide the fate of the draft constitution in a referendum. We will continue to support a transition process that leads to an inclusive civilian government selected through free, fair, and transparent elections, and civilian government based on the rule of law, fundamental freedoms, accountability, and an open and competitive economy. So we will see when it is transferred, and we will take a close look at it.

Bahrain.

**QUESTION:** Yeah. Do you have any view on the government --

**QUESTION:** A quick one on Egypt. Hold on. I'm sorry, Matt. You don't have any comment on the prohibition of religious parties in Egypt?

**MS. PSAKI:** Again, we'll wait to comment on it until it's been officially transferred. Obviously, there are steps in there we may be complimentary of and others we may not be.

**QUESTION:** Yes, please.

**QUESTION:** Does the decision of the -- not to release this human rights campaigner when he was eligible to be released? It was yesterday or today.

**MS. PSAKI:** Let me see. I think I have something on this. One moment, Matt.

**QUESTION:** Mm-hmm. You can get it -- if you just want to make it a TQ, that's fine.

**MS. PSAKI:** Yeah, that's fine. I believe I have something on it for you. Let's see. We continue to encourage Bahrain to take the necessary steps to promote reconciliation among Bahrainis, including permitting all sectors of society to voice their political views in a peaceful manner. We have seen reports

that the head of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights Nabeel Rajab -- is that who you're talking about -- okay --

**QUESTION:** (Inaudible.)

**MS. PSAKI:** -- was denied early release today in Bahrain. We understand that he has served 18 months of his two-year prison sentence and is scheduled to be released in May of next year. We remain deeply concerned about the three-year prison sentence for leading illegal gatherings. We urge the Government of Bahrain to protect the universal rights of freedom of expression and assembly, just as we urge all elements of Bahraini society to engage in peaceful expressions of political opinion.

**QUESTION:** Do you think that he should've been released as was -- as he could've been today?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I believe we are concerned about his -- we were concerned about his three-year prison sentence, I believe. Let me check and see, but I believe that's what we're implying here.

**QUESTION:** I mean, this is not the first. I mean, there have been several other opposition activists and so forth that have been detained. I mean, does this cast doubt on your encouraging words earlier in the year about Bahrain's commitment to political reforms?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we certainly are encouraging them to take some step -- to take necessary steps to promote reconciliation. And obviously, each time that there is a case like this, we have expressed concern. So I don't have any analysis as to what that will mean longer-term or about the overall relationship, but each time there has been an incident, we have certainly expressed our concern.

**QUESTION:** Well, but each time -- you say each time that there's been an incident. I mean, there's a pattern of incidents. I mean, does that say something about their actual commitment to reforms?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I don't have any more analysis on it for you.

Thanks, everyone.

**QUESTION:** Thank you.

(The briefing was concluded at 3:18 p.m.)

DPB # 196

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**Fischer, Kyle G**

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**From:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K <trudeauek@state.gov>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 09, 2016 5:19 PM  
**To:** Forgerson, Luke A  
**Subject:** <http://video.state.gov/en/video/2886914568001>

**RELEASE IN FULL**

26.58

Highlighted below. The video posted online here

(<http://redirect.state.sbu/?url=http://video.state.gov/en/video/2886914568001>) ends with Psaki responding to Roz's question saying "....and so that has not changed that." White flash on screen at 26:58 and then it picks up with Roz talking again.

**Elizabeth Kennedy Trudeau**  
Director, Office of Press Relations  
U.S. Department of State  
202.647.4444 | [TrudeauEK@state.gov](mailto:TrudeauEK@state.gov)

**RELEASE IN PART**  
B6**Toufanian, Melissa Turley**

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**From:** Rosen, James [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Friday, May 13, 2016 6:14 PM  
**To:** Kirby, John

B6

John, Thanks for the strong statement on the erased video. Yours gratefully, James

James Rosen  
Chief Washington Correspondent  
Host, "The Foxhole"  
Twitter: @JamesRosenFNC

[REDACTED] (office)  
[REDACTED] (mobile)

Author, Cheney One on One

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RELEASE IN FULL

**Fischer, Kyle G**

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**From:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K <trudeauek@state.gov>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 09, 2016 5:17 PM  
**To:** Forgerson, Luke A  
**Subject:** Are you around?

**Elizabeth Kennedy Trudeau**  
Director, Office of Press Relations  
U.S. Department of State  
202.647.4444 | [TrudeauEK@state.gov](mailto:TrudeauEK@state.gov)

**Fischer, Kyle G**

**From:** Forgerson, Luke A <ForgersonLA@state.gov> **RELEASE IN FULL**  
**Sent:** Monday, May 09, 2016 5:36 PM  
**To:** Curran, Andrea M; Jones, Eric M  
**Cc:** Brown, Cynthia A; McAdams, Lisa A  
**Subject:** RE: URGENT: Brightcove Video -- Daily Press Briefing - December 2, 2013

Eric --

I'm walking over to Elizabeth's office in PRS.

Can you check DVIDS. I checked YouTube -- it appears on YouTube the same as it does on state.gov.

---

**From:** Forgerson, Luke A  
**Sent:** Monday, May 09, 2016 5:29 PM  
**To:** Curran, Andrea M; Jones, Eric M (PACE) (JonesEM@state.gov)  
**Cc:** Brown, Cynthia A (brownca@state.gov); McAdams, Lisa A (mcadamsla@state.gov)  
**Subject:** URGENT: Brightcove Video -- Daily Press Briefing - December 2, 2013  
**Importance:** High

Eric/Andrea --

Need assistance on this ASAP.

Can one of you call me or come to my desk please?

Thanks!

---

**From:** Forgerson, Luke A  
**Sent:** Monday, May 09, 2016 5:21 PM  
**To:** Curran, Andrea M; Jones, Eric M (PACE) (JonesEM@state.gov)  
**Cc:** Brown, Cynthia A (brownca@state.gov); McAdams, Lisa A (mcadamsla@state.gov)  
**Subject:** Brightcove Video -- Daily Press Briefing - December 2, 2013  
**Importance:** High

Andrea,

Can you please check minute 26:58 of this video? Come see me if you have questions. Can you also find it on YouTube. (If you need assistance, please let me know.)

<http://video.state.gov/en/video/2886914568001>

**RELEASE IN PART**  
**B5, B6****Fischer, Kyle G**

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**From:** Harf, Marie E <harfme@state.gov>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 09, 2016 5:31 PM  
**To:** Hickey, Lauren A; Kirby, John; Toner, Mark C; Trudeau, Elizabeth K  
**Cc:** Beechem, Stephanie; Werberg, Samuel (Cairo)  
**Subject:** Re: Urgent

+sam

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**From:** HarfME@state.gov  
**Sent:** Monday, May 9, 2016 5:30 PM  
**To:** Hickey, Lauren A; Kirby, John; Toner, Mark C; Trudeau, Elizabeth K  
**Cc:** Beechem, Stephanie  
**Subject:** Re: Urgent

B5

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**From:** Hickey, Lauren A  
**Sent:** Monday, May 9, 2016 5:26 PM  
**To:** Harf, Marie E; Kirby, John; Toner, Mark C; Trudeau, Elizabeth K  
**Cc:** Beechem, Stephanie  
**Subject:** FW: Urgent

Marie – Any insight here? The transcript is online

B5

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

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**From:** Rosen, James [mailto:James.Rosen@FOXNEWS.COM]  
**Sent:** Monday, May 09, 2016 5:21 PM  
**To:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K; Kirby, John  
**Cc:** Toner, Mark C; Beechem, Stephanie; Hickey, Lauren A  
**Subject:** RE: Urgent

At the 12/2/13 briefing, I confronted Jen Psaki with the false statement made to me by Toria Nuland at the 2/6/13 briefing. That earlier exchange went like this:

**ROSEN:** There have been reports that intermittently, and outside of the formal P-5+1 mechanisms the Obama Administration, or members of it, have conducted direct, secret, bilateral talks with Iran. Is that true or false?

**NULAND:** We have made clear, as the Vice President did at Munich, that in the context of the larger P-5+1 framework, we would be prepared to talk to Iran bilaterally. *But with regard to the kind of thing that you're talking about on a government-to-government level, no.*

Of course, the secret Iran talks had begun eight months before that exchange.

The transcript for the 12/2/13 briefing is below, with the yellow part signifying the part that has been edited out of DOS's video of the briefing on its website and YT channel.

We want to know why and when DOS inserted a white-flash into the 12/2/13 video to censor the part where I asked Jen Psaki about Toria Nuland's false statement on the Iran talks (and Psaki in essence said the administration needed "privacy").

All of this is obviously relevant in light of the NYTM questions about whether Rhodes/DOS et al misled the people, and the press, about the origins and timing of the Iran talks.

If we don't hear back by 5:45p – we just discovered this act of censorship – we are going to report it as such in our 6p show.

-----  
James Rosen  
Chief Washington Correspondent  
Host, "The Foxhole"  
Twitter: @JamesRosenFNC

(office)  
(mobile)

B6

B6

Author, Cheney One on One

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**From:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K [<http://redirect.state.sbu/?url=mailto:trudeauek@state.gov>]  
**Sent:** Monday, May 09, 2016 5:13 PM  
**To:** Rosen, James; Kirby, John  
**Cc:** Toner, Mark C; Beechem, Stephanie; Hickey, Lauren A  
**Subject:** RE: Urgent

James, I am solo in town today – Kirby and Toner on road. Adding Beechem and Hickey on this.  
Not sure I understand Q.

---

**From:** Rosen, James [<http://redirect.state.sbu/?url=mailto:James.Rosen@FOXNEWS.COM>]  
**Sent:** Monday, May 09, 2016 5:10 PM  
**To:** Kirby, John  
**Cc:** Trudeau, Elizabeth K; Toner, Mark C  
**Subject:** Urgent

Need a call from one of you in the next thirty minutes or so. We are going to go to air with the information below, in the context of the whole Ben Rhodes controversy, at 6p, and we'd like to give DOS a chance to clear it up. My contact info is below. The relevant info is also below, courtesy of one of our video librarians in the Fox News Washington bureau. The basic question is why – and when – DOS censored its video of the highlighted portion of the 12/2/13 briefing (26:58 into the clip) with a white flash, on both the DOS web page and the DOS YT channel. Yours cordially, James

James Rosen  
 Chief Washington Correspondent  
 Host, "The Foxhole"  
 Twitter: @JamesRosenFNC

[redacted] (office)

[redacted] (mobile)

Author, *Cheney One on One*

B6

B6

Highlighted below. The video posted online here

(<http://redirect.state.sbu/?url=http://redirect.state.sbu/?url=http://redirect.state.sbu/?url=http://video.state.gov/en/video/2886914568001>) ends with Psaki responding to Roz's question saying "....and so that has not changed that." White flash on screen at 26:58 and then it picks up with Roz talking again.

#### TRANSCRIPT:

1:54 p.m. EST

MS. PSAKI: Hi, everyone. Happy --

QUESTION: Happy belated birthday.

MS. PSAKI: Thank you. Thank you very much. Twenty-two. It's glorious. (Laughter.)

QUESTION: And you will be 22 for the next --

MS. PSAKI: I will be.

QUESTION: What, 10, 15 years?

MS. PSAKI: At least, at least. Well, I have nothing at the top, so Matt, let's go to what's on your mind.

QUESTION: Let's see. I have a lot --

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

QUESTION: -- but nothing is really worth starting with, so let's just start with the Secretary's trip.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

QUESTION: Both -- excluding the middle stop in Moldova, at the beginning, how much of the NAC do you expect is going to be concentrated on Afghanistan and then talking about the BSA? Will there be any Afghan officials there to talk with? And then -- well, that'll be that one question for --

MS. PSAKI: Okay. Well, we'll clearly, as we typically do, be doing a briefing en route about the trip and about our visit to the NATO Ministerial tomorrow, where we will venture to have more specific details about who will be attending. Obviously, Afghanistan and the ongoing presence there post-2014 of the United States and of NATO will certainly be a big topic of discussion. But I will let our briefers outline more specifics en route to Brussels.

QUESTION: All right. Well, I was going to ask about the Middle East but -- as well, the stop in Israel and the PA. But if you're just -- are you going to give me the same answer, wait for the briefing on the plane?

MS. PSAKI: I likely will, yes.

QUESTION: Okay. Well, then never mind.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

QUESTION: And then quickly on Afghanistan --

MS. PSAKI: Sure, Lesley.

QUESTION: Is -- what further is happening as far as trying to resolve this issue with Afghanistan?

MS. PSAKI: Well --

QUESTION: As far as -- is it true that --

MS. PSAKI: The BSA.

QUESTION: The -- exactly.

MS. PSAKI: The signing, I assume.

QUESTION: Is it true that Special Envoy Dobbins has gone -- is on his way to Afghanistan?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any announcements at this point on travel for him or anyone else. Obviously, our team on the ground, Ambassador Cunningham and others, have been in close contact. At this point, we've made our position clear,

and so have the Afghan people. Signing the BSA soon is the path forward, as we've said many times, to sustaining a partnership between the United States and Afghanistan to support Afghans in achieving lasting peace, security, and development. That's the message that we're conveying at every level. And as we've said before but important to reiterate here, given it's a week later now: We -- deferring the signature of the agreement until after next year's election is not viable. It would not provide Afghans with the certainty that they deserve regarding their future in the critical months leading to the elections, nor would it provide the United States and NATO allies the clarity necessary for a potential post-2014 military presence.

So we're continuing to convey that. Our team on the ground is certainly hard at work. I don't have any travel announcements. If that changes, we'll certainly let all of you know.

**QUESTION:** Has Secretary spoken to President Karzai in the last couple of days on BSA?

**MS. PSAKI:** He has not spoken with him in the last couple of days.

**QUESTION:** And the Pentagon today said that this is not the end of it; after BSA is signed, the U.S. and Afghanistan have to negotiate and sign their agreement called SOFA, and that would be done by the State Department. Has any process started on SOFA, signing of SOFA with Afghanistan?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'd have to look more specifically at what they said. Maybe you're referring to the NATO SOFA that they may have to negotiate and sign, I believe, as a step? But for our purposes, there's the signing; it goes through parliament, then it would have to be signed again. Obviously, as you all are very familiar with, this doesn't outline a specific number for a troop presence, so there would be a great deal of planning in regards to that that DOD would certainly be very engaged with. But in terms of that, I'd have to look at specifically what they said. I'm not familiar with that --

**QUESTION:** Is December 21<sup>st</sup> the redline, the deadline for signing of BSA, after which you will begin preparing for all troops pull out from Afghanistan post 2014.

**MS. PSAKI:** I am not going to get into new redlines or deadlines today, I will say. But on the trip question, well, as you all know, a decision hasn't been made. You would know if it had been. It's not our preference, but no troops is certainly a potential outcome for Afghanistan if there is no BSA. So that is, again, not our preference, but natural that planning would have to take place for all different options.

**QUESTION:** Have you tried to understand why President Karzai is doing what he's doing or conducting himself the way he has? Do you have a clearer picture than we do, for instance?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't know that I have any further insight than you do. Obviously, the Secretary spoke with him last week, as you all well know. We continue to press our case for why this should be signed as quickly as possible, but I don't have any analysis of particular actions or comments in Afghanistan.

**QUESTION:** So you think that he's perhaps more concerned about his personal safety post the elections?

**MS. PSAKI:** I will let you, Said, do your own analysis. I don't have any other analysis on it.

Do we have any more on Afghanistan?

**QUESTION:** Just the trip?

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

**QUESTION:** For those of us who are interested in Moldova --

**MS. PSAKI:** Yes.

**QUESTION:** -- could you just tell us why stop in Moldova? What's the importance? We see the winery, et cetera.

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure. Moldova is a country that has taken a number of important reform steps in recent years. They have -- they're taking steps to help grow their economy, and wine is obviously a significant export. But they have a number of exports they also work with. And given the steps they've taken, the Secretary felt it would be an important opportunity to pay a visit. You'd have to check my history and facts here, but I believe he may be, if not the first, one of the first Secretaries to pay a bilateral visit to Moldova.

**QUESTION:** And also it comes, obviously, right after Ukraine decided not to sign the agreement with the EU.

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

**QUESTION:** Moldova did. So you could read into this that the Secretary wants to buck them up or give them something, a sign of support.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we had planned this trip -- this trip was in the works before that decision was made. But certainly, they have put a number of reforms in place and they're working hard on their economy and the -- if -- the Secretary felt it was important to highlight that.

**QUESTION:** Following on that --

**QUESTION:** Okay. Can I go over just to Afghanistan for one very briefly?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Okay, and then we'll go to Anne.

QUESTION: I was gone last week so I'm -- most of last week, so what -- did the Secretary speak with Karzai before or after Ambassador Rice was there?

MS. PSAKI: Let's see. He spoke with Karzai -- President Karzai -- I'd have to look back. I believe it was prior to her visit. Let me double check that for you to make sure.

QUESTION: So the last senior official to speak with Karzai, as far as you know, was Ambassador Rice.

MS. PSAKI: I believe that's correct, yes.

QUESTION: Just following on the Moldova for Ukraine substitution, in saying that Secretary Kerry would not, as had been widely expected, attend the OSCE -- when you said that, I don't know, about 10 days ago or so --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- we were just at the very beginning of this whole episode.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: And at that point you said it was scheduling issues that had -- it would force his cancellation. Are you sticking with that? Is that still the case? Or might there be some policy implications to his decision not to go to the OSCE?

MS. PSAKI: I am sticking with that. I'm just looking at Lesley here in my -- corner of my eye. I am sticking with that. I don't have any new guidance for you on that front. Assistant Secretary Nuland is still planning to attend and travel there after joining us for the first part of the visit.

QUESTION: On Syria?

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Is it --

QUESTION: Can you tell us the -- oh, sorry.

QUESTION: Sorry. Just on this charade -- charade, for Lesley -- of scheduling reasons, is it not the case that not doing -- not going on this trip -- not going to Kyiv is a sign of displeasure?

MS. PSAKI: I will let you do your own reporting, Matt. I don't have any more analysis or comments on it from here.

QUESTION: But there was --

QUESTION: And one more quick one on Ukraine.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Obviously, we're seeing the demonstrations, violent crackdown.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: What's the response from the State Department?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we're of course, naturally, closely monitoring the ongoing demonstrations, not only in Kyiv but in cities around Ukraine. As you know, since the demonstrations began on November 21<sup>st</sup>, there have been an increasing number of violent incidents, including against journalists. We stress there is no room, and we continue to stress there is no room for violence in a country that aspires to a democratic future. We continue to call on all sides to maintain calm, and on Ukrainian authorities to ensure that members of the public and the press are able to safely and peacefully exercise their rights of speech and assembly.

As I mentioned a little bit before, we still have -- Assistant Secretary Nuland is still planning to travel there. The Ukrainian foreign ministry announced that the ministerial is proceeding as planned.

QUESTION: But there was --

QUESTION: Are you sure that Ukraine is a country that aspires to a democratic future?

MS. PSAKI: Any country that may aspire, certainly, these are important values to follow through on.

QUESTION: Right. But are you still convinced that Ukraine aspires to a westward-looking, democratic future?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we will see, Matt. Time will tell. Actions speak louder than words.

QUESTION: Do you -- does this --

QUESTION: Do you still stand by the comments made by Ambassador Nuland in her speech to the Atlantic Council a couple of weeks ago and also comments from this podium that it is your belief that Ukraine should be following the path towards joining some kind of association agreement with the EU?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Our view has not changed on that. Obviously, there have been a lot of events that have happened since then, but --

QUESTION: And do you believe that the demonstrations on the streets are actually -- that's what they want? I mean, it seems to be that they're demonstrating because they're angry that the government hasn't taken this path that's been laid out for them.

**MS. PSAKI:** I would point you to the comments of the demonstrators, of which there have been many. I don't want to speak on their behalf, but our position hasn't changed on what steps they could take. Obviously, it's up to Ukraine to take those steps.

**QUESTION:** So – but, I mean, the United States is – if you don't want to give your backing to them – at least sympathetic to what the demonstrators are asking for.

**MS. PSAKI:** Again, the demonstrators are saying a range of things, so I don't – beyond what we've stated publicly many times, I don't have any other further public statements on our position, which has been stated by Assistant Secretary Nuland and by other officials in the past several weeks.

**QUESTION:** Given the estimates of some 300,000 people who were demonstrating across the country on Sunday, and given that they all seem, to a person, to be saying that the government is ignoring their wish to be more closely aligned with Europe, isn't it a bit disingenuous for this building to suggest that they need to show any restraint? They're not the ones who are bludgeoning people with battering rams and turning rubber bullets on the police. It seems they're taking the brunt of everything that's been happening.

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't think I took sides. I think I said that it's important for all sides to maintain calm, that there's no place for violence in a country that aspires to a democratic future. So I don't – I would disagree with the premise of your claims.

**QUESTION:** What does this building think of the prime minister's – call for his security forces to show restraint and seemingly to be missing in action when on Sunday there was more violence heaped upon the demonstrators, particularly in Kyiv?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I think I just expressed what our view is of violence against demonstrators, so that's what our view is.

**QUESTION:** Can I – has the Secretary spoken to somebody in Ukraine, his counterpart?

**MS. PSAKI:** He has not in the last several days. I can check if there's been any other calls I'm not aware of.

**QUESTION:** Because one of the big issues for Ukraine is tearing itself away from Russia and looking towards Western Europe for economic support. And one of the big things is that the president of Ukraine is heading to China to look for that. And if – I was wondering if the U.S. had offered them kind of – some kind of assurance or reassurance economically that they could be better off by signing these deals and with the support – and the U.S. would support any kind of reform through the International Monetary Fund.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, aside from public statements we've made, which, as Jo referenced, is – that our belief is that European integration is the surest course to economic growth and strengthening Ukraine's democracy. That's still our belief. That's been consistently our belief. But beyond that, I'm not aware of any other discussions. Obviously, there's a lot of – that's going on with the EU and with Russia, and beyond that we have made our position clear.

**QUESTION:** And what is the building's position on the detention of Yulia Tymoshenko?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we have consistently spoken about this in the past and expressed our concern about her detention. I know this was also a component that was potentially being worked through as an element of Ukraine getting into the EU. So we've consistently expressed concern, encouraged them to take steps forward. Obviously, there hasn't been progress on that on the ground.

**QUESTION:** I'm sorry, what did you say was the surest way to economic growth?

**MS. PSAKI:** I said European integration is the surest course to economic growth and strengthening --

**QUESTION:** Did you give the same advice to the Greeks?

(Laughter.)

**MS. PSAKI:** Matt. Behave.

Do we have any more on Ukraine or Afghanistan, since we touched on that too?

**QUESTION:** Still on Ukraine.

**MS. PSAKI:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** The Russians have proposed that the EU, Ukraine, and Russia get together to discuss some of these problems. Would the United States be in favor of that, some kind of a trilateral discussion to discuss the economic situation and political differences?

**MS. PSAKI:** It wouldn't involve the United States, so I don't have a particular position. I'm happy to talk to our team and see if we have a view on that.

Ukraine or Afghanistan? Okay, should we move on to Syria? Let's go to Margaret.

**QUESTION:** Thank you. Jen, the OPCW said over the past few days that the U.S. has stepped up, that they're going to give operational support, offering up financing. Can you give us some more detail on that?

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm. Well, I don't know if it will be satisfying, but let me try. (Laughter.) Well, as you know, the United States is committed to supporting the international community's efforts to destroy Syria's chemical weapons in the safest, most efficient and effective means possible. We have offered and are currently outfitting a U.S. vessel with field-deployable hydrolysis system technology to support the OPCW's efforts. We are in close contact with the OPCW and our international partners and remain confident that we can meet the milestones for destruction set out by the OPCW. Of course, the OPCW remains – and the UN – remain the lead coordinators on reaching out to countries and coordinating steps forward and any timeline, et cetera.

**QUESTION:** But on the financing, what is it exactly that we're offering? Is that a chunk of change? Is that financing and loans, or --

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we've offered – we've offered in the – prior to this, we have offered – we have given 6 million to the OPCW and the UN Trust Fund, both in financial contributions and in kind, so I think we gave some materials as well. But this, of course, would be a DOD vessel. So I would point you to them on the specific costs. This, at this point, is an offer. So I think that's still being worked through.

**QUESTION:** So – but beyond the vessel, the OPCW says the cost is going to be between 35 to 40 million euros for the private contractors who would actually be --

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

**QUESTION:** -- be doing the disposal themselves. So is any of that money coming through the State Department, or is the State Department topped out at \$6 million?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we've said we'd be open to exploring additional ways to provide assistance. I don't have any announcements today of additional assistance we're planning to provide, but that certainly is something we're in discussions with the OPCW about.

**QUESTION:** So we can understand correctly, it is a commercial vessel, correct, that they are trying --

**MS. PSAKI:** It is a --

**QUESTION:** -- (inaudible) --

**MS. PSAKI:** -- U.S. Government vessel, not a commercial vessel.

**QUESTION:** Right.

**MS. PSAKI:** But there is a part of this – and this may be what you're asking about – which is the OPCW reaching out to commercial companies about the destruction capabilities.

**QUESTION:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** So what – so DOD is outfitting its own boat, which will be staffed with DOD personnel who will do this?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'd have to check on the specifics of that. I think some of it may still be work – be going through the process of being worked out, Matt, because they've offered – but obviously, how it would be staffed and the materials and the money – I mean, all of those are pieces that are still being discussed.

**QUESTION:** Do you actually have a timeline and the location for where this would happen?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have a location. That's still being discussed. The timeline, as you know, is – the next deadline is – not deadline, it's a target – is December 31<sup>st</sup>. And that is to get all of the chemical weapons out. But in terms of when the next step would be, I don't have a timeline of that.

Anne.

**QUESTION:** I realize part of this is kind of DOD-flavored, but you might know the answer.

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

**QUESTION:** So is it proper to call this a warship, or is it a military-owned, but not non-warship ship?

(Laughter.)

**MS. PSAKI:** That is a very specific ship question. I would hesitate to answer incorrectly. I'd have to check on specifically how we categorize it. I don't believe it is a warship, but let me see if we can get more specification on how we – what we call it exactly.

**QUESTION:** Okay. And on the policy side, I mean, is there any disappointment here that after casting about to – for a friend here, it ends up being the U.S. having to essentially do this on its own?

**MS. PSAKI:** I wouldn't categorize it that way. I mean, certainly this is a priority for the U.S., as it is for the international community, to destroy and eliminate the chemical weapons. The OPCW is still talking to countries. There are countries that have made public comments about their willingness to help, so we'll see how that all shakes out. And certainly, we'd welcome the support or contribution of other countries.

**QUESTION:** Well, I'd imagine from your perspective, it should be a shared priority among many nations who would also share the same goal of the ultimate destruction, right? I mean, everybody was waving a flag when that – when the thing was signed.

**MS. PSAKI:** Certainly, and there are countries, as you know, throughout that have been open to contributing that couldn't for a variety of reasons, whether it's regulations or capacity or resources. But they're still talking to countries about contributing and being a part of this, and certainly we're hopeful of that as well.

**QUESTION:** So if the question is: "Are you surprised that you've been left holding the bag on this, once again," --

**MS. PSAKI:** We're not holding the bag yet, Matt.

**QUESTION:** -- the answer would be no, you're not surprised. You expected your friends in Europe to wimp out.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we made clear we were open to contributing from the beginning, Matt. There are other countries that have expressed an openness to contributing in some capacity. They're all going to make their decisions about what that will – what will – that will entail, and we'll let the OPCW decide how all of it will work together.

**QUESTION:** What about Russia, who you made this deal with and has been instrumental, as you say, in helping move this towards a resolution? Why can't Russia contribute in a significant way like you can?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not familiar with what they have contributed or what they've committed to contribute or what they have not. Obviously, there are financial ways – there are a number of ways to contribute. We certainly welcome any country's contribution. There are different ways that each country can do that.

**QUESTION:** Are you in touch with the Russians specifically about making an – a contribution?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not sure. I'd have to check on that and see if it's a discussion that's been a part of the regular discussions with Foreign Minister Lavrov.

**QUESTION:** Jen, still on Syria.

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

**QUESTION:** Yesterday, Mike Rogers, the chair of the Intelligence Committee, warned that there are many jihadis that are Americans and Europeans and Westerners and so on, that they go back and forth and so on. Are you concerned about these jihadis being trained in Syria and now they come back to the United States and perhaps organize terrorist acts?

**MS. PSAKI:** I haven't seen his comments specifically. I know – I believe he may have been on a Sunday show yesterday. I haven't read them fully. We've – we're naturally concerned, as you know, about extremists whether they're going in and certainly and if they're coming out. I talked a little bit, I think it was a week or two ago, about ways that we coordinate with our international partners in the region to kind of track this and efforts we undertake to make sure we're watching, but of course we're concerned. I don't have any other specifics for you.

**QUESTION:** Are you pressing your partners in this case, like the Saudis and the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, that have been supplying arms and money in the past for these extremist groups – are you pressing them not to do so?

**MS. PSAKI:** We have consistently, and all the countries, as you know, have agreed repeatedly to contribute assistance through the SMC.

**QUESTION:** Finally, yesterday there was a report in the *Telegraph*, *The London Telegraph*, that says basically the Free Syrian Army now is becoming a group of warlords and accumulating money and gangs and so on and have no interest, really, in reaching a settlement. Is that your assessment, or are you still working very closely with General Idris?

**MS. PSAKI:** We are still working very closely with General Idris, we're still working towards a Geneva conference in January, and we still believe there's no military solution, as you know.

More on Syria?

**QUESTION:** Still on Syria.

**MS. PSAKI:** Or – go ahead, Roz.

**QUESTION:** Still on Syria, the Iranian Foreign Minister Zarif did an interview with Al Jazeera this morning. And when it came to Geneva II, he said that while Iran is, quote: not begging to attend the talks in January, it would attend if invited. My first question: Would the U.S. be willing to invite Iran to take part in these talks? And if so, what does the U.S. believe that Iran could bring to this situation to try to end the civil war?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, no decisions have been made about participation yet. There's another trilateral meeting on December 20<sup>th</sup> coming up that we'll be participating in with the UN and the Russians. Our position hasn't changed on Iran's participation or whether we believe they should be invited. They have not endorsed the Geneva communique. That's a condition we feel is necessary, but obviously this will continue to be discussed at the next trilateral meeting.

**QUESTION:** But given the – that the UN is now estimating that upwards of 120-25,000 people may have been killed in the civil war to date --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- is there some sort of leverage that Tehran could bring to the table to try to induce the Assad regime to, if nothing else, stop the killing and try to at least put in some sort of ceasefire?

MS. PSAKI: Well, this goes back to the premise that attendees should be endorsing the Geneva communique, because that is what the purpose and the goal of the conference is. So, I don't have any speculation on what leverage they may or may not have, but the conversations we have had with them in recent weeks have been about their nuclear program and moving towards a first-step agreement on that. They've not been focused on Syria. And our position on whether or not they should attend the Geneva conference in January hasn't changed.

QUESTION: But you do feel that if they do endorse Geneva I, there's a great deal of value for Iran's participation --

MS. PSAKI: Well, we'd have to --

QUESTION: -- considering that it is --

MS. PSAKI: We'd have to evaluate it, Said. I don't want to get ahead of --

QUESTION: But it's a very ally of the regime. It supports other elements that help the regime in its fight, like Hezbollah so on.

MS. PSAKI: If that is a step they take, we can have a robust discussion in here about it.

QUESTION: Jen, are there any contacts currently between the United States Government and the Syrian regime? I mean, I know Secretary Kerry spoke months and months ago --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

QUESTION: -- to Foreign Minister Muallem. Is there anything going on at the moment?

MS. PSAKI: And we have for some time, as you know, have had different channels, but I don't have anything specific for you. I can check if there have been any recent contacts on any level.

QUESTION: So there were reports over the weekend that some European countries are quietly beginning to --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- reopen diplomatic conversations or channels with the Syrian regime because, I think, the fear is that this is just so blocked at the moment that they're --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- it's not going anywhere.

MS. PSAKI: Well, let me see if there have been any contacts at any level of the regime. We've -- they have happened in the past, as you mentioned, so I will see if there's more to report on that.

QUESTION: Can I go back to the Iranians and taking part in Geneva? I mean, I think over the last week or so, when there's been, like, various bouts of violence in Syria, that the Iranian Government has said that there needs to be a political solution to the situation in Syria. So don't you think that Iran is making more positive comments? I mean, I don't think the Russians have gone far beyond saying that there needs to be a political solution. They haven't said anything about President Assad leaving (inaudible).

MS. PSAKI: Well, the whole premise -- I mean the whole goal is to create a transitional governing body. That's the goal of a Geneva conference. So, certainly, they haven't embraced that as the focus of the Geneva communique, and --

QUESTION: Well, even though the Russians have agreed to a political transition, your definition of a transition is far different from the -- than the Russians' definition of a transition. So if the Iranians were to say, like, okay, we accept a political transition, I mean, does that really mean that they --

MS. PSAKI: It's not just about a political transition. It's about embracing the Geneva communique, which they have not done. If they do that, we will evaluate whether or not we'd support their -- an invitation to them to attend the conference.

QUESTION: Zarif also told us that his country is not interested in aggravating any sectarian tensions between Shiite and Sunni, between Alawite and other major Islamic communities; that they're trying to, in their efforts, promote more harmony, more peace. Does that add any -- does that change the complexion at all, particularly in Syria?

MS. PSAKI: I don't want to speak too specifically to an interview I haven't yet seen yet, and neither has anyone on our team. Broadly speaking, obviously we took a significant step forward with the first-step agreement on their nuclear program, but there are remaining concerns that we have, as you all are familiar with, whether it's their involvement in support of the regime in Syria or humanitarian issues, and so that has not changed that. I can take a closer look once we see the transcript of the interview and see if we have more comments on Foreign Minister Zarif's comments.

QUESTION: You're saying your team does not watch Al Jazeera?

MS. PSAKI: Well, that is not true; we do. However, I believe there's only been a very short clip that has played of this interview that I'm sure will get lots of attention once it all plays.

QUESTION: Beyond the interview, he's freely reaching out. He visited Kuwait. He's reaching out to the other Gulf countries. He wants to visit Saudi Arabia. I mean, there is an effort underway to alleviate their fears and actually encourage them towards participating in Geneva II to make it a success. You must have some sort of a reading of this effort.

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any particular reading of it for you, Said. Our position, I think, has been pretty clear on whether or not they attend the Geneva conference.

QUESTION: I have another really quick logistics thing. On the December 20<sup>th</sup> meeting, that's Wendy Sherman and that -- it's the same iteration?

MS. PSAKI: It is that level. Exactly, yes. Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Is that new or was that announced last week or something --

MS. PSAKI: I believe we talked about it last week as being the next meeting.

QUESTION: On China -- (inaudible).

QUESTION: Please, Jen, can we stay on Iran, please?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Let's stay on Iran and then we can go to China.

QUESTION: On the 6<sup>th</sup> of February in this room, I had a very brief exchange with your predecessor, Victoria Nuland --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- about Iran. And with your indulgence, I will read it in its entirety for the purpose of the record and so you can respond to it.

*"Rosen: There have been reports that intermittently, and outside of the formal P5+1 mechanisms, the Obama Administration, or members of it, have conducted direct secret bilateral talks with Iran. Is that true or false?"*

*"Nuland: We have made clear, as the Vice President did at Munich, that in the context of the larger P5+1 framework, we would be prepared to talk to Iran bilaterally. But with regard to the kind of thing that you're talking about on a government-to-government level, no."*

That's the entirety of the exchange.

As we now know, senior state department officials had, in fact, been conducting direct, secret bilateral talks with senior officials of the Iranian Government in Oman, perhaps dating back to 2011 by that point.

So the question today is a simple one: When the briefer was asked about those talks and flatly denied them from the podium, that was untrue, correct?

MS. PSAKI: I mean, James, I -- that -- you're talking about a February briefing, so 10 months ago. I don't think we've outlined or confirmed contacts or specifics beyond a March meeting. I'm not going to confirm others beyond that at this point. So I don't know that I have any more for you.

QUESTION: Do you stand by the accuracy of what Ms. Nuland told me, that there had been no government-to-government contacts, no secret direct bilateral talks with Iran as of the date of that briefing, February 6<sup>th</sup>? Do you stand by the accuracy of that?

MS. PSAKI: James, I have no new information for you today on the timing of when there were any discussions with any Iranian officials.

QUESTION: Let me try it one last way, Jen --

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

QUESTION: -- and I appreciate your indulgence.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

QUESTION: Is it the policy of the State Department, where the preservation or the secrecy of secret negotiations is concerned, to lie in order to achieve that goal?

MS. PSAKI: James, I think there are times where diplomacy needs privacy in order to progress. This is a good example of that. Obviously, we have made clear and laid out a number of details in recent weeks about discussions and about a bilateral channel that fed into the P5+1 negotiations, and we've answered questions on it, we've confirmed details. We're happy to continue to do that, but clearly, this was an important component leading up to the agreement that was reached a week ago.

QUESTION: Since you, standing at that podium last week, did confirm that there were such talks, at least as far back as March of this year, I don't see what would prohibit you from addressing directly this question: Were there secret direct bilateral talks between the United States and Iranian officials in 2011?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything more for you today. We've long had ways to speak with the Iranians through a range of channels, some of which you talked – you mentioned, but I don't have any other specifics for you today.

QUESTION: One more on Iran?

QUESTION: The Los Angeles Times and Politico have reported that those talks were held as far back as 2011. Were those reports inaccurate?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not sure which reports you're talking about. Are you talking about visits that the Secretary and others made to Oman, or are you talking about other reports?

QUESTION: I'm talking about U.S. officials meeting directly and secretly with Iranian officials in Oman as far back as 2011. The Los Angeles Times and Politico have reported those meetings. Were those reports inaccurate?

MS. PSAKI: I have nothing more for you on it, James, today.

QUESTION: One more on Iran?

MS. PSAKI: On Iran? Let's just finish Iran and then we can go to China. Go ahead, Roz.

QUESTION: One of – one more on Iran. Foreign Minister Zarif said, directly contradicting the Obama Administration's contention that sanctions worked, he told our interviewer that when the sanctions were first imposed, Iran had 200 working centrifuges. Today, they have more than 19,000. What is this building's reaction to his comment that sanctions did not work and did not bring Iran to the negotiating table?

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, I would like to look more closely at the context of the comments. But, just as reminder, President Rouhani and others have talked about how the impact – how growing the economy and putting an end – doing – bringing an end to the sanctions is something that was a priority for them in order to help the economy and the Iranian people. There's no question, if you look just at the facts of the impact of oil revenues, the impact on their economic growth writ large that there was a huge impact of – that there – the sanctions had an enormous impact, and that that was a driving factor in bringing the Iranians back to the negotiating table.

In terms of progress made on their efforts to develop a nuclear weapon, whether through centrifuges or at their various facilities, that to me sounds like a separate question. Obviously, there was concerns about steps they were taking and progress they were making, which was why it was so important to come to an acceptable agreement that would halt and roll back the progress of their program.

QUESTION: Just to follow up on that, though –

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: – Secretary Kerry, when he did his round robin of interviews after the announcement of the deal in Geneva, more than once stated that when Iran had reached out to the Bush-Cheney Administration in 2003, Iran was only in possession of 164 centrifuges. Now, he would go on to say, they have 19,000, and this therefore represents the best possible deal that could be secured.

Isn't it a fact that since the Obama-Biden Administration took office, 70 percent of Iran's centrifuges have been installed?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I'd have to look at the statistics, James, but we have not questioned the fact that Iran has made progress on enrichment and on developing a nuclear weapon. We have not questioned that. That's one of the reasons why we stepped up sanctions over the past couple of years. The President and Secretary Kerry were big proponents of that. We worked with the international community to do just that to put that necessary pressure in place.

The point I was trying to make to Roz is that – what she's asking sounds to me like two separate questions, so that was –

QUESTION: Right. I'm pursuing the separate one part that she carved out, and that is to say – and if this is untrue, I'd be grateful to be disabused of the notion – but the great bulk of Iran's progress in the development of its enrichment program has taken place under President Obama's watch, correct?

MS. PSAKI: I'd have to check on the specific numbers. The –

QUESTION: You're not prepared to dispute that statement, as –

MS. PSAKI: Well, James, I think what we're focused on at this point is the fact that we're now at a point where we are halting and rolling back the progress of their program and we're working towards a comprehensive agreement to bring an end to it. I can't speculate for you what would happen without – what would have happened without sanctions. I would venture to guess –

QUESTION: (Inaudible) sanctions.

MS. PSAKI: But they were being paired together, so that's why I'm bringing it into the conversation.

**QUESTION:** But the context of the question was exactly: "The Obama Administration says we showed up because our economy is falling apart. I'm here to tell you that's not the case. We have our own reasons for coming."

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we will take a close look at his comments and we'll have more to say about them once we do.

**QUESTION:** Can I just go back to the Geneva meeting and --

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** -- December 20<sup>th</sup> with Wendy Sherman?

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

**QUESTION:** This is --

**MS. PSAKI:** It's that level -- in terms of specific attendance, I'll have to just double-check that for you.

**QUESTION:** Oh, okay.

**MS. PSAKI:** Yeah.

**QUESTION:** This is going to be the first of the political meetings towards the next -- the comprehensive agreement --

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

**QUESTION:** -- or this is the technical discussions?

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

**QUESTION:** No, this is Syria.

**MS. PSAKI:** This is -- sorry, this is Syria.

**QUESTION:** Oh, I'm sorry.

**MS. PSAKI:** This is Syria.

**QUESTION:** Excuse me. I'm sorry.

**MS. PSAKI:** So this is the pre-Geneva. No, it's okay. It's confusing. Lots of Genevas.

**QUESTION:** Okay. But I did have an Iran question, actually.

**QUESTION:** But is there any new -- I mean --

**QUESTION:** Yeah.

**QUESTION:** -- when is it that you're going to start to negotiate the comprehensive deal with Iran?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, right now, what we're focused on is the technical discussions leading up to the start of the six-month --

**QUESTION:** Right.

**QUESTION:** So do you have a date for those?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't yet have a date on those.

**QUESTION:** Or a place?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't yet have a place. It's being worked through. Hopefully we'll have an update for you all in the coming days.

**QUESTION:** And can I ask -- I don't know if you had seen the reports that the new British envoy to Iran is actually going to visit Tehran tomorrow. I wondered what the --

**MS. PSAKI:** I haven't seen that.

**QUESTION:** Well, I wanted a U.S. reaction to this following on to the question I asked last week about how far along the line you are prepared to go with your new diplomatic relations or not with Iran.

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm. I still don't have any prediction of any step beyond what step we've already taken, which is being a part of the P5+1 agreement on the first step here with Iran. Obviously, different countries are going to make their own decisions, and as with most issues, we certainly support that.

**QUESTION:** Would it be helpful, though? Do you believe it's helpful that the British envoy could be going to Tehran?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't know that I have that level of analysis on it. I don't have all the details on what the purpose of the trip is or what they hope to accomplish. And obviously, every country will make their own decisions about diplomatic relationships.

**QUESTION:** Jen, one more on the --

**QUESTION:** East China Sea?

**QUESTION:** -- secret negotiations with Iran.

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

**QUESTION:** I apologize if you've already addressed this, but there have been reports that the secret negotiations that the U.S. was engaging in with Iran created a feeling of resentment among P5+1 allies such as France, and then that contributed to a rift among the P5+1 and made it difficult to reach consensus within that group. Do you have a reaction to that or a comment on that?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't want to speak to anonymous reports about what may or may not be the feelings by other countries, but I will reiterate for you that this was – these discussions were fed into the P5+1 process. That is the process that we ultimately all worked through to achieve a first-step agreement here. The P5+1 members, as well as our friends in Israel, were briefed early this fall.

As to the discussions, we have always been clear we've been open to bilateral discussions with Iran; that there are a range of channels to do that through; that if anything got serious, that we would certainly be briefing our important partners on that; and that's exactly what we did in this case.

**QUESTION:** Jen --

**QUESTION:** And when did the talks begin?

**MS. PSAKI:** James, you're so tricky over there. (Laughter.)

**QUESTION:** Can I ask about China?

**MS. PSAKI:** Let me just say one thing, though, for James. It's important here too – and then I promise we'll go to China – it's important here also to note, though, that these really picked up after President Rouhani's election, that in terms of the discussion of specific pieces about how to move forward, what kind of – what an agreement could look like, that's when it picked up. So I understand that's not answering your question, but I felt it was important to --

**QUESTION:** But just on the basis of methodology and removing the specifics of Iran and who's president or who's Secretary of State, if you were able to stand there at the podium last week and say, "Yes, I'm confirming a certain set of talks that occurred in March," explain to me what is it that prohibits you from saying, yes or no, that a certain set of talks occurred two years ago?

**MS. PSAKI:** If I have more details for you, James, I will – happy to share them.

**QUESTION:** I didn't ask you – I'm asking for your thinking about why you're not addressing the question, not the specifics of the meetings. What is it that prohibits you from addressing a question about meetings that are two years old?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not going to do a psychiatrist chair today.

Go ahead. On China?

**QUESTION:** What about the couch? (Laughter.)

**QUESTION:** Thank you, Jen. So as we know, the U.S. Government has already told U.S. carriers to comply with China's requirements before any flights pass through the new air defense zone established by the Chinese Government. So does that mean the U.S. Government has recognized this new air defense zone established by the Chinese Government?

**MS. PSAKI:** So let me be absolutely as clear as I can be here because I know there's been a range of reporting. It has been – some of it has been inaccurate, to no fault of – perhaps it's our fault for not explaining it well enough. So we are not – the State Department is not the point of contact with airlines. The FAA is the point of contact with airlines. There has not been any information that has been put out or confirmed that I am aware of that has conveyed what has or has not been communicated in that capacity to airlines.

There is – for safety and security of passengers, U.S. carriers operate internationally – operate consistently as a process with the notices to airmen issued by foreign countries, as is the case in this case. Their concerns are about the safety and security of passengers. That is different from what the U.S. Government policy is. It is not – this in no way indicates U.S. Government acceptance of China's requirements in the newly declared ADIZ and has absolutely no bearing on the firm and consistent U.S. Government position that we do not accept the legitimacy of China's requirements.

This is a case where China announced this in an uncoordinated fashion. It's inconsistent with standard practice. And their requirements for operating exceed internationally accepted practice in this capacity. So I don't know how much more clear that it is, but it does contradict a bit your question, so I wanted --

**QUESTION:** It looks like we received the statement or the Q&A from the State Department, so it looks like it's from the U.S. Government. And also, you are saying --

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, in that statement, which I certainly was well aware of, what was conveyed in there is that for safety and – for the safety and security of passengers, U.S. carriers operate consistently internationally with the notices to airmen issued by foreign governments. It did not convey that – anything specific about what had been communicated to airlines. It did not convey that the U.S. Government supported this effort. So I'm very familiar with the statement you're referring to, and there were a lot of – there were some assumptions made.

**QUESTION:** So (inaudible) --

**QUESTION:** Okay. It looks like --

**QUESTION:** -- that the FAA did not instruct airlines to comply with the Chinese regulations?

MS. PSAKI: I would point you to the FAA for what they did or did not communicate to commercial airlines.

QUESTION: Okay. Well, the FAA is part of the U.S. Government, is it not?

MS. PSAKI: They are. They --

QUESTION: Yes.

MS. PSAKI: Certainly, they are not housed in the State Department, however. (Laughter.)

QUESTION: So -- I understand that, but the State Department does have a representative -- you're familiar with the ICAO?

MS. PSAKI: I am not.

QUESTION: Okay. It's in Montreal.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

QUESTION: It's a good excuse to get to Montreal --

MS. PSAKI: Good.

QUESTION: -- if you ever want to go up there.

MS. PSAKI: I will take that advice.

QUESTION: It's the International Civilian -- it's the civilian airline -- the UN agency for airlines. Do you know if the United States is going to use its membership in the ICAO to oppose this Chinese decision?

MS. PSAKI: I don't.

QUESTION: And if you don't know, could you ask?

MS. PSAKI: Yeah, I'm happy to check on that for you, Matt. Absolutely.

QUESTION: And when you say that the U.S. Government does not accept the legitimacy of the Chinese requirements --

MS. PSAKI: Well, it doesn't accept -- yeah, the Chinese requirements, right.

QUESTION: Right. That's what you said.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Doesn't that -- if the FAA has been telling airlines that they have to comply with this, or that they should comply with it, how is that not accepting -- the government accepting the legitimacy?

MS. PSAKI: Well, there's a whole field of regulations and regulatory policy that I am certainly far from an aviation expert, as it evidenced by your Montreal question. So I would point you to them on that.

Evidence of the fact that the U.S. Government does not accept China's requirement is by the fact that the announcement will not change how the United States conducts military operations in the region, which is something DOD announced last week. And that is certainly a U.S. Government decision to make.

QUESTION: So does that mean that U.S. Government planes will not obey the -- or will not follow the Chinese requirements if they're flying through this airspace?

MS. PSAKI: Military planes?

QUESTION: Say the Secretary of State flying on an Air Force plane to Seoul or to Tokyo will not notify the --

MS. PSAKI: I am not aware of any upcoming Seoul trip coming up.

QUESTION: Well, the Vice President is there right now, or in Tokyo, at least. Are you saying that his plane, an Air Force plane, will not follow the requirements of the Chinese?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I am saying military planes would not, and that level of specificity I'd certainly have to check and see where that falls in.

QUESTION: What is this episode -- what impact is this episode having on U.S.-Sino relations?

MS. PSAKI: There are times when we agree and there are times when we disagree, as you know. We've made clear our concerns about not only what was announced but how this was announced, the fact that there was no prior notice. As you also know, Vice President Biden is in the region now on a prior planned trip. He will, of course, be meeting with key leaders to discuss a range of issues. Certainly, this could be a topic of discussion, but there are a number of other issues that we discuss both with China and other partners in the region.

QUESTION: And has the pivot to Asia worked? Is this evidence of the pivot working?

MS. PSAKI: I wouldn't categorize this into -- I wouldn't put this in the evaluation category of whether or not it worked. Our pivot to Asia, or rebalance to Asia, means focusing on Asia and the important partnership we have with Asia, with countries in the region, the economic and strategic partners. And nothing is further evidence of that than the Vice President's trip there, the fact that, as you know, the Secretary will be going back to Asia soon, that he was just there a couple of months ago with Secretary Hagel. So that is evidence of our commitment to the region. And we work with them on a -- countries in the region on a broad range of issues.

**QUESTION:** But as we survey the last five years of this Administration, would you say that China is less aggressive in its serial commission of human rights abuses, currency manipulation, cyber warfare against U.S. businesses and government, territorial aggression, or is it better than it used to be?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not going to do an evaluation of that. Obviously, we work with them on economic issues, we work with them on strategic issues. There are still issues, including human rights, including this issue we're talking about now, that we express concerns about when warranted, and we'll continue to do that. But we know that the relationship is a vital one and one that we need to keep plugging away at even when we disagree.

**QUESTION:** Jen, could I (inaudible) for a second?

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

**QUESTION:** Is it fair to characterize the U.S. position as being that aside from the official policy, for the purposes of safety and avoiding some kind of unfortunate incident, that commercial carriers should abide by the Chinese ADIZ requirements?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have -- I'd point you again to the FAA on more specifics than what I just conveyed. There are a range of regulations and policies that, of course, they oversee or are in place, but our general position as a U.S. Government is that we don't accept China's requirements. And obviously, the military -- actions of military exercises is evidence of that.

**QUESTION:** Jen, this comes from --

**QUESTION:** Sorry, sorry. Just a quick follow-up on that.

**MS. PSAKI:** Go ahead.

**QUESTION:** It looks like the two main U.S. airlines are complying with -- are taking steps to comply. Delta and United are the two that have flight routes through the area, which seems to have kind of created a little bit of confusion/consternation in Japan over a perceived rift with Japanese policy, which is to not allow U.S. commercial airliners to file their flight plans with China. Do you have a -- do you have any kind of reassurance or any kind of response to that?

**MS. PSAKI:** We coordinate closely with Japan and with South Korea and all of the countries in the region about a range of issues. And certainly on this issue, we have been in touch with Japan and will continue to be. This is -- for specific actions of individual commercial airliners, I would point you to them or the FAA on any regulations.

**QUESTION:** But -- so you're not -- but you're not afraid for the safety or concerned about the safety of U.S. citizens on flights that are flying through the area?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, certainly safety and security of citizens should be of concern to everyone. Obviously, there are policies in place and regulations in place because of that. But we don't oversee airline regulations. The FAA does, so I would point you to them.

**QUESTION:** (Inaudible.) Did the United States Government -- the position has changed toward this ADIZ, or not changed? What is the position to ADIZ now?

**MS. PSAKI:** It has not changed. We -- China announced the ADIZ without prior consultations even though the newly-announced ADIZ overlaps with parts of longstanding ADIZs of Japan, the Republic of Korea, and Taiwan, and includes territory administered by Japan. As I mentioned, we -- the fact that China's announcement has caused confusion and increased the risk of accidents only further underscores the validity of concerns and the need for China to rescind the procedures. It's consistently been our position and one we have communicated both publicly and privately. I know there was some confusion over the weekend about airlines and specifically.

**QUESTION:** Jen, you said that you are not still -- not accepting China's new air defense zone. But I wonder, like, Japan has its own air defense zone, and also part of it covers Taiwan. But it looks like the U.S. doesn't say anything about it. So do you think there is sort of a double standard? Why do you react so strongly to China's air defense zone?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, one of the reasons is that they announced this without prior consultations. It was inconsistent with longstanding procedure and process. And obviously, it overlaps with a number of other longstanding air defense zones of some other neighboring countries.

**QUESTION:** Jen --

**QUESTION:** Jen, you do not contest the ability of China to declare such a identification zone; it's just the manner in which they did it, or the extent?

**MS. PSAKI:** No. I think I have -- I've just consistently said that we believe they should rescind the procedures. I've just -- I've also stated a couple of times that we don't accept China's requirements. So I think I've made that pretty clear.

**QUESTION:** (Inaudible.)

**QUESTION:** Is the first --

**QUESTION:** In response to the – China's declaration of its own ADIZ, the South Korean Government is poised to expand its own ADIZ, so-called KADIZ, to the South China Sea. What is the position of the United States? Would you encourage it or discourage it?

**MS. PSAKI:** I haven't seen those reports, or I don't even know if they're reports or if there's been an announcement. I haven't seen any announcement, I guess I should say. So let me check into that, and --

**QUESTION:** They say they have already started consultations with the United States.

**MS. PSAKI:** I'd have to check into it and see if we have more to say on that.

**QUESTION:** Is this the first time the U.S. has called --

**QUESTION:** Jennifer, you talk about safety --

**QUESTION:** -- for the zone to be rescinded?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'd have to check on that for you, Roz.

**QUESTION:** Can we change topic?

**QUESTION:** No.

**QUESTION:** You talk about safety. Are you really concerned that the Chinese may down an airliner or something?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not predicting that, but certainly there is -- they created these Air Defense Identification Zones, they've asked for prior flight plans. So of course, the security and safety is part of the regulatory process, and -- but I don't have any predictions. It's just the question of abiding by it.

**QUESTION:** Is it a real concern, downing an airliner?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't think I have any more for you on that question.

**QUESTION:** Jen, when you're taking that question that Roz had --

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** -- could you also check whether the United States actually is directly asking the Chinese to rescind it?

**MS. PSAKI:** Happy to. Sure.

**QUESTION:** Thank you.

**QUESTION:** Well, at least --

**QUESTION:** Apart from the specific concerns about how this was announced without any prior notice, its excessiveness, at least in terms of other regulations, and the safety risks that you say it cause, do you have any -- are there broader concerns about this area being identified as essentially the entire East China Sea? Is the U.S. concerned that the Chinese are looking at anything on a map that has the word "China" in it as all their own?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, part of the concern is certainly that it overlaps with parts of other --

**QUESTION:** Right. But in terms of territorial claims --

**MS. PSAKI:** As well as territory administered by Japan, sure.

**QUESTION:** Right, right. But in terms of China's territorial claims, are you concerned that this is the first step or could be a first step towards actually moving in some kind of forceful way to take control of areas of territory and ocean maritime space that it says that it owns?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I don't want to make a prediction of that.

**QUESTION:** No, but I'm asking if you were concerned --

**MS. PSAKI:** But --

**QUESTION:** -- that this is a step in that direction, apart from the specific problems with the no prior notice and all that other -- the safety concerns.

**MS. PSAKI:** But one of the specific problems is also that this includes area -- territory administered by Japan, it includes overlapping area with other countries in the region. So certainly, that does touch on what your question is here. In terms of a prediction of what it will mean in the future, I certainly wouldn't venture to make that at this point.

**QUESTION:** Right. Well, the Chinese say that they would be well within their rights also to declare one of these zones over the entire -- over the South China Sea. Are you concerned about the possibility of that?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, you're familiar with what our position is on that, and we've long --

**QUESTION:** Well, that's over the territorial disputes over the -- it's a question of sovereignty for these little atolls and bits of rock.

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

**QUESTION:** Would you be as opposed as you are to this if the Chinese did it for the South China Sea, or is that a hypothetical question that you will wait to bash the Chinese over the head for once they -- if and when they do it?

**MS. PSAKI:** It is a hypothetical question at this stage in time.

QUESTION: All right.

QUESTION: One more thing. Just one more thing on that. China at the same time has announced they sent a fighter jet against United States and Japanese aircraft last week. Did you comment on that?

MS. PSAKI: I am not familiar with that specific report. In -- where, exactly?

QUESTION: If it's true, are you concerned about these Chinese announcement?

MS. PSAKI: I'd have to look at the specific report, and that may be a DOD question.

James.

QUESTION: Given that China makes this declaration --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- and we regard it as thoroughly problematic, if not illegal, and therefore we have on our hands a dispute with the Chinese --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- which is to be adjudicated somehow in a nonviolent way, wasn't it a kind of a provocative act for the United States to fly B-52s through that very zone in a short time thereafter?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would point you to DOD on that, but I would reiterate the fact that we have made clear that this action, this announcement, is not going to change our military exercises. And that is an example of that.

QUESTION: So other than taking -- other than the Vice President, are you aware -- or has there been at this point any conversations that you're aware of in this -- from this building with the Chinese directly? It's kind of on Jill's question. And if not, do you expect them or is this going to be left up to the Vice President when he goes to --

MS. PSAKI: Let me check. I know we have expressed concerns. I mentioned this last week, Matt, so let me just make sure you have it.

QUESTION: Jen, the -- Secretary Kerry did meet on Wednesday with a senior Chinese official?

MS. PSAKI: I'd have to --

QUESTION: On Wednesday, the vice premier.

QUESTION: Lu.

QUESTION: Yeah.

MS. PSAKI: I'd have to look back at that. It seems like a long time ago.

QUESTION: I know it does. And it was happening on Wednesday.

MS. PSAKI: Deputy Secretary Burns met last week with a Chinese official where this was a topic of discussion. Also, Assistant Secretary Russel spoke with the ambassador about a week ago, and Ambassador Locke has also been in touch, of course, on the ground. In terms of specific contacts over the last couple of days, I'm happy to check and see what else we can read out for all of you.

QUESTION: Are you taking this to the UN in any forum there?

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

QUESTION: New topic?

QUESTION: So it's strictly a bilateral or a multilateral thing, but outside the auspices of the UN is how you're going to seek to resolve it?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I don't have anything for you on it at this point. We're taking this day by day. I conveyed for you what we've done and what we've communicated. But obviously, we're taking steps day by day.

QUESTION: But is that a kind of -- is that a consideration?

MS. PSAKI: Not that I'm aware of, Elise. But obviously, we're taking this day by day.

QUESTION: Can we change --

QUESTION: New subject?

MS. PSAKI: Sure, Jill. Go ahead.

QUESTION: I'm still on China. Can you actually clarify this? China's argument is that we institute the ADIZ that other countries have already instituted. If you're saying that China does not have a right to do that, they can say, well, what's good for the goose is good for the gander. And it doesn't seem like you have a legal foot to stand on. If you're opposed to the way in which they did it or the extent of it, these can be a subject of debate. And China has said we can get rid of our ADIZ if the Japanese get rid of theirs. I mean, something like that could happen. But somehow -- are you really saying that you do not accept -- you do not give China the right to declare a defense identification zone?

MS. PSAKI: I think I've thoroughly outlined what our concerns are, so I'm not sure I have much more to add to your question.

QUESTION: Just on another topic, Jen – sorry.

MS. PSAKI: Well, we were going to go to Jill next, and then I'm happy to go to you.

QUESTION: North Korea?

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

QUESTION: Merrill Newman.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: You've seen probably, or read at least, his so-called confession. Do you have any comments about that, any reaction? And what is the latest on his status?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the latest is – and let me do this first and then I'll do the second part. On November 30<sup>th</sup>, North Korea permitted the Embassy of Sweden, our protecting power, to consular access to Merrill Newman. It – and given his advanced age and health conditions, we continue to urge North Korea to release him so he may return home and reunite with his family.

We, of course, have seen the Korean Central News Agency report regarding Mr. Newman's detention. According to the report, he apologized for the misunderstanding that led him – led to his detention. We don't have any other further information regarding the reason for his detention. But again, given his age and health, we continue to call for North Korea to release him as quickly as possible.

QUESTION: Do you believe that the North Korean – that that apology was – that he wrote and that was released by the North Koreans – do you believe that he wrote that of his own volition and that he – and do you have reason to believe that all of those things in that apology are true?

MS. PSAKI: We just don't have any other further analysis. We've seen the same reports all of you have seen, of course, about his interview and the publication of that, but I don't have any other further analysis on it.

QUESTION: Are you aware if that – the subject of his quote, unquote "confession" came up in the meeting with the Swedes?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything more on it, but I'm happy to check and see if there's more detail we can outline for all of you.

QUESTION: Did the Swedes as for and did Mr. Newman sign a PAW?

MS. PSAKI: A Privacy Act waiver?

QUESTION: Correct.

MS. PSAKI: Yes, he did. That is why I am able to talk about him now.

QUESTION: Okay. So then if – since he has signed the waiver, would you take it back to your – whoever it is that liaises with the Swedes on this --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: I assume it's EAP, but I guess it could also be EUR – and find out if Mr. Newman, in his discussions with the Swedes, talked at all about or said that he had freely made this alleged confession and when it was that he recorded this or when it --

MS. PSAKI: I am happy to take that and see if there's more we can share.

Go ahead, Lesley.

QUESTION: Also, did the Swedes report back in what condition he is in? Has he been tortured? Anything today? And how long did they meet with him, and was it in a jail? Was it in a --

QUESTION: Guest house.

QUESTION: -- government – a guest house?

QUESTION: A jailhouse guest house.

MS. PSAKI: A guest house. I don't have many specifics on that. I'm happy to also check with Matt's questions and to see if there's more we can share on that as well.

QUESTION: But didn't it include a --

QUESTION: But they did say – the Swedes did say that he --

QUESTION: -- physical examination of him?

QUESTION: The Swedes did, I think, say that he was --

MS. PSAKI: I believe they've spoken publicly about it.

QUESTION: -- that he was treated – that's he's being treated (inaudible), right?

MS. PSAKI: Right. I've seen those comments as well. So I don't have any other specifics on it, but if there's more we share beyond what they've said publicly, I'm happy --

**QUESTION:** Including whether or not there was a physical examination of him during this consular access?

**QUESTION:** I just want to get back to his confession. I mean, it is kind of written in language that kind of fits the narrative that North Korea has been saying, and I'm just wondering if you think that he wrote this. Are you -- I mean, there's often times that you would say, like, oh this person seemed under duress --

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

**QUESTION:** -- or something like that. So I mean, I'm just -- about this particular confession, do you have any reason to believe that he did not confess to all of those things?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't -- I certainly understand why you're asking. I don't have any particular analysis on it at this stage. I will see if this is something that our team is looking into, and if there's more we can say about it specifically.

**QUESTION:** And what is this building doing to secure his release beyond calling for his release from imprisonment? I mean, Ambassador King had tried months ago to go --

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

**QUESTION:** -- for the other American under detention, Kenneth Bae. What's actually being done to get them out?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, our Swedish protecting power just visited with him two days ago, and obviously that's an important component of reaching out to citizens who are detained in North Korea. We certainly do continue to call for his release. I don't have any other predictions or announcements on travel or visits of other officials at this point to tell you about.

**QUESTION:** But beyond those consular visits, I mean, is there any outreach to the Chinese specially on behalf of Mr. Newman?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have more I can outline for all of you, but I can check and see if there is any more to tell.

**QUESTION:** Have they been helpful the past with Kenneth Bae or with others? The Chinese (Inaudible)?

**MS. PSAKI:** They have been helpful, but there's not more specifics I can outline.

**QUESTION:** Through the Swedes are elsewhere, has North Korea communicated any demands or requests of the United States that have to do with Newman or -- as a prelude to his possible release?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have any more specifics on the contact with the Swedes and kind of what the discussion entailed beyond confirming --

**QUESTION:** Well, any -- in any forum, have they asked for anything from the United States?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have any details on it. I am happy to check if there's any more to share with all of you.

**QUESTION:** But you guys are in touch with the North Koreans directly, just to confirm?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we -- as you know, we've long had a channel, but we've been working in this case through our Swedish protective -- protecting power.

**QUESTION:** But you have been in touch with the North Koreans specifically on his matter?

**MS. PSAKI:** On this specific case, not that I'm aware of, but I'm happy to check if there's anything more on that.

**QUESTION:** Are you in touch with Mr. Newman's family?

**MS. PSAKI:** We are. We have been. Let me see if I have the detail of when we last spoke with him -- with his family. I don't have that detail for you. I'm happy to put that in the pocket of things I'm going to check on.

**QUESTION:** And have they asked for you to help facilitate any kind of visit by them to North Korea, given that this gentleman's actually -- I mean, he's quite elderly --

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

**QUESTION:** -- so you would imagine that if -- there would be concern enough to try and travel to visit him.

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm. I'm not aware of a request that they've made about that specifically, but we can see.

**QUESTION:** So all the attention, really, is on this Mr. Newman. But as we've said, Kenneth Bae has been held for quite a long time.

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm. You're right.

**QUESTION:** So in your efforts working with the Swedes or working to try and get the release, I mean, are you emphasizing because of Mr. Newman's age and health that you need to get him out right away, or are they part of a package that you think that they --

**MS. PSAKI:** I mean, we'd certainly like to see them both released as quickly as possible. In terms of that level of detail, I just don't have that.

**QUESTION:** These American citizens being held against their will in a rogue state, they're hostages, right?

**MS. PSAKI:** I mean, they're being held by the governments. The governments have confirmed that, so I don't know that I need to categorize it further, James.

**QUESTION:** You don't regard them as hostages?

MS. PSAKI: Do we have another topic?

QUESTION: Yes. Could I move onto the --

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

QUESTION: -- the Secretary's trip.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Okay. The portion to the West Bank and to Israel.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

QUESTION: Yes. If you have more to share with us -- today or yesterday, President Abbas, the president of the Palestinian Authority, was so impressed with the Geneva success, now he's suggesting a format, perhaps another Geneva, where the Palestinian-Israeli issue could be resolved. Would you look kindly at this suggestion?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I haven't seen those comments from him specifically. I know this has been an idea floated out there. Our focus remains on the direct negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians. We're a facilitator in that effort. There are certainly a number of countries who have a great investment and great interest in the success -- in a successful outcome here, including the Arab League, including many other countries that want to contribute to growing the Palestinian economy. But that's our focus, not on planning yet another conference.

QUESTION: And a Palestinian member of the Israeli Knesset, Mr. Ahmed Tibi, claims that the 20,000 housing that the Israelis announced and they put on hold were actually not put on hold, that there is -- construction is ongoing. Do you have any information on that?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything new on that. I'd have to look into that for you.

Scott?

QUESTION: (Inaudible.)

MS. PSAKI: Oh.

QUESTION: Can we stay on stay on that?

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

QUESTION: Just on this idea of not necessarily a Geneva-type conference for the peace process, but just the idea of internationalizing the process, would the United States -- would the Administration object to an internationalization of the peace process?

MS. PSAKI: Well, it's hard to know exactly what that means. Obviously, as you all are well aware, there's direct negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians now. That's what our focus is on, so certainly that's not a path we're pursuing.

QUESTION: Well, I think that the point that -- right, it's not a path that you're pursuing --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- but the point that people who are suggesting that this might be a way to go, the point that they make is that the United States has been the sole and unique arbiter, mediator, facilitator, whatever you want to call it, of Israeli-Palestinian peace talks going back decades.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: And you haven't gotten anything out of it. There's been no success. It's been one failure after another. Is it perhaps not time to try something new, is the argument that these people would make.

MS. PSAKI: Well, Matt, obviously, many people are going to make different arguments about how it should proceed. We're less than halfway through the nine-month timeline here. There are a number of countries that are engaged and invested, including, of course, the Arab League, who, as you know, are in very close contact with the Palestinians and engaged in this effort. There are many who are engaged with the Israelis in this effort. So our focus remains on the direct negotiations, and I don't think we're at this point speculating on a different alternative forum.

QUESTION: Well, let me -- okay. Well, let me put it this way: Is it still the position of the Administration that the United States has unique leverage and influence with both sides that makes it the only logical or capable, competent, credible mediator for peace between Israel and the Palestinians?

MS. PSAKI: I don't know that we've ever stated it exactly like that. We're playing a facilitator role which both sides are comfortable with. There are other countries engaged with this effort and certainly in touch with the Israelis and the Palestinians. I expect that will continue. But in the meantime, we'll continue to play the facilitator role as long as it's productive.

**QUESTION:** Do you believe, does the Administration believe that the United States still has leverage and influence with Israel or the Palestinians? I mean, you say, in reference to other questions about, say, Mr. Newman or Mr. Bae in North Korea --

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

**QUESTION:** -- that the Chinese have influence with the North Koreans and you would like to go through them, maybe after you're done yelling at them about their air defense zone. But do you still think that the United States -- does the Administration believe that it has influence and leverage with either Israel or the Palestinians?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I think we have a close relationship with both. And obviously, we're at this point because both sides decided to come to the table. I don't think it's about leverage. There's -- it's in the interest of both sides to come to an agreement on the final status issues, and that's what they're working to do at this point.

**QUESTION:** Jen, could I just ask -- there was an agreement --

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** -- reached last week between the EU and Israel which will allow Israel to actually touch some funding for scientific research. There have been some problems, because the EU wanted to bar all research in areas of -- in the West Bank --

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

**QUESTION:** -- settlement areas in the West Bank. Is there an -- I mean, does the American -- do America -- does America believe that this is a good agreement for the EU and Israel, given that Secretary Kerry has always mentioned that he fears an increasing isolation of Israel on the international stage?

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm. I haven't talked to our team about it, so I'd have to talk to them and see if we have any particular view on the agreement last week.

**QUESTION:** And is -- what is the message that Secretary Kerry's going to be bringing with him when he visits Israel later on this week?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I think he'll be talking to both sides about the importance of staying firm with the timeline and working through the tough and difficult issues that they're doing at the negotiating table, and reiterating the importance of coming to a peaceful end to the final negotiations. And of course, when he's meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu, they'll certainly be discussing the recent P5+1 agreement with Iran and having an ongoing dialogue about that as well.

**QUESTION:** And have there been any meetings, direct talks between the Israelis and Palestinians, since the resignation of the Palestinian team?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have any updates on meetings at this point. I'll see if there's any more we want to provide to all of you in terms of specific meetings and timing of that.

**QUESTION:** But I mean, since the last time the Secretary's been there, there's been another announcement of new settlement construction.

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

**QUESTION:** There's been the resignation of the Palestinian -- it just seems that without him actually physically there holding their hand for hours at a time, that they're not able to sustain it on their own.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, they've had many meetings when he has not been there. So obviously, we didn't expect this to be easy. We certainly are aware of some bumps in the road of late, but both sides have also reaffirmed their commitment to seeing this through.

**QUESTION:** Would you really call those bumps in the road, though? I mean, particularly on the -- actually, on either side, whether it's the Israelis continuing to announce settlement construction or the Palestinians' full negotiating team just giving up, it just doesn't seem as if --

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, when the negotiating -- and that's a good example. The negotiating team -- President Abbas reaffirmed his own commitment to seeing this through --

**QUESTION:** But it just --

**MS. PSAKI:** -- whether it was them or whether it was other officials in their place. So they're continuing to move forward.

**QUESTION:** It just doesn't seem like they have the -- while they may have the desire and the dream that there'll be a peace deal. The motivation to actually do the hard work day in and day out doesn't seem to be there. And so it does seem as if Secretary Kerry is the one holding this together personally, and isn't there, like, a limit to how much he can do?

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure. That's why he has a team to help work through it every day.

**QUESTION:** Well, I meant more the parties themselves.

**MS. PSAKI:** You're right, but there also is a long timeframe we still have left. One of the reasons committing to the nine-month timeframe was so important is because we knew there would be challenging periods throughout the process. But both sides remain committed to that, and so we'll continue to work through it.

**QUESTION:** But it doesn't sound like – unless you could disabuse us of the notion, it doesn't sound like since Secretary Kerry's last trip in early November that there have actually been any direct talks.

**MS. PSAKI:** I wouldn't jump to that conclusion. We just have always said we wouldn't confirm every meeting.

**QUESTION:** Sure.

**MS. PSAKI:** So let me see if I can confirm any meetings since that point for all of you.

**QUESTION:** Jen, could you tell us if Ambassador Indyk is there now? Is he there? Is he in the region? Is he – Ambassador Indyk, where –

**MS. PSAKI:** He's here. I saw him this morning.

**QUESTION:** He's here. Okay.

**MS. PSAKI:** Okay. Let's just do one or two more here.

Scott.

**QUESTION:** What is the U.S. view of what's going on in Thailand right now?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we certainly deeply regret the loss of life in Bangkok due to politically motivated violence. We condemn violence as a means to achieve political objectives and urge all sides to exercise restraint and respect the rule of law. We are concerned about the continuing political tension in Thailand, and we are following the situation closely. Peaceful protest and freedom of expression are important aspects of democracy, of course. Violence and seizure of public or private property, however, are not acceptable means of resolving political differences. We firmly believe all parties should work together to resolve differences through peaceful dialogue in ways that strengthen democracy and rule of law.

Ambassador Kenney spoke with the prime minister and – has spoken with the prime minister and opposition leaders to also encourage restraint and peaceful dialogue. You may have also seen that the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok issued a security message for U.S. citizens in Thailand explaining that large political demonstrations may continue in coming days – in the coming days, including at government facilities, in and outside of central Bangkok, and is advising them to avoid areas of demonstration and to exercise caution.

**QUESTION:** Following his talk with the prime minister, one of the main opposition leaders said that he would accept nothing short of her resignation. Is that a responsible position in the eyes of the United States?

**MS. PSAKI:** We just continue to encourage all parties to work together to resolve their differences. We, of course, have seen his comments, but I don't think we're going to weigh in further at this point, aside from encouraging restraint on the ground.

**QUESTION:** Would you weigh in on the general amnesty bill that the ruling party failed to get through parliament, which was one of the instigations for this?

**MS. PSAKI:** I know – I don't know if I've spoken to that in the past, Scott. I'd have to – I don't have anything for you on it at this particular moment, but I'm happy to follow up post-briefing.

Okay, let's do two more here. In the back, you've been very patient.

**QUESTION:** Thank you. Michael Vincent from the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. What's the U.S. response to the Australian Government's rejection of the U.S. company Archer Daniels Midland's bid for GrainCorp?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we are disappointed by the Government of Australia's decision to reject Archer Daniels Midland's proposed acquisition of GrainCorp. We do not – we do note that the Australian Treasurer Joe Hockey has expressed openness to approving an increase in ADM's current share in GrainCorp. The United States is the largest foreign investor – foreign direct investor in Australia, with 132 billion in investment projects to date, and we look forward to working closely with Australia's government to build stronger ties and investment – stronger trade and investment ties.

**QUESTION:** Just a quick follow-up.

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

**QUESTION:** Did – unrelated matter, but has the U.S. Government accepted private medical, legal, or religious information on Australian citizens as offered by Australian intelligence agencies?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have anything further or anything for you on a range of reports. I'm certainly not going to comment on any of them. As you know, we're undergoing our own review of these processes, which we expect to conclude by the end of the year.

**QUESTION:** Jen, back to ADM for a second.

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

**QUESTION:** Did – was this issue, this proposed sale, bid by ADM raised at the AUSMIN ministerial meetings?

**MS. PSAKI:** It's a good question, Matt. I'd have to check. It wasn't one raised while I was there, but let me check and see if it was.

**QUESTION:** And if it was, did – was – were you given any indication that this is the way your closest antipodal ally was going to go?

**MS. PSAKI:** I will check and see if it was even raised.

Okay, let's do one more. Go ahead, Samir.

**QUESTION:** Do you have a reaction to the draft constitution in Egypt today?

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** Can I throw a Bahrain question at the end of that?

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure. Why not?

Well, we continue to track the constitutional process with interest, and we'll examine the document carefully once it is finalized and sent to President Mansour, which we understand will occur tomorrow. The Egyptian people, of course, will decide the fate of the draft constitution in a referendum. We will continue to support a transition process that leads to an inclusive civilian government selected through free, fair, and transparent elections, and civilian government based on the rule of law, fundamental freedoms, accountability, and an open and competitive economy. So we will see when it is transferred, and we will take a close look at it.

Bahrain.

**QUESTION:** Yeah. Do you have any view on the government --

**QUESTION:** A quick one on Egypt. Hold on. I'm sorry, Matt. You don't have any comment on the prohibition of religious parties in Egypt?

**MS. PSAKI:** Again, we'll wait to comment on it until it's been officially transferred. Obviously, there are steps in there we may be complimentary of and others we may not be.

**QUESTION:** Yes, please.

**QUESTION:** Does the decision of the – not to release this human rights campaigner when he was eligible to be released? It was yesterday or today.

**MS. PSAKI:** Let me see. I think I have something on this. One moment, Matt.

**QUESTION:** Mm-hmm. You can get it – if you just want to make it a TQ, that's fine.

**MS. PSAKI:** Yeah, that's fine. I believe I have something on it for you. Let's see. We continue to encourage Bahrain to take the necessary steps to promote reconciliation among Bahrainis, including permitting all sectors of society to voice their political views in a peaceful manner. We have seen reports that the head of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights Nabeel Rajab – is that who you're talking about – okay --

**QUESTION:** (Inaudible.)

**MS. PSAKI:** -- was denied early release today in Bahrain. We understand that he has served 18 months of his two-year prison sentence and is scheduled to be released in May of next year. We remain deeply concerned about the three-year prison sentence for leading illegal gatherings. We urge the Government of Bahrain to protect the universal rights of freedom of expression and assembly, just as we urge all elements of Bahraini society to engage in peaceful expressions of political opinion.

**QUESTION:** Do you think that he should've been released as was – as he could've been today?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I believe we are concerned about his – we were concerned about his three-year prison sentence, I believe. Let me check and see, but I believe that's what we're implying here.

**QUESTION:** I mean, this is not the first. I mean, there have been several other opposition activists and so forth that have been detained. I mean, does this cast doubt on your encouraging words earlier in the year about Bahrain's commitment to political reforms?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, we certainly are encouraging them to take some step – to take necessary steps to promote reconciliation. And obviously, each time that there is a case like this, we have expressed concern. So I don't have any analysis as to what that will mean longer-term or about the overall relationship, but each time there has been an incident, we have certainly expressed our concern.

**QUESTION:** Well, but each time – you say each time that there's been an incident. I mean, there's a pattern of incidents. I mean, does that say something about their actual commitment to reforms?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I don't have any more analysis on it for you.

Thanks, everyone.

QUESTION: Thank you.

(The briefing was concluded at 3:18 p.m.)

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