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Friday, March 13, 2015
1:02 p.m. EST
Briefer: Jen Psaki, Spokesperson

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
DAILY PRESS BRIEFING

DPB # 43

FRIDAY, MARCH 13, 2015
(ON THE RECORD UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED)

1:02 p.m. EDT

MS. PSAKI: Hi, everyone.

QUESTION: Hello.

MS. PSAKI: All right. Happy Friday.

QUESTION: Yes, Friday the 13th again.

MS. PSAKI: Again. That is true.

QUESTION: Tomorrow is Pi Day.

MS. PSAKI: That's a lot.

QUESTION: And Sunday is the Ides of March.

MS. PSAKI: Wow. Monday? Do you have one for Monday?

QUESTION: No. (Laughter.) Monday is just --

MS. PSAKI: It's disappointing.

QUESTION: -- the 16th.

MS. PSAKI: Tuesday is St. Patrick's Day.

QUESTION: This would have been a great day to do an outdoor briefing.

MS. PSAKI: It would have been. We'll consider that for next week.

QUESTION: Is that a thing that happens?

MS. PSAKI: I don't know that it's happened before, but we --

QUESTION: Not yet.

MS. PSAKI: -- can start new precedents here. We're open, we're innovative.

QUESTION: In your last few weeks.

MS. PSAKI: Okay. A couple of items at the top. Today the Secretary is in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, to participate in the Egypt Economic Development Conference. He also met with Egyptian President al-Sisi. Secretary Kerry participated in a meeting with President al-Sisi, PA President Abbas, Jordanian King Abdullah, and met with the American Chamber of Commerce delegation to the conference. He'll remain in Sharm el-Sheikh over the weekend for additional meetings that are still being determined. On Sunday, the Secretary will travel to Switzerland to meet with Iranian Foreign Minister Zarif as part of the EU-coordinated P5+1 nuclear negotiations. I would expect that additional readouts from the trip will come from our team on the road, and we of course will make those available to all of you.

Go ahead.

QUESTION: I presume we'll get back to Egypt at some point, but I want to start with Iran. There's been quite a bit of talk, including in this room this week and previously, about possibly bringing an agreement, if one is reached, to the UN Security Council, and there seems to be a lot of confusion about this. One, is it true that at some point if a deal is done and UN sanctions are to be removed from Iran pending its compliance with any agreement, that the UN Security Council would have to take some kind of action?

MS. PSAKI: Yes, at some point. I think some of the -- so let me start with some of what I think some of the confusion is. That's different from, of course, an immediate vote. Obviously, the timing or process of any sanctions and when they would be rolled back is not yet determined. That is part of what is being discussed in the negotiations. We would anticipate that if we're able to reach a joint comprehensive plan of action between the P5+1 and Iran, an endorsement vote would be held by the UN Security Council, and that should really come as no surprise given the permanent members of the Security Council are the ones negotiating the deal with Iran. That is different, however, from the question you asked about sanctions. And obviously, given that these sanctions were put in place through UN Security Council resolutions, they would need to -- there would be action required to pull them back. But of course the timing and how that would work is not yet determined.

QUESTION: Right. So we're talking about two things here. One would be the P5 and the rest of the council, the elected members, giving their stamp of approval to a deal; and then at some point down the line, if and when it is determined that Iran has complied and it deserves, merits the sanctions relief that it has been offered, then there would be something else. Is that correct?

MS. PSAKI: Correct. Regarding the sanctions.

QUESTION: Right. On the -- well, take --

MS. PSAKI: But let me just note just since I – so I don't – since I have a moment: We would expect to retain many of the UN Security Council provisions even under a deal with Iran. Obviously, they're not all related to sanctions – nuclear sanctions.

QUESTION: And which – are you talking – when you say that on – take them separately. On the endorsement – you've talked about the endorsement – would that – that you envision that coming after the framework or after a final deal if and when one is reached? In other words, like, two weeks or three weeks from now if you meet the deadline, or end of June/July?

MS. PSAKI: Well, my assumption would be a final deal, but let me check on that specific question, and we can get an answer around to all of you.

QUESTION: There has been some criticism that taking it to the council for an endorsement even would somehow violate U.S. sovereignty. One, is it the Administration's position that it would somehow? And two – well, I'll just leave it at that for --

MS. PSAKI: No. This is – it shouldn't come as any surprise in our view that this would be, given who the members are who were negotiating this, that this would be a natural step in the process. Obviously, an endorsement is different than an up-or-down binding vote, clearly.

QUESTION: All right. Even if the United Nations Security Council were so inclined to remove sanctions, how would that affect the U.S. or other countries' unilateral sanctions? Does that – does a council vote to remove the sanctions mean the U.S. has to remove its sanctions or lift them?

MS. PSAKI: No. So any UN – I mean, and some of this has been a bit of confusion as well out there. Any UN Security Council resolution would likely include elements that would be adopted under Chapter 7 as any decision to suspend or modify the sanctions that were previously imposed by the council under Chapter 7 would require new council action under the chapter. I know that's not your question, but I think it's important for people to understand.

Obviously, there would be action that would be taken by Congress at the appropriate time to roll back sanctions that are U.S. sanctions.

QUESTION: Right. Can the United Nations Security Council require Congress to remove sanctions?

MS. PSAKI: No, just like they can't require other countries to --

QUESTION: Can the United – does the United States Congress have a vote in the UN Security Council?

MS. PSAKI: The Congress? No.

QUESTION: It does not.

MS. PSAKI: Correct.

QUESTION: But it's in the United States. I don't get it.

MS. PSAKI: Well, the --

QUESTION: It's in New York.

MS. PSAKI: This is all an educational process, Matt.

QUESTION: Isn't that part of the host country agreement, that members of the U.S. Congress get to have a say in --

MS. PSAKI: I think you know the answer to that, but I -- thank you for giving us the opportunity to make that clear.

Go ahead, Arshad.

QUESTION: Yeah, a couple of other things. The -- you said we would anticipate that if you reach a comprehensive joint plan of action, that there would be an endorsement vote from the UN Security Council. Would you expect that endorsement vote -- presumably there would be a resolution to endorse it -- would that resolution fall under Chapter 7?

MS. PSAKI: Don't anticipate -- no, that's a different -- that's a separate process. That would be related to the sanctions. I'm -- now, the fact is the details of how and when the sanctions rollback piece, which I think is the component you're getting at here, would work is not yet determined. So --

QUESTION: There's reason I'm asking this.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

QUESTION: So I mean, let's just do it as Q&A.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

QUESTION: Does the U.S. Government regard Chapter 7 sanctions resolutions passed by the UN Security Council as legally binding on the United States of America?

MS. PSAKI: In what capacity? Do you mean in terms of requiring the United States to take -- can you -- sorry, can you keep --

QUESTION: Well, that's basically -- what I -- what has been explained to me, and I was hoping you'd be able to explain it on the record although I don't -- I want to make sure it's correct -- is that it is the position of the U.S. Government that Chapter 7 resolutions are indeed legally binding. So for example, if you pass a Chapter 7 resolution to impose sanctions on country X,

that everybody is then obliged to impose sanctions on country X; and similarly, that if there were a resolution to ease certain sanctions on country X, that that would be legally binding on all the nations of the United Nations to ease those sanctions.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I'm happy to talk to our lawyers about this specific question. I mean, our view and our objective here is that the UN Security – the Security Council would not impose new binding obligations on the United States that would limit our flexibility in any way to respond to future Iranian noncompliance. A right – I know it's a different question, but I think the question is – what is it requiring us to do, I think is your question.

QUESTION: Sure. Well, the reason I'm trying to draw it out is that if I understand it correctly, you just said that a resolution of endorsement would not – you would not expect that to be under Chapter 7. Right?

MS. PSAKI: Correct.

QUESTION: And my understanding is that you would not regard such a resolution of endorsement as being binding on the United States in any particular way whatsoever.

MS. PSAKI: Right, yes, mm-hmm.

QUESTION: And that it's only if and when you got to a point where the Security Council were to pass a Chapter 7 resolution, that that then would be --

MS. PSAKI: Related to the unwinding of sanctions.

QUESTION: Correct – that that would be binding. I'm just trying to --

MS. PSAKI: Correct.

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. PSAKI: I believe that's my – let me check with our lawyers. I just want to make sure given how detailed in the weeds we are that we're providing the accurate information.

QUESTION: A TQ might be helpful for that so everybody totally gets that.

MS. PSAKI: Sure, I'm happy to take the question. Absolutely.

QUESTION: And then one --

QUESTION: I – okay. Let me just --

QUESTION: Can I (inaudible)?

QUESTION: Yeah, yeah.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

QUESTION: So you made a statement earlier that you would keep some of the UN Security Council sanctions on Iran even if there were to be a comprehensive joint plan of action, and I want to draw you out on that --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

QUESTION: -- because my assumption -- but I'd like to know if the point there is that those would be the non-nuclear sanctions imposed on Iran --

MS. PSAKI: Well, those are --

QUESTION: -- like sanctions for terrorism or whatever.

MS. PSAKI: Those are certainly very applicable examples, and that's what I was referring to. But in terms of what sanctions would be rolled back and when, that's part of the negotiations.

QUESTION: Right, but --

MS. PSAKI: What nuclear-related.

QUESTION: What nuclear-related sanctions.

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

QUESTION: Right, got it. Thanks.

MS. PSAKI: Right.

QUESTION: I just want to make sure I understand one thing. In your response to Arshad's question, a Chapter 7 resolution that removes the UN's --

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

QUESTION: -- tranche of sanctions on Iran.

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

QUESTION: Can you find out -- are you saying that you believe the United States is bound, is obligated to comply by removing its own -- by removing its --

MS. PSAKI: No, I don't believe the United States is.

QUESTION: Right.

MS. PSAKI: I just want to be very clear with our lawyers.

QUESTION: But the question is legal obligations --

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

QUESTION: -- and being legally binding.

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

QUESTION: The United Nations can remove sanctions on any country it wants to.

MS. PSAKI: Right.

QUESTION: It doesn't mean that --

MS. PSAKI: Correct.

QUESTION: -- you have to remove them.

MS. PSAKI: That is also my understanding given what this is a reference to in terms of the process.

QUESTION: It is correct also that the United States has imposed its own sanctions on Iran --

MS. PSAKI: Without the UN --

QUESTION: -- and other countries --

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

QUESTION: -- without anything having to do with the UN.

MS. PSAKI: That's correct.

QUESTION: And in fact, you just did it the other day with Venezuela.

MS. PSAKI: And we want to preserve that ability to do that.

QUESTION: I want to make sure that I understand this correctly though.

MS. PSAKI: Okay, go ahead.

QUESTION: Because let's draw a distinction between sanctions that have been imposed on Iran under the United States own statutory --

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

QUESTION: -- authorities. As I understand it, those are totally within the U.S. Government's purview --

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

QUESTION: -- to remove if and when it chooses, or not.

MS. PSAKI: Yes. Or to put more in place if we want.

QUESTION: Correct.

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

QUESTION: However, sanctions that have been imposed pursuant to a UN Security Council resolution on Iran – the question I have is whether those sanctions would need to be – whether the United States would be under any legal obligation, would be legally bound to remove any of those sanctions.

MS. PSAKI: Yes, I understand your question. Yes.

QUESTION: Yeah. And the answer is yes, they would be?

MS. PSAKI: No. I believe the answer is no, but I want to check with our lawyers and make sure I'm getting you the right information.

QUESTION: Okay. Great.

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

QUESTION: Madam --

QUESTION: Sorry for being late.

MS. PSAKI: It's okay, Said.

QUESTION: And also apologies if you --

MS. PSAKI: You're in a different spot here.

QUESTION: Okay. Yeah. Sorry about that. Anyway, I wanted to ask you about something that the Secretary said the other day during the hearing.

MS. PSAKI: Is this on Iran, just to make sure?

QUESTION: Yes, Iran. Of course, yeah.

MS. PSAKI: Okay. Go ahead.

QUESTION: Yeah. He said that the Arab countries were on board. Is that a uniform position? Is that like – or is that taking with each country separately? Or is that like a GCC position?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would point you to the GCC for them to make any statements about what their position is. And I believe this was in – related to a back-and-forth you're referring to --

QUESTION: Right.

MS. PSAKI: -- that happened during the Senate hearing.

QUESTION: Yes.

MS. PSAKI: And what the Secretary was making clear is that there's a shared concern, obviously, about Iran acquiring a nuclear weapon and a support for the process. Obviously, everybody wants to see what the details are and what a final deal would look like, and that's something we'll continue to brief our partners on.

QUESTION: The reason I ask is because he said: I sat with the Saudi foreign minister and he told me that they were on board. Was the Saudi foreign minister speaking, let's say, on behalf of the other members of GCC, who he was --

MS. PSAKI: Again, Said, I'm not going to speak on behalf of the GCC and I'm not going to speak on behalf of the Saudi foreign minister.

QUESTION: Madam, as far as these sanctions are concerned – I'm sorry.

MS. PSAKI: Okay. Iran?

QUESTION: Yeah, Iran. Just quickly.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

QUESTION: Do you have any good news for those countries who were buying the Iranian oil but because of the nuclear sanctions and they were prevented, including India?

MS. PSAKI: Well, as you know, this is something that we monitor every single year. We put out annual reports. Obviously, there's not a deal yet, so if there's an agreement we can certainly speak to that.

Go ahead.

QUESTION: Just on Iran. You may or may not – I don't know – have seen the comments the President made in an interview --

MS. PSAKI: I did see a report of some of the comments. I'm not sure if I saw the entire transcript, but --

QUESTION: -- about him saying that he is embarrassed for the 47 senators. I recognize you don't speak for him, yet. However, you will in about three weeks or so, right?

QUESTION: And you have.

MS. PSAKI: True. I don't at this moment.

QUESTION: Right. But not at this moment. Still, nonetheless, do you – does this building – do you know if Secretary Kerry shares this idea that you're embarrassed for the senators who signed this letter to Iran's leaders?

MS. PSAKI: I think the Secretary is – I have not spoken with him about this specific interview, but I would think it's safe to assume he's in the same boat --

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. PSAKI: -- about their affiliation with the Ayatollah.

QUESTION: Their affiliation?

MS. PSAKI: Well, their --

QUESTION: Well --

MS. PSAKI: -- letter they sent to him.

QUESTION: -- their letter was kind of unaddressed. The President himself, if I'm not mistaken, has actually written directly to the Supreme Leader. And I'm just wondering if – what would he be embarrassed about for these senators, considering the fact that he has been – maybe not a pen pal, he certainly has exchanged or tried to exchange correspondence with the Supreme Leader himself? Is it the content of the letter signed by the senators that is an embarrassment?

MS. PSAKI: I think the content is clearly the issue we're talking about here, Matt.

QUESTION: Okay. It's not simply picking up pen and writing to the Supreme Leader or to other Iranian leaders that is the embarrassing part. Is that correct?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think if there was a letter that stated we understand there's a negotiation going on from government to government and we will see how that plays out, I don't see that we'd have the same issue with it.

QUESTION: That would be okay? Okay. All right.

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

QUESTION: (Inaudible) you said something about an affiliation. Did you mean to use that word or were you looking for – you're not suggesting that 48 senators are affiliated with --

MS. PSAKI: No, I was not suggesting that. I was suggesting the letter to or the --

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. PSAKI: -- letter to the Ayatollah. Thank you for that, Arshad.

QUESTION: Very quickly follow up on Iran.

MS. PSAKI: Okay. Go ahead.

QUESTION: Very quickly. I asked you this on Tuesday.

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

QUESTION: Has there been any kind of backtracking by the Iranians saying, "Oh wait, maybe we should not go ahead and sign a deal with the United States if we are not getting an ironclad commitment that they will abide by it?"

MS. PSAKI: I'm not sure what you're referring to. What ironclad commitment?

QUESTION: What I'm referring to – I mean, this – because obviously the letter says look, you can sign with the President, but he's going to go in a couple years and there's going to be another president; we are not obligated; at the end of the day, we decide. That's what they – what the letter said.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think one of the reasons we've been out there making clearer the inaccuracies in the letter is to make sure everybody understands that this is a negotiation from government to government --

QUESTION: Right.

MS. PSAKI: -- not just the United States to Iran. The Russians, the Chinese, the British, the French, the Germans, the EU – they are all part of these negotiations. We don't expect this to be an issue in the negotiating room, but certainly, given the letter, we felt it was important to come out and make clear what's accurate.

QUESTION: So in your estimate, in the event that the United States does not sign onto a deal and – could the other countries involved sign on to – on their own, so to speak?

MS. PSAKI: This has been a negotiation, and it will continue to be, with the P5+1. That includes the United States.

On Iran? Okay. Go ahead.

QUESTION: Yeah. I was looking back at some of the President's old speeches, and he said in August of 2013 – before asking Congress for a vote for the authorization of the use of force against Assad forces – he said now is the time to show the world that America keeps its commitments; democracy is stronger when the President and the people's representatives stand together. It was a vote he didn't need, it was a vote he probably wasn't going to get, but he asked --

MS. PSAKI: This is for AUMF last summer?

QUESTION: Yes. And obviously, circumstantial --

MS. PSAKI: Well, in order to authorize or have new – the reason he didn't need it is because we already have authorization through past AUMFs. So – but that was authorized through Congress. So that is a process that would go through Congress.

QUESTION: No, I get the --

MS. PSAKI: The point here is that this is a political agreement between countries and international negotiations. It's a very different thing.

QUESTION: I get that. But in terms of the principle of democracy is stronger when the President and the people's representatives stand together, which he said at multiple different circumstances on foreign policy, why doesn't he want – even if it's – he's – or the Administration, rather – they're not asking for any nonbinding resolution; they're not asking for any sort of vote whatsoever. Is there anything that --

MS. PSAKI: Congress will have a vote. They'll have a vote at some point during the duration of the deal. And that's been something they're aware that we've also been consulting with Congress all along and recognize the important voice that they have.

The point I'm making, and which is an important context here, is the difference between an international negotiation with multiple countries and the authorization of the use of the force of the United States military. They're two entirely different things.

QUESTION: I just wanted to ask if there's any perception in this building that the letter has affected the momentum of negotiations or the tenor, if it's had any impact in what your negotiators are seeing in the room, and so on.

MS. PSAKI: Well, the negotiations haven't actually started again, right, since the letter was issued. We don't anticipate it will in the room, but it certainly is something that would give the

Iranians an excuse at the end of the game. But obviously, we came out to clearly state that this is not how this process works for a purpose.

QUESTION: As an excuse to what?

MS. PSAKI: An excuse as to the kind of – if they don't agree to or if they find that they don't trust the process. Obviously, we're working to avoid that. We haven't seen it, don't anticipate it'll have an impact in the room.

QUESTION: But your point is – isn't your point that the letter is, I think, mistaken in certain --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

QUESTION: -- aspects with regard --

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

QUESTION: -- to the Constitution.

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

QUESTION: So your point is that the threat implied in the letter, as I understand it, is not really a real one.

MS. PSAKI: Correct.

QUESTION: So you think that it's possible that the Iranians could use a letter that you yourselves say has no basis for its threat as an excuse to not sign an agreement?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I'm not going to predict that. I think, obviously, one of the reasons not just the United States but I think you saw the German foreign minister come out and others have stated that this is unhelpful and this is not useful to the process.

QUESTION: Just on --

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

QUESTION: -- not asking about details of the negotiations, but I know Zarif has mentioned that in the final hours we're talking about political concessions. And then I know the French have said conversely there's still some technical issues that we have to work out. Yesterday, you were asked about how close you are. Would you say it's a mix of both things, without going into too much detail, or --

MS. PSAKI: Well, there's no question that a big part of the conversation will continue to be technical components, right, because this is a very technical deal.

QUESTION: So that's not done?

MS. PSAKI: That's ongoing. And it would be ongoing even after a framework. But in terms of the decisions that need to be made, certainly a big part of those are political. But both are part of the process and part of the discussion.

QUESTION: Can I just go back to the UN angle for one second?

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

QUESTION: I just want to make sure that we're not talking about any UN Security Council endorsement or sanctions lifting until a final full deal would be reached, the deadline for which is July – or the end of June. Is that correct?

MS. PSAKI: That would be my expectation, but it's another one I said I would check with our team to make sure that's accurate.

QUESTION: Right. Okay. But you – as far as you know, at the moment, there is no talk of if – no talk of seeking the endorsement part of it after a framework is reached, right?

MS. PSAKI: That's my understanding, correct.

QUESTION: It would only be for the full-on, whole-nine-yards, comprehensive --

MS. PSAKI: Which I think would make sense, but let me talk to our team after the briefing and I'll make sure that that's accurate.

QUESTION: Can I ask you one follow-up on that?

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

QUESTION: Would you expect any resolution – which clearly you want – endorsing an eventual deal, if one is reached, to make any reference at all to the potential eventual lifting of sanctions?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think the sanctions process would be part of any agreement, presumably, in some capacity. So I can't predict for you what a resolution would look like. I don't – at this point, I just can't speak to that.

QUESTION: I'm just asking if you, the U.S. Government --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

QUESTION: -- would want a reference to potential eventual sanctions lifting.

MS. PSAKI: We're just not at that point right now.

QUESTION: Okay. Can I ask you one follow-up from last --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

QUESTION: From yesterday.

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

QUESTION: It's a different topic, but you had said that you would check -- yesterday, you said a couple of times that you're now automatically archiving --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

QUESTION: -- the emails of certain principals.

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

QUESTION: Who falls in that category?

MS. PSAKI: Well, there are dozens who fall into that category: high-level officials -- the Secretary, obviously; deputy secretary, under secretaries, assistant secretaries. Beyond that, I don't have a characterization for you.

QUESTION: No, but that's helpful.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

QUESTION: Great. And when did that start?

MS. PSAKI: February of this year.

QUESTION: And why did that start in February?

MS. PSAKI: Out of an effort to continue to update our process. Our goal, actually, is to apply an archiving system that meets these same requirements to all employee mailboxes by the end of 2016. So it's only natural that you'd start with the Secretary, which we did in 2013; that you would progress with other senior Department officials, and we'll continue to make -- take steps forward.

QUESTION: Was the February decision -- I mean, that's -- February is obviously -- well, when in 2013 was it? Was it right from the get-go when the Secretary -- after he was sworn in that all of his are archived?

MS. PSAKI: I'm happy to check on that. I think it was fairly early in his time.

QUESTION: So I guess the next question would be, then it's sort of two years later you've extended it to additional categories of very senior officials. Why did you decide to do that in February? Why not do it, I don't know, a year after or a few months after you did it for the Secretary?

MS. PSAKI: I'm sure if we had the technical capability to, we would have, and it's just a process that takes some time.

QUESTION: So you didn't have the technical capability until February of this year to capture emails for the deputy secretary's --

MS. PSAKI: Well, I'm not an expert on IRM, to be fair.

QUESTION: Yeah. No, no --

MS. PSAKI: I think that there's an effort that they have had underway for some time. We have known about the narrow guidelines for some time as well, and there has been an effort underway to get up to meeting the national standard. So -- and that has long been in place -- or the timeline for that has long been the end of 2016, so this is just part of the process.

QUESTION: But was it related -- sorry, last one from me on this -- was it related to the -- was the decision to apply the automatic archiving of emails from senior officials in February related in any way to the recognition that not having archived Secretary Clinton's emails could raise problems for the Department and for the government more generally in terms of figuring out what should be archived eventually?

MS. PSAKI: No. This has been a process that's been ongoing, and obviously, it's not only time-consuming and requires a lot of effort on the part of employees to do it in other ways, but they have long been planning to do this. It's just something that it took some time to put in place.

QUESTION: The auto-archiving thing that you're talking about is outside of the SMART thing, right?

MS. PSAKI: Yes, outside of the SMART. Yes.

QUESTION: Does that mean that prior to the auto-archiving, all emails are lost and never -- will never see the light of day?

MS. PSAKI: No. There are many ways, including -- we've talked about printing, we've talked about -- you can preserve records by saving as part of a specific file, and there's a personal -- in a personal folder. There's instructions to do that.

QUESTION: But they're voluntary, not automatic.

MS. PSAKI: Correct, it's all voluntary, yes, to date. But that's why we're updating the process.

QUESTION: My question is to make sure that I understand --

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

QUESTION: -- that just because something wasn't auto-archived doesn't mean that it is lost to history.

MS. PSAKI: No, it doesn't.

QUESTION: And just because something wasn't put in the SMART program --

MS. PSAKI: Correct.

QUESTION: -- doesn't mean that it is lost to history.

MS. PSAKI: Yes, that's correct.

QUESTION: Okay. Thank you.

QUESTION: But am I correct in understanding that it is -- it would have been lost to history if some individual didn't take the time to personally choose to archive or save it themselves?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I wouldn't state it's lost to history, because there are always -- there are technical means of gaining access to past information. But -- and I'm not an expert on the technical capabilities, but obviously, the preference would be that it would be archived through the many ways that it can be archived, whether printing, whether through a personal folder. And certainly, we're updating it because it's an imperfect system.

QUESTION: But do you believe that you have the ability to systematically go back and find old emails that were not automatically or voluntarily or via the SMART system archived?

MS. PSAKI: I just don't have that level of detail, Arshad. I don't have a master's in computer science. I wish I did.

Go --

QUESTION: Well, you might need one.

MS. PSAKI: I might. I'm starting --

QUESTION: Better go back to school.

MS. PSAKI: I would have credits, I think, pretty soon. (Laughter.) Right. Do we have more on this issue?

QUESTION: I have a related one.

QUESTION: (Inaudible.)

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead. Oh, back to Iran? Sure.

QUESTION: Iran. Just to clarify, did you confirm that Security Council members have begun discussions to end sanctions --

MS. PSAKI: No.

QUESTION: -- if a nuclear deal is reached?

MS. PSAKI: No, no, no. I said obviously part of the discussions and the negotiations are the sanctions component, and the Iranians have spoken to how important the UN Security Council sanctions are to them. And the permanent members of the Security Council are the ones negotiating the deal, so -- but beyond that, no. I did not --

QUESTION: Would it be logical for them to start talking about this at this --

MS. PSAKI: No. We need to -- we're not even -- we don't even have a deal yet. So I think, obviously, all of these are part of the discussions, but in terms of the process or the timeline or any of that, that would all be part of the negotiations.

QUESTION: By the way, Jen, on this -- on the sanctions issue --

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

QUESTION: -- just to understand -- I know you addressed this before -- these sanctions, when and if they are lifted, will they be lifted lock, stock, and barrel or are they going to be like chronologically -- last one first and so on, that kind of a thing?

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, I think this part of the negotiations is exactly this -- part of that question, Said. But I also made clear earlier that there are many sanctions that -- there are sanctions that would remain in place, certainly. So that's all part of the discussions. If and when there's a deal, I'm sure that's something that we'll be discussing.

Go ahead.

QUESTION: Has briefing on this issue to the Israelis kept pace over the last couple weeks? And are there any plans for the Secretary or for Wendy Sherman to brief the Israelis this coming week on the negotiations?

MS. PSAKI: I believe we frequently, often brief the Israelis, as well as many other governments, after every round of negotiations, so I would expect that would continue.

QUESTION: You wouldn't say that it's changed -- increased, decreased -- that it's given since the speech?

MS. PSAKI: I wouldn't say it's changed, no. There have been more rounds, so perhaps more calls as a result, but --

Yes?

QUESTION: New subject?

MS. PSAKI: Well, let's finish Iran.

Go ahead.

QUESTION: Can I -- I wanted to go briefly back to the email subject, if that's okay.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

QUESTION: Could I get perhaps a little bit of clarity about the review that's ongoing? Do you have any more on when the first set of documents related to the Benghazi -- the Select Committee's -- when those could be released?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have a prediction of that at this point.

QUESTION: Could you explain a little bit what the difference in the review process is when documents are going to be released to the committee versus to the public? Because is this something where you could take what you've already redacted and put that out quickly, or is there a whole separate review that has to go on?

MS. PSAKI: Well, there -- it's a good question, and I'm not sure I'm in a position to go into too many details. Obviously, there's a uniform process for each, right. And certainly, we'd want to make sure that any information that would need to be redacted for it to be public -- because obviously the committee doesn't make these documents public -- would be removed. So there's personally identifying information. There are other steps that would need to be taken using the FOIA standards in order to make it public.

QUESTION: So there are things that might be redacted in a public release that wouldn't necessarily have been redacted for release to a committee?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Sure. But I can see if there's more detail on the difference in the process, but --

QUESTION: And yet related to this, yesterday you were asked if you knew whether Secretary Clinton signed a separation statement.

MS. PSAKI: I don't have an update on that.

QUESTION: Is that something that you expect that you will be able to get an answer to, or is it covered --

MS. PSAKI: I do expect I will be able to.

QUESTION: -- or is it -- so it's not covered by any kind of employee privacy act or something like that?

MS. PSAKI: I don't believe so. I can ask that question, but hopefully we'll be able to get an answer.

QUESTION: Actually, I'm sorry I even raised it, because I don't want you to ask that question. (Laughter.)

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

QUESTION: I just want to know if she signed it or not.

MS. PSAKI: Understood.

QUESTION: So let me -- I want to retract that question.

MS. PSAKI: Okay. Remove it from the record.

QUESTION: But is it something that you would suggest that you would refer us or people asking about it to her office, or is it something that the State Department --

MS. PSAKI: That may be a faster way to get the answer, but I certainly can --

QUESTION: But as far as you know, it is --

MS. PSAKI: -- I would remain focused on getting the answer here as well.

QUESTION: Okay. It is something that you expect, once everything -- you expect to be able to answer that question?

MS. PSAKI: I hope to, yes.

QUESTION: All right, thank you.

MS. PSAKI: On this question, yes.

QUESTION: So I was wondering if you can tell us: Do you think that it would be, prior to this February, last month change in policy to expand the automatic recording on emails -- prior to that time, would it have been a reliable way to preserve emails to send them to top officials of the Department?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not sure what you're getting at.

QUESTION: Well, if somebody thought they were complying with Federal Records Act or records preservation obligations by copying top officials of the Department of emails, prior to last month, would that have been an effective way of permanently archiving records?

MS. PSAKI: Well, clearly, individuals – any top officials would also be expected to preserve their documents in the same way that I have outlined. Now, obviously, this is a more efficient way, a way that will require less human effort. I think it's fair to say we have quite a bit going on here at the State Department, given you all cover us every day, so this is a more efficient and better way. But obviously, there were ways to preserve, and employees and individuals were expected to do that prior to this new process.

QUESTION: Okay. But simply emailing somebody with a [state.gov](https://www.state.gov) address wouldn't have been a successful way to do that prior to –

MS. PSAKI: Well, it depends on whether the employee archived their documents, doesn't it.

QUESTION: So then the follow-up to that would be, how could Secretary – former Secretary Clinton have expected that her emails would automatically be captured by the State Department if they were addressed to [state.gov](https://www.state.gov) official – [state.gov](https://www.state.gov) addresses if emails to [state.gov](https://www.state.gov) addresses were not systematically kept and it was entirely up to the individuals so addressed to voluntarily save them?

MS. PSAKI: I would have you address that question to Secretary Clinton and her team, Arshad.

QUESTION: Can I just clarify one word?

QUESTION: Well, hold on. But that answer is – I mean, do you – does the building think that that was a reliable and appropriate way to have documents stored, if, in fact, there wasn't this auto archive? I mean, I know that you can't speak for what happened before you were here, or perhaps even for the email habits of the current Secretary of State.

MS. PSAKI: I can speak to those, but not the former. But go ahead.

QUESTION: But if you were – if one was in a position whereby you did not have a [state.gov](https://www.state.gov) account, you were using a personal account for official business, and you – and your explanation for doing that and complying with the federal records law is that you sent those work-related emails to people with [state.gov](https://www.state.gov) addresses, and that – and so you had a full expectation that the regulations were being complied with, that – it doesn't seem to be foolproof. It doesn't seem to be – there doesn't seem to be a 100 percent way of knowing or perhaps of even being able to claim that you were – that you expected the messages to be archived, because you don't know.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I just can't speak to that. That is a process that happened in the first term.

QUESTION: Well, did the State Department – I mean, I think it's a relevant question.

MS. PSAKI: I'm not saying it's not relevant, but go ahead.

QUESTION: No, no, but I think it's a question – I think it's a relevant question to ask –

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

QUESTION: -- you, and your predecessors do indeed sometimes address things that happened or policies that were adopted prior to their --

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Policies is a little bit different than email habits, but go ahead.

QUESTION: But there are policies, or apparently sometimes not, about email habits.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: So the question that I have is whether the State Department looked at whether Secretary Clinton's – former Secretary Clinton's assumption that her emails to [state.gov](https://www.state.gov) addresses would be captured for archival purposes and said yes, that's fine, or no, actually, we don't keep all that stuff automatically and it requires on the recipient to archive it, or – I mean, did you guys look at – did the State Department institutionally look at her proposed policy to use a personal email under the assumption that emails to official addresses would be captured and say yes, that's fine, or no, that's not fine?

MS. PSAKI: I'm just not in a position to speak to a conversation that may have taken place six years ago, Arshad.

QUESTION: You haven't looked into that at all, and that –

MS. PSAKI: I just don't have more information for you.

QUESTION: But you don't have more – you don't have more information for me. You may have the answer, but you just don't want to say it publicly, or you don't have the answer?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have more information for you on a conversation that may or may not have taken place six years ago, Arshad. I would have you pose that to Secretary Clinton and her team.

QUESTION: But why is it not a relevant question to ask the State Department, which, after all, has institutional interests in complying with laws and regulations and maintaining the historical record –

MS. PSAKI: Of course we do, and that's why we've taken steps like sending a letter to former secretaries. We also sent a letter recently to former staff asking that if they should become aware, or in the future are aware or become aware in the future of a federal record in their possession, such as an email sent or received on a personal email account while serving in their official capacity at the Department, that such record may be made available to the

Department. So of course, we've taken steps in order to make sure as much information is archived as possible.

QUESTION: But do you know whether or not there was any effort on the part of the State Department as an institution, presumably by the legal advisor's office, although maybe this is something that comes under management – I don't know – to look at the proposed email practices and make a decision on whether they were appropriate given the existing policies and statutes?

MS. PSAKI: I certainly understand your question. I don't have more information on whether a conversation may or may not have taken place six years ago. I don't know that I will.

QUESTION: Well, let's – just a second.

QUESTION: When did you send that letter --

QUESTION: Does --

MS. PSAKI: This letter was sent – I believe it was earlier this week. Let me check on that for you.

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

QUESTION: And it went to who?

MS. PSAKI: Well, there was – there have obviously been requests from Congress for certain information, so it was part – that was part of the effort.

QUESTION: And just – does the building – does the Department take a position on whether or not Secretary Clinton's explanation for how she thought that these emails, that her emails would be archived – is it adequate?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think, one, Matt, Secretary Clinton has --

QUESTION: Or does it not?

MS. PSAKI: -- Secretary Clinton has spoken --

QUESTION: I know she did. I --

MS. PSAKI: Let me finish my answer and then you can follow up. Secretary Clinton has spoken to this herself. She responded to our request for information with 55,000 pages of documents.

QUESTION: Right.

MS. PSAKI: We're going to review those. Beyond that, I don't have any other comments.

QUESTION: Right. But I was asking are you satisfied with that?

MS. PSAKI: Are we satisfied? In what way do you mean?

QUESTION: Yes, do you – well, do you believe that – maybe not you – do you – does the Department believe that the regulations will be satisfied because of --

MS. PSAKI: What – which regulations?

QUESTION: The archival regulations.

MS. PSAKI: She has said that they – these documents span the time of her time at the State Department.

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything more.

Go ahead.

QUESTION: Can you just clarify a couple of points?

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

QUESTION: You said that former officials – can you be any more specific – receiving the letter, who they would be, what era we're talking about, what level? Presumably not everyone who's left the Department received this letter.

MS. PSAKI: Sure. It's current and former. I can check and see if there's more specifics we can get into for you.

QUESTION: Okay. And both you and Arshad used this word, "voluntary." Is that the best word? My understanding is there were obligations to keep certain records. It may have been a system where you had to do it on --

MS. PSAKI: Perhaps it's a better way to describe it to say it's the responsibility of individuals to keep and archive certain records.

QUESTION: Right. So there were systems that required you to do that on a case-by-case, document-by-document, or email-by-email basis instead of automatically in certain – in most circumstances, until recently.

MS. PSAKI: Well, it doesn't – I think the question is automatically, it hasn't – it's starting to happen. It wasn't the case or wasn't the policy previously. It makes it certainly much easier for

employees for it to be automatically archived. And I think it's safe to assume some assumed that that was what was happening at the time as well. And I'd certainly have you ask them that particular question. But there are other ways – saving to a personal folder, printing – and these are the instructions that are given in terms of how to preserve your records.

QUESTION: But it's not voluntary, like, say, the way giving to the Combined Federal Campaign might be.

MS. PSAKI: It's not voluntary like I can decide I don't want to do it or don't feel like doing it. It's the responsibility of; it's on the individual. That's – thank you for that.

QUESTION: Thanks.

QUESTION: The guidelines, the guidelines that she talks about, are they government-wide guidelines or are they State Department guidelines?

MS. PSAKI: The FARA guidelines?

QUESTION: Now, the guidelines – yes.

MS. PSAKI: Or – well, there are national --

QUESTION: That you talked about.

MS. PSAKI: There are national standards. Certainly, we have guidelines that are consistent with other federal agencies, though.

QUESTION: Okay.

QUESTION: Change of --

QUESTION: Is it likely to change these guidelines as a result of the controversy?

MS. PSAKI: There are guidelines, narrow requirements that the State Department and in many agencies that have been in place for some time, are working to get up to speed on by the end of 2016.

Go ahead.

QUESTION: Change of subject?

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

QUESTION: What's the comment on the decision by Pakistani high – Islamabad High Court to give bail to Mumbai terrorist attack mastermind Zaki-ur-Rehman Lakhvi?

MS. PSAKI: We are monitoring reports that an Islamabad High Court judge suspended detention orders for the alleged Mumbai attack mastermind. The Government of Pakistan has pledged its cooperation in bringing the perpetrators, financiers and – financiers and sponsors of the Mumbai terrorist attacks to justice, and we urge Pakistan to follow through on that commitment. Pakistan is a critical partner in a fight against terrorism. We've certainly seen the reports, but we can't speculate on the outcome of an ongoing legal process in Pakistan.

QUESTION: According to these media reports appearing in Pakistani newspapers, the Pakistani Government says they don't have any credible evidence against Zaki-ur-Rehman Lakhvi. Do you have any credible evidence against him of why you were calling him mastermind?

MS. PSAKI: Well, for now, let me also reiterate he remains in prison. Obviously, there's a range of ways that we share information. I'm not going to speak to that from the podium.

QUESTION: (Inaudible) shared with him. Do you think he --

MS. PSAKI: I'm just not going to speak to that from the podium.

QUESTION: Okay, thank you.

QUESTION: A related question?

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead, in the back. Go ahead.

QUESTION: Follow-up? In Islamabad today, Pakistan also summoned an Indian diplomat and protested that the perpetrators of Samjhauta Express bombing which took place 2007 in which more than 50 Pakistanis were burned alive. That case has not been – that case has not proceeded in the courts, and the self-confessed perpetrator, Swami Aseemanand, is released.

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any information on this. I'm happy to check with our team and see if we can get you a comment after the briefing.

QUESTION: Yeah. What is your position on that?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. I will talk to our team after the briefing.

Go ahead.

QUESTION: Just a quick follow-up.

QUESTION: Cuba?

MS. PSAKI: I wanted to ask: Has there been a date set for the human rights talks that are supposed to happen at the end of March?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any update at this point in time I don't think. Hold on. Let me just make sure I don't.

QUESTION: And then the follow-up is: Are there any readouts? They were supposed to be in permanent communication ahead of the Summit of Americas. Do you have any readouts on that? About the embassy and diplomatic relations.

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Well, we – as you noted, we agreed to meet at the end of March to discuss the subject – the structure of a human rights dialogue. I don't have an update on the exact timing on that.

QUESTION: Still the end of March?

MS. PSAKI: Yeah, still the end of March, exactly. And can you repeat one more time your other question?

QUESTION: So they're supposed to be in permanent communication about reestablishing diplomatic relations. One, is there another date for talks? And two, do you have any readouts on the permanent communication?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we are in ongoing discussions. In terms of the next round, I don't have anything to update you on at this moment. I expect we will soon, so stay tuned.

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

QUESTION: Thank you. There is this job offer submitted by a company called Glacier Technology Solutions that claims to be working directly with the U.S. Marine Corps, and it says that they're looking for role players for men of Ukrainian and/or Russian ethnicity and language skills to, quote, "assist the Marine Corps with their language and culture immersive simulation training program." Is the U.S. preparing to send Marines to Ukraine?

MS. PSAKI: No, but I would refer you to the Department of Defense for any information on that report given we don't speak on their behalf.

QUESTION: Do you – thank you. Do you –

QUESTION: This is a Craigslist ad, I believe. (Laughter.)

MS. PSAKI: All right.

QUESTION: Correct? Is that correct?

QUESTION: It is. It is.

QUESTION: Is that correct? From San Diego?

QUESTION: It is.

QUESTION: Do you --

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would not take every --

QUESTION: Do you have any --

MS. PSAKI: -- Craigslist ad as representative of the United States Government.

QUESTION: Do you find it hard to believe that there is such a training program?

MS. PSAKI: I find a lot of things on Craigslist hard to believe. (Laughter.)

QUESTION: Specifically this?

MS. PSAKI: Many things are hard to believe on Craigslist, but again I would point you to the Department of Defense, and I'm sure they can get you a quick response.

QUESTION: But you're not aware of any State Department program that would --

MS. PSAKI: No.

QUESTION: -- that might even come close to --

MS. PSAKI: No, no, no.

QUESTION: No? Okay.

QUESTION: One more.

QUESTION: However, you are aware of --

QUESTION: Do you see --

QUESTION: -- Marines going to the Baltic nations, right?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think we're referring to different things here, Said.

QUESTION: Okay.

QUESTION: Do you see any way to resolve the conflict in the Ukraine other than diplomatically through the Minsk agreement?

MS. PSAKI: Well, certainly our focus is on – and I think the Secretary and many other high-level United States officials have conveyed that our belief is that a diplomatic process, the implementation of the Minsk agreement, the several components of that that need to continue to be put in place is what we think is the best path forward. So that’s where our focus remains.

QUESTION: Under what circumstances would the U.S. send troops, Marines to Ukraine?

MS. PSAKI: Well, that’s not something we’re considering, so I’m not going to speak to that.

QUESTION: There was a report that Russian President Vladimir Putin hasn’t been seen in public for a week. Does the State Department have any idea where he is, what he’s up to?

MS. PSAKI: I believe the Kremlin has spoken to this, so I would point you to that.

QUESTION: You don’t have any reaction?

MS. PSAKI: I don’t have any more information, no.

QUESTION: Staying with the region?

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

QUESTION: Thank you, Jen. I have actually three different subjects in the same region, Russia and Ukraine. A senior Russian diplomat accused the United States of violating the NPT treaty, Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, by training pilots from allied nations. He said, “The so-called joint nuclear missions virtually are training of pilots to use nuclear weapons. We consider this a serious violation of the NPT.” Do you have a response to that?

MS. PSAKI: I have not even seen this report. We’re happy to take a look at it.

QUESTION: Okay. Please, do. And another – and I am sorry. I will keep quoting people.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

QUESTION: Another quote comes from a retired American military officer, a General Robert H. Scales who said on Fox News, quote, “The only way the United States can have any effect in this region,” meaning Ukraine, “and turn the tide is start killing Russians. Killing Russians by – killing so many Russians that even” Russian “media can’t hide the fact.” So is that an appropriate statement to be –

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, it sounds like you’re referring to a retired individual who --

QUESTION: Right, he is –

MS. PSAKI: -- does not speak for the United States Government, and certainly that is not consistent with our beliefs.

QUESTION: And so when the Russians claim that such statements are a result of the official line against Russia at this point, you do not agree with that?

MS. PSAKI: Can be absolutely clear: That individual is not speaking on behalf of the United States Government.

Go ahead.

QUESTION: Okay, and one last thing if I may.

MS. PSAKI: Oh, okay. More. Are you quoting from another person?

QUESTION: Yes.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

QUESTION: Now – yes, I’m quoting.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

QUESTION: In this case, I’m quoting --

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

MS. PSAKI: Yes. (Laughter.)

QUESTION: In this -

MS. PSAKI: Somebody on Wikipedia. Go ahead.

QUESTION: I’m sorry. In this case, I’m quoting the State Department.

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

QUESTION: Victoria Nuland, who we all know --

MS. PSAKI: Yes, we do.

QUESTION: -- who submitted written testimony to the House Foreign Affairs Committee on March 4th --

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

QUESTION: -- saying, in part, quote, “In Eastern Ukraine, Russia and its separatist puppets unleashed unspeakable violence and pillage. MH17 was shot down.” Now, six days later, March 10th, Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Again, Victoria: “In Eastern Ukraine, Russia

and its separatist puppets unleashed unspeakable violence and pillage,” full stop now. This manufactured conflict – and then she went on. This tiny bit about MH17 was shot down – and, of course, we are seeing what she is doing. She does not claim directly that the separatists shot down the plane. She just creates the impression that that happened.

So – but then, in the Senate hearing, that tidbit was deleted.

MS. PSAKI: Well, you’re following her very closely.

QUESTION: My question – it’s actually – it’s not me. It’s an American blogger who found it, and I found his – actually, he believes --

MS. PSAKI: Okay, do --

QUESTION: So, anyway --

MS. PSAKI: Do you have a question? Go ahead.

QUESTION: -- the question – yes. The question is: Why was it deleted?

MS. PSAKI: Why was what deleted?

QUESTION: Why was this reference to the plane being shot down deleted from the second testimony as against the first?

MS. PSAKI: I can’t speak to specific testimonies and what was in different remarks, and they sound pretty consistent to me.

QUESTION: Do you know if you have any new information on that episode?

MS. PSAKI: I don’t have new information, no.

Go ahead.

QUESTION: And the official position on that has not changed?

MS. PSAKI: Nope.

Go ahead.

QUESTION: Could I also – I guess not quote, but paraphrase an official?

MS. PSAKI: Sure, of course.

QUESTION: This was the commander of NORAD. Admiral Gortney was testifying yesterday, I believe, before Congress, and he said that – he noted concern that Russia is developing

significant new capabilities, which, he said, if continued on that track, could potentially threaten the security of North America, specifically with response to these long-range, conventionally armed cruise missiles. Is his concern something that the State Department shares, and is – if so, is it something that Secretary Kerry has discussed with his counterparts in Russia?

MS. PSAKI: Well, certainly, that would be a concern appropriately expressed through the Department of Defense, so I would refer you to them. I don't have any more specifics from here.

QUESTION: So you can't say whether or not this is something that Secretary Kerry has brought up with his counterparts?

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

QUESTION: Does that mean that there was no Russian threat in the past to the --

MS. PSAKI: That there was what?

QUESTION: Was there not a threat, a Russian threat to begin with, all along?

MS. PSAKI: What are you talking about?

QUESTION: Well, I'm saying that this new weapons – he's saying that it poses a threat or added threat, but they have had that threat all along, right? I mean, they have intercontinental missiles, they have nuclear bombs, they have all kinds of things, right?

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

QUESTION: (Inaudible) put a finer point on it --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

QUESTION: -- is there a concern that recent Russian posturing is returning us to a geopolitical situation similar to what we saw in the Cold War?

MS. PSAKI: We certainly wouldn't put it in those terms. Obviously, the Secretary raises issues as it's appropriate through diplomatic channels. We don't always talk about those, but given these are comments by the NORAD commander, I would point you to the Department of Defense.

QUESTION: Well, there was – during the Cold War, there was diplomatic contact between Washington and Moscow.

MS. PSAKI: I'm not saying there wasn't. I'm just not comparing it to the Cold War. But go ahead.

QUESTION: On this issue, did you get any more about this request to the Vietnamese on Cam Ranh Bay and not allowing the Russians to – and not wanting them to allow – you not wanting them to refuel Russian planes there?

MS. PSAKI: Well, just to be clear – and maybe I wasn't as clear yesterday, so let me try to do this again – it's – our concern is about activities they might conduct in the region, and the question is: Why are they in the region? It's not about specifically refueling or telling the Vietnamese not to allow them to refuel.

QUESTION: So there hasn't been a request to stop refueling them, or there has?

MS. PSAKI: It's more about concerns. It's not as much about Vietnam as much as it – as it is about concerns about what activities they would be in the region for.

QUESTION: Okay. Well, you – I mean, there are U.S. planes flying over there all the time.

MS. PSAKI: Sure, there are.

QUESTION: So you don't want Russian planes flying there, but it's okay for U.S. planes to fly there? I mean, I just – it gets to the point where you – the suggestion is that everything the Russians are doing all the time everywhere is somehow nefarious and designed to provoke. But you can't – but you don't seem to be able to understand or accept that American planes flying all over the place, including in that area, is annoying to the Chinese, for one, but also for the Russians. But the suggestion is always that the American flights are good and beneficial and don't cause tension, and that other people's flights do cause tension. So can you explain what the basis is for your concern that the Russian flights there in the Southeast Asia area are – raise tensions?

MS. PSAKI: There just aren't more details I can go into.

QUESTION: (Inaudible.)

MS. PSAKI: On this one? Sure.

QUESTION: On this, yeah.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

QUESTION: So – actually --

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead. Go ahead, and we'll go --

QUESTION: Okay, I'm just going to ask real quickly.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

QUESTION: There has been a reassessment in the Administration recently of security assistance to Vietnam following what had previously been a full embargo. You said that these discussions are ongoing as to what kind of security assistance can be provided. Is there – have you been relaying to the Vietnamese Government that concerns over what the Russians are doing on this base could affect future security assistance?

MS. PSAKI: No, I wouldn't put it in those terms, no.

Go ahead, in the back.

QUESTION: Jen, I wanted – yes, I wanted to go back to my question about this general.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

QUESTION: You seemed to be sort of dismissive --

MS. PSAKI: The former general who's no longer a U.S. official?

QUESTION: The former – yes, the former general.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

QUESTION: You seem to be dismissive of this as a private view, but – yes, it is a private view. But it is broadcast – it is broadcast on --

MS. PSAKI: Well, I don't – let me finish. I don't think that I was at all dismissive. I actually think I made very clear that that wasn't representative of the views of the United States Government.

Go ahead in the back.

QUESTION: You're – so – I'm sorry. So you're – as for the substance of the comments, you do not agree with this, you condemn this? What is your reaction?

MS. PSAKI: I think I made it very clear.

Go ahead.

QUESTION: My – it's not clear to me, and the Russians --

MS. PSAKI: You can look back at the transcript. We're going to move on, because we have other questions.

Go ahead.

QUESTION: Sorry. This was just a very simple question.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

QUESTION: Regarding this concern that you have about the Russians, the tensions that they could raise, did any of your allies or partners in the region raise similar concerns to you about this Russian --

MS. PSAKI: Similar concerns to us?

QUESTION: Yeah. I mean, I'm trying to figure out -- you talk about how the Russians --

MS. PSAKI: I would ask the Vietnamese that question or the Russians.

QUESTION: I'm just not talking about -- just --

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to speak for what our partners or allies have expressed during private -- through private diplomatic channels.

QUESTION: Madam, before my question on Sri Lanka, let me go back to Pakistan quickly, please.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

QUESTION: As far as this court decision comes at the time when the Indian foreign minister was in Islamabad for having dialogue in the future between the two countries and have peace in the region and all that -- but how you think this future dialogues and the relation between the two countries will affect? Because since India is demanding even more than Lakhvi sitting in Pakistan, those terrorists.

MS. PSAKI: Well, certainly, we support ongoing dialogue. I'm not going to speak to how it will impact talks between two other countries. I think we have to move on.

QUESTION: Sri Lanka?

MS. PSAKI: I'm sorry. We've got to move on. Go ahead in the back.

QUESTION: One question about the AIIB?

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

QUESTION: Thank you. Do you have any comment about the Brits deciding to join it, please? Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Well, this is a sovereign decision made by the United Kingdom. We hope and expect that the United Kingdom will use its voice to push for the adoption of high standards. Our position on the AIIB remains clear and consistent. The United States and many major global economies all agree there is a pressing need to enhance infrastructure investment

around the world. We believe any new multilateral institution should incorporate the high standards of the World Bank and the regional development banks. Based on many discussions, we have concerns about whether the AIIB will meet these high standards, particularly related to governance and environmental and social safeguards. So it's important to note that any country that becomes a prospective member of the AIIB will be responsible for the standards adopted, and certainly, we hope that those standards will be pushed as well.

QUESTION: Are you --

MS. PSAKI: Let her finish. Go ahead.

QUESTION: Are you concerned that other allies who had in the past indicated interest in this institution, such as Australia and --

MS. PSAKI: It's the sovereign decision of any country. That's just our view --

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. PSAKI: -- and we certainly hope any country would push to increase the standards.

Go ahead.

QUESTION: A quick question on the Secretary's participation in the conference in Sharm el-Sheikh.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

QUESTION: He met with Abbas, of course, and he met with the others. Was his meeting with Palestinian Authority President Abbas restricted to the economic aspect, or did they discuss prospects for, let's say, maybe renewed negotiations? Because it's -- the leader of one of the Israeli parties, Tzipi Livni, is saying that after the election, she'd like to see a push for the talks, so --

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think -- I don't have more of a readout other than to convey to you that the meeting was part of our ongoing efforts to engage with critical stakeholders, given that we continue to be concerned about the financial situation with the Palestinian Authority. So it made sense to meet, given that concern, and that was certainly the focus and the reason for the meeting. For any other readout, I'd point you to our team who's traveling with the Secretary.

QUESTION: So do you expect, after the election, the Israelis would ease up on the tax that are being withheld?

MS. PSAKI: The rhetoric, you mean, or --

QUESTION: No, their actual money. They would release the --

MS. PSAKI: I would have you ask the Israelis that question.

QUESTION: Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

QUESTION: Can we move on to Iraq?

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

QUESTION: There are reports that ISIS leader al-Baghdadi has made a statement in which he supports Boko Haram's pledge of allegiance to the group. Does such a statement from the leader indicate a operational link between those two groups?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we're aware of an ISIL recording accepting the pledge of allegiance by Boko Haram to ISIL. Boko Haram, which previously has expressed solidarity with both AQIM and al-Qaida core and ISIL, has demonstrated similar acts of wanton brutality, and we take any potential links between these groups – two groups as a matter of concern. But we believe this allegiance may be designed in part for propaganda purposes. We will continue to watch for signs that these statements could amount to something more than rhetorical support.

QUESTION: And do you have any indication at this point that Boko Haram is receiving assistance from ISIS in the form of messaging and – propaganda, for lack of a better word – messaging assistance, the robust media wing that ISIS has and that Boko Haram seems to be emulating?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any more details on that. Obviously, this is, as I mentioned, a propaganda effort, is our belief. But in terms of operational coordination, we haven't – we'll continue to watch that space.

All right.

QUESTION: I have one on Bahrain.

MS. PSAKI: Oh, okay. Yes.

QUESTION: Sunday, the appeal – court's going to hear the appeal of Nabeel Rajab, the blogger.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm. I have something on this, Matt, but it's at my desk, so I will promise to get it to you right after the briefing. I apologize.

QUESTION: All right. I guess that will do.

MS. PSAKI: It's a Friday. My apologies.

QUESTION: Yes, it is.

MS. PSAKI: Thank you, everyone.

(The briefing was concluded at 2:02 p.m.)

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