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**Briefer: John Kirby, Spokesperson**

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
DAILY PRESS BRIEFING

DPB # 87

THURSDAY, MAY 19, 2016  
(ON THE RECORD UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED)

1:39 p.m. EDT

**MR KIRBY:** Hello, everybody. I do not have – I guess for the second straight day, maybe the third, I don't have any opening statements, so we'll get right at it.

**QUESTION:** Can we start with – and I know this has already been addressed from the White House podium, but – the EgyptAir crash?

**MR KIRBY:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** Can you confirm that there were no U.S. citizens or dual U.S. citizens on board? Do you have any information about the kind of help the U.S. Government has offered for the investigation? And have you had any communications from the Egyptians requesting assistance?

**MR KIRBY:** Okay. There's a lot there. So we still don't have any indications at all that there were American citizens on board. Obviously, we're still working our way through this, but at this time, we know of no American citizens that were on board the plane.

As for help, I think my colleagues at the Defense Department have already spoken to the fact that they have helped with respect to maritime patrol aircraft to help in the search for wreckage and potentially survivors. And as for investigative help, I'm not aware of any specific investigative help that's being provided. Now that said, we have made it very clear that the United States stands willing to do that. But I'm not aware of any specific investigative help right now.

**QUESTION:** And are you aware of any acceptance – I mean, even if they accepted it, there might be a little bit of a delay between --

**MR KIRBY:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** -- when you could – the investigators get there. Have they accepted your offers?

**MR KIRBY:** I'm not, honestly, aware of any specific requests for investigative assistance by Egyptian authorities. But again, we've made it clear that we, certainly, are willing to provide that. You might want to check in with the FBI or NTSB later today. I'm just not aware.

**QUESTION:** And just on the – I'm blanking on what I wanted to ask you. I apologize.

**MR KIRBY:** Nic. Yeah.

**QUESTION:** Okay. I know that it's difficult to say, it's maybe too early to say, but do you have reasons to believe that it could be a terror attack or that it could be an accident?

**MR KIRBY:** It's just too soon to know. It really is. Investigators are just getting to work on this. And I don't think it would be prudent for us to speculate one way or the other right now.

**QUESTION:** Sorry. I remember what it was.

**MR KIRBY:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** Regarding the DOD's offer of -- I think it was EP-3 or P-3 aircraft to look for survivors --

**MR KIRBY:** Right.

**QUESTION:** -- has there been any -- and I know this is their question, but it wasn't clear to me from what I saw out of them whether those aircraft might have, for example, have had surveillance of the area when the crash occurred.

**MR KIRBY:** Yeah. We are not aware that there was -- we're not aware that there was any recognition or received transmission of any indications at the time of the accident in terms of what might have happened. So I'm not aware of any sensors that the U.S. military has or deploys -- air or maritime -- that picked anything up on this.

**QUESTION:** Can we move on?

**MR KIRBY:** Yeah.

**QUESTION:** Okay.

**MR KIRBY:** Well, wait, I think Arshad's got one.

**QUESTION:** Sorry.

**QUESTION:** Sure, sure.

**QUESTION:** Just one on this. Just leaving aside sensors picking up communications --

**MR KIRBY:** Or --

**QUESTION:** -- or video or anything else --

**MR KIRBY:** -- video or -- I'm not aware of any capturing through electronic means -- let me try to be as expansive as I can -- any capturing through electronic means of either imagery, audio, or any other electronic transmissions that would lead us to have any greater clarity about what happened.

**QUESTION:** Does that include satellites, and actual technical readings?

**MR KIRBY:** As far as I know, it includes --

**QUESTION:** Everything?

**MR KIRBY:** -- everything. We don't have --

**QUESTION:** Okay. Thank you.

**MR KIRBY:** Now, but that said, Arshad, again, this just happened this morning. And so I would refer you to DOD for more detail about that. But just before coming out here -- because I asked -- I'm not aware that we have -- that we recorded, saw, photographed, or have possession of any electronic indications about what happened. So again, it's just now getting started, but I would -- DOD would probably be a better place to go.

Yeah.

**QUESTION:** Can we go to the Palestinian-Israeli peace process?

**MR KIRBY:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** Can I have one more on Egypt?

**QUESTION:** Because the Secretary just issued a -- on EgyptAir?

**QUESTION:** Sorry. Can I have one more on Egypt?

**QUESTION:** Sure. Yes, absolutely.

**QUESTION:** Just a quick follow-up.

**MR KIRBY:** He's being such a gentleman today.

**QUESTION:** I'm always a gentleman. (Laughter.)

**MR KIRBY:** You are.

**QUESTION:** I really appreciate that.

**MR KIRBY:** You are. I apologize.

**QUESTION:** Thank you.

**MR KIRBY:** You are. You are. We'll give you credit for that.

Go ahead, Nike.

**QUESTION:** Yes. Will today's incident be taken into consideration for the travel alert to Egypt by the State Department?

**MR KIRBY:** I'm not aware of any – again, this just happened. So there's been no updates that we've issued in terms of a travel alert. I'm not aware of any intention to do so right now. But we're going to, obviously, follow the investigation as closely as we can. And if we feel there's a need in the future, we'll certainly do that. But I'm not aware of any intention to do so right now. Okay?

**QUESTION:** Yeah. I want to move to the Palestinian-Israeli peace process. Because the Secretary just gave a statement saying that he would attend the ministerial meeting in Paris, France, apparently, on June 3rd. He said I don't know whether it's June 3rd or when, but he will attend. My question is will the Secretary go in there to explore or would you go there with certain ideas that have accumulated over, let's say, your past efforts or as a result of your past efforts? Because he did acknowledge that – in his statement, he says we made a great deal of effort, we made some progress, and so on. So will you go in with some sort of parameters or certain ideas and so on?

**MR KIRBY:** Well, I can assure that the Secretary's not going to attend the meeting with the expectation that he's just going to be in the audience. He certainly fully expects to be a participant in these discussions. And as he has said many times, and I think said it again today, we're not going to close down any good ideas that can help try to create the conditions for the leadership there, by the parties, to get to a two-state solution. So I would fully anticipate that the Secretary's participation will be very active and energetic, as it has been.

**QUESTION:** Now he – when he was asked about the failure of the U.S. policies, he says we have not failed, the countries have failed. Now is he suggesting that the Palestinians are a country that have failed or is it just Israel in this case?

**MR KIRBY:** He was talking – no. No.

**QUESTION:** Or was he talking about recently?

**MR KIRBY:** No. He was talking about the international community together has got to continue to do more.

**QUESTION:** Okay, let me ask you a couple questions on other issues. The Israelis have added more restrictions on Palestinian passages and checkpoints, added many checkpoints and so on. It is becoming really very difficult for them to traverse an already sort of burdened geography. Do you have any comment on that? Would you call on the Israelis to sort of maybe ease the restriction rather than increase them?

**MR KIRBY:** I don't have – I'm not going to comment on specific measures that the Israeli Government may or may not be putting into place. So I'm going to refrain from commenting on that specifically. That said, in general, as you know, we continue to support freedom of movement in general.

**QUESTION:** Okay. And also the Palestinians have arrested a student today because he – the Palestinian Authority – because he posted on Facebook a comment stating that – or expressing

his opinion about the Palestinian Authority being corrupt. Now the Palestinian Authority is one of – you are its largest benefactor. These kind of abuses go on day in and day out, the human rights abuses. They arrest people at will; they do all kinds of things. Will you raise this issue with the Palestinian Authority? Would you raise this issue with the Palestinian Authority?

**MR KIRBY:** I'm not aware of this particular incident, so I can't affirmatively say that we will, in fact, raise it, but we'll obviously follow it as best we can. And just what I would say writ large is we're going to continue to stress to leaders of both sides here to take the necessary actions to reduce the tensions. And obviously, when it comes to expression, you know where we are in terms of our belief in the freedom of expression.

**QUESTION:** But this is not the first time, John, that the Palestinian Authority has taken very draconian measures against journalists, people who are Palestinian journalists, people who are expressing --

**MR KIRBY:** Right.

**QUESTION:** -- their point of view and so on. They are being arrested at will and so – and the United States seems to be looking the other way, because --

**MR KIRBY:** No, no. I totally disagree with that. We're not looking the other way. I mean, we routinely – publicly and privately – raise our concerns about freedom of expression and freedom of the press in particular. And you know that better than anybody, sitting here every day as you do. This is not something that we're turning a blind eye to. And we – we're not bashful. No matter who it is, or in what country it is, we're never bashful about raising these concerns, and we'll continue to do so. I just don't have any specific information about this incident. You have information I don't have, but I can tell you that we routinely raise our concerns there and elsewhere around the world.

**QUESTION:** And my final question: A group of Belgian parliamentarians want to – they're gathering support and some sort of signatures to offer the peace prize to a Palestinian political parliamentarian who is in prison, who's been in prison for a dozen years – Marwan Barghouti. Is that something that you would not look too kindly on, would you support, or anything like this? Or would you rather wait until this comes to light, this issue?

**MR KIRBY:** I've not heard about this particular decision or this group's desire to nominate this individual. So I think I'm going to refrain from commenting on that until we can get a little bit more information about it. I just have not heard about it, Said.

**QUESTION:** Iraq?

**MR KIRBY:** Yeah.

**QUESTION:** Thank you. So the governor of --

**QUESTION:** Can we stick with Israel and Palestine? Sorry. Just to get it out of the way. I realize that Prime Minister Netanyahu has not yet formally formed his governing coalition or his

new governing coalition. But it seems fairly clear that Avigdor Lieberman is going to be in the cabinet. Do you have – and likely as defense minister. Do you have any comment on this expected coalition formation and whether it is likely to be even further to the right than the existing one?

**MR KIRBY:** Well, I think it won't come as a surprise to you that because this – there's been no formal formation, we're going to refrain from commenting at this time, particularly on a – what's an internal Israeli political matter. That said, as we say elsewhere, we look forward to working with the prime minister's government no matter who he selects, and to looking for ways to continue to deepen the very close, very strong bilateral relationship that we have with Israel. And I'm quite confident that we'll be able to do that.

Yeah.

**QUESTION:** Thank you. So the governor of Kirkuk, Najmiddin Karim, is in – has been in Washington for a few days. Has he met anybody at the State Department?

**MR KIRBY:** I'm not aware of it.

**QUESTION:** And he has talked in the media calling for more autonomy for his governorate, for the province of Kirkuk. And do you – does the United States support autonomy for that province?

**MR KIRBY:** We support the central government in Baghdad and Prime Minister Abadi and his efforts to continue to govern Iraq through a unity government, and that support and that policy is not going to change.

**QUESTION:** Okay, and just one more question. The Kurdish members of parliament in Iraq, they haven't been back to the parliament since the protesters stormed the parliament building, and that's led to the virtual dysfunctional – dysfunctioning of the parliament. Do you call on the members of parliament to go back to their normal duties?

**MR KIRBY:** Look, these are individual decisions that these members are making. What we are going to do is continue to support the Iraqi Government – the central government in Baghdad – as it, under Prime Minister Abadi's leadership, continues to make the reforms they know they need to make to move Iraq forward. And some of those include, obviously, the security sector, and so we're going to remain committed to our mission of trying to improve the competency and capability of the Iraqi Security Forces.

Yeah.

**QUESTION:** On Japan, do you have any comment on the murder case in Okinawa, where a former U.S. Marine employed at Kadena Air Force Base was arrested?

**MR KIRBY:** Yes, I do, if I could just get to it here.

We're aware of the arrest of a U.S. citizen civilian – in Okinawa and we're obviously following the case very closely. As Ambassador Kennedy has indicated earlier, our heartfelt sympathy and deepest condolences go out to the family and the friends of the victim, Rina Shimabukuro. This is a terrible tragedy and it's obviously an outrage. We're treating this situation with the utmost seriousness, and the United States military is cooperating fully with local authorities in their investigation. And for more details on that, I'd refer you to DOD.

**QUESTION:** Are there any concerns that – given the timing that this might have a negative effect on the – next week's G7 summit?

**MR KIRBY:** Well, I know that we very much look forward to the G7 summit – the United States does – to participating. And as you know, the President will be going. There is an awful lot to discuss, a lot of very significant business before the G7, and we look forward to participating in that. And I can't tell you to the degree to which – that this will be brought up or discussed, but as I said earlier, we take it very, very seriously and so does the Department of Defense. And nothing's going to change about the gravity with which we move forward on this case and do whatever we need to do to help local authorities as they investigate it.

**QUESTION:** Thank you.

**QUESTION:** A follow-up question. Do you think that this – this matters angers Okinawa people really now, and so do you think that --

**MR KIRBY:** It angers us.

**QUESTION:** Yeah. Now, do you think that this fear influence to the Futenma relocation plan? And also, do you think – Okinawa governor want to be reversed the SOFA, so do you think it – United States is think about that changing to the SOFA (inaudible)?

**MR KIRBY:** I would refer you to DOD for discussions about the Status of Forces Agreement. That is for them to speak to. But did I understand your first question to be about the impact on the Futenma replacement facility?

**QUESTION:** Yeah, Futenma plan, replacement plan. Yes.

**MR KIRBY:** Look, nothing's changed about our commitment to moving forward on the Futenma replacement facility, and nothing's changed about the Japanese Government's commitment to that. And we're going to continue to work towards that end. As dreadful and as tragic as that – as this is, it's not going to change our commitment with the Government of Japan to moving forward with the FRF. As I said, we're going to work as closely as we can – and I'd refer you to the military for more details – with local authorities as they investigate this horrible crime.

**QUESTION:** Can we stay in China?

**MR KIRBY:** China?

**QUESTION:** In Asia. Do you have anything on the – what DOD claimed to be unsafe intercept of a U.S. military aircraft by two Chinese flight – fighter jets over the South China Sea? Has there been any diplomatic communications between these two countries after this incident?

**MR KIRBY:** I'm not aware of any specific communications about this incident. This was a – obviously, we share the concerns that were expressed by the Defense Department over these unsafe maneuvers. They're not doing anything to lessen tensions and to decrease – to do anything to decrease the possibility for miscalculations and perhaps put people in real harm's way. So we absolutely share the concerns that were expressed by Defense Department leaders about these maneuvers. I just don't have any specific diplomatic conversations to read out. This is something that we routinely have raised in the past when it's happened, and I'm quite certain that we'll continue to raise our concerns about this going forward.

**QUESTION:** Could you give us a sense of the current mechanism between these two countries to prevent miscalculation or incidents like this?

**MR KIRBY:** I'm sorry, say that again?

**QUESTION:** The current mechanism between U.S. and China to prevent incidents like this and to prevent miscalculation.

**MR KIRBY:** Well, again, I'd refer you to DOD to talk about specific mechanisms. But this is not a military with which we don't have a relationship. It's not a military in which we don't have avenues for communications. We do routinely on many, many levels. So there's certainly plenty of vehicles available for the United States military and the PLA to have appropriate communications on these kinds of incidents. That's not the problem. The problem isn't are you talking or not. The problem is this kind of behavior, this very unsafe, dangerous behavior in the air, which puts people's lives at risk unnecessarily.

**QUESTION:** John?

**MR KIRBY:** Samir.

**QUESTION:** Did the Secretary talk to any Egyptian officials today about --

**MR KIRBY:** I don't have any conversations with Egyptian officials by the Secretary to read out to you, but if that changes I'll let you know.

**QUESTION:** Okay.

**MR KIRBY:** Yeah.

**QUESTION:** Can we stay in the same region, Sudan?

**MR KIRBY:** Sure. Sudan.

**QUESTION:** Sudan. Yes, sir.

**MR KIRBY:** Go ahead.

**QUESTION:** (Inaudible.) Today *The Washington Times* quotes the Sudanese ambassador to Washington, Maowia Osman Khalid, as having said that the United States, that his country and the United States are cooperating in the fight against ISIL and that they provide intelligence, they do all kinds of things, and they are willing to do more – in fact, give some sort of, I guess, base or something to – in the fight against ISIS in exchange for the lessening of the sanctions and so on. Is that something that would be considered by this Administration?

**MR KIRBY:** You're going to have to let me take that. I haven't seen those – I haven't seen those comments and so I'm not --

**QUESTION:** Okay, it's in *The Washington Times* and if you take the question --

**MR KIRBY:** Yeah, I haven't seen those comments.

**QUESTION:** But generally --

**MR KIRBY:** I'm reticent to speculate about --

**QUESTION:** Right.

**MR KIRBY:** -- what we will or will not do. Obviously, there's a shared threat of terrorism there --

**QUESTION:** Right.

**MR KIRBY:** -- in the region. And we are working with many governments in the region to help them deal with this threat. I don't have anything specific with respect to Sudan.

**QUESTION:** Well, he was quite forward or – in his explanation that they can cooperate on Somalia, on --

**MR KIRBY:** Yeah.

**QUESTION:** -- on Libya and many others. They are --

**MR KIRBY:** The other – so let me take the question, Said. I just don't have any details on what we may or may not be willing to do going forward. I suspect part of the answer to you will be to consult with DOD since it is DOD that really manages government-to-government relations with respect to specific counterterrorism activities.

Yeah.

**QUESTION:** On Taiwan, Tsai Ing-wen will take office as the new president of Taiwan tonight. What are the U.S. comments on her presidency?

**MR KIRBY:** What I can tell you is that the American Institute in Taiwan has announced that it has organized a delegation representing the American people to attend the inauguration. The lead will be former United States Trade Representative Ron Kirk. He'll be joined by Ambassador John Negroponte, AIT Chairman Ambassador Raymond Burghardt, and AIT Director Kin Moy, and Mr. Alan Romberg. Okay, so we'll have a delegation there.

**QUESTION:** I would like to follow up on Taiwan. When Tsai Ing-wen, before she got elected, she was visiting Washington, D.C., and met with Deputy Secretary of State Tony Blinken. Was there any plan – is there any plan for him to issue maybe a phone call or congratulation or a letter, like that?

**MR KIRBY:** I'm not aware of any, and we – and if we have further comment on it, we'll let you know, but I'm not aware of any right now.

**QUESTION:** The fact that she is the first female president of Taiwan, what does that say to the democracy in Asia? Is that a good example?

**MR KIRBY:** Well, I think, look, we're going to – the delegation will congratulate the president-elect on her inauguration and reiterate our strong support for Taiwan's vibrant democracy, the importance the United States places on its relationship with the people of Taiwan, and our strong interest in continued cross-strait peace and stability.

Okay? Yeah, ahead.

**QUESTION:** In light of the investigation that the U.S. opened into Russian officials and athletes believed to have been involved in doping, I want to ask you if other countries should expect that their athletes can be prosecuted by the United States if there is evidence of doping and if they competed in the U.S.

**MR KIRBY:** That's a great question for the Justice Department.

**QUESTION:** But that involves – I ask you – I just --

**MR KIRBY:** Goyal.

**QUESTION:** That involves foreign nationals, and also the question is what other countries should expect.

**MR KIRBY:** I understand. I understand that your question involves other foreign nationals, but you're asking about a law enforcement investigation for which I won't speak. And it's really a question better placed to the Justice Department.

Goyal.

**QUESTION:** Thank you, sir. Two questions. One, as far as U.S. and Nepal relations are concerned, recently Nepal's deputy prime minister was here across the street at the U.S.-India – the USIP, and he was talking about that the international community and the U.S. should help

more after one year of earthquake in Nepal, and people are still waiting for shelter, food, medicine, and so forth. But some of the NGOs that I were talking in the same audience are saying that most of the money going from the U.S. or donations from the international community, much of it goes in the pockets of the corrupt politicians, not reaching to the people.

**MR KIRBY:** Well, I think our longstanding position about corruption is well known and the Secretary has spoken very firmly about this, as recently as just a couple of weeks ago in Oxford about the corrosive effect that corruption can have on entire societies, if not regions, and certainly across the world. So without speaking to specifics on these incidents you're talking about in terms – in Nepal, I mean, this is something that we routinely discuss with our counterparts around the world about the need for governing structures to be accountable to the people that they represent and to marshal their resources and their behavior to comport with those responsibilities. So it's something we take very, very seriously.

**QUESTION:** Is the U.S. – moreover is happy with the current government in Nepal?

**MR KIRBY:** Well, we're watching the situation there. We've talked about this before. We're certainly watching that closely and we continue to have frank and honest discussions with leaders in Nepal about the responsibilities of governance, of good governance.

**QUESTION:** One on Bangladesh, please. As far as Bangladesh, much is going on there after the attacks and – against the minorities and including LGBT and the U.S. also – this official there. There was a demonstration at Dupont Circle by the minorities – a vigil, actually, it was a candle vigil also standing by with the minorities and also against – and against the attacks – minorities in Bangladesh. And there was a official from the Bangladesh embassy also. He said that the Bangladesh Government is doing the best and also bringing to justice those in 1971 and other terrorists and they are standing and need U.S. help.

So what sort of help they are seeking, or what's going on between U.S. and Bangladesh as far as stopping all these attacks against the minorities, including Hindus, Christians, LGBTs, and others?

**MR KIRBY:** Well, obviously, we're deeply concerned by this violence, Goyal. We're very troubled by this. They appear to be carried out by a small group of terrorists who seek to stifle independent thought and to attack violently anyone who disagrees with them and their thoughts. We're pretty confident – no, not pretty confident – we are confident that these attacks do not represent the views of and are rejected as abhorrent by the overwhelming majority of people in Bangladesh. Bangladesh, as you know, has a proud tradition of being a pluralistic society that values diversity, welcomes the free exchange of ideas, and these are the values that these violent extremists are ultimately attacking.

**QUESTION:** Thank you, sir.

**QUESTION:** Can I have a quick one on Syria?

**MR KIRBY:** Got time for just a couple more.

**QUESTION:** Really quick, just give us an update of what's going on, I mean, with the – there seems to be a total absence of clarity on what is happening on Syria and --

**MR KIRBY:** Oh, on Syria.

**QUESTION:** Right, regarding Syria on the talks, on the --

**MR KIRBY:** Well, I don't know if I --

**QUESTION:** -- the ceasefire status and so on. You're --

**MR KIRBY:** I don't think I agree that there's been a total absence of clarity. I mean, the Secretary addressed some of this today in Brussels at his press conference and then he, of course, addressed the international community after the ISSG meeting in Vienna.

Look, what's going on is the ISSG – now up to 24, 25 different nations, so four more nations added – has come together yet again in Vienna – and I encourage you to look at the communique – reaffirmed that what we're trying to get is a transformation from cessation of hostilities that tend to be in localized areas to a nationwide ceasefire. And everybody signed up to that.

Number two, that for those parties who show a persistent reluctance to participate actively in abiding by the cessation, that they will no longer be allowed to be considered parties to it.

Number three, that humanitarian access, though it has improved, is still woefully behind the need, and that if things don't get better by the 1st of June, the ISSG will urge the World Food Program to conduct more airdrops to places in need, and that the ISSG will support those efforts.

And number – and number four, and not inconsequentially, is a strong affirmation by the ISSG about the need to get the political talks back on track and resumed. And Special Envoy de Mistura said himself that he recognizes the clock is ticking here. We've got Ramadan coming up in the first week of June and he's mindful of the calendar, and he's also mindful of the need to get the parties back together to resume the very necessary, very important political dialogue that has to occur to try to get to this transitional governing body. You know well that in three sets of meetings – or three meetings, there hasn't been as much progress made towards that as anybody would like, and Special Envoy de Mistura knows that he has to do that.

So there was a very substantive set of discussions on Vienna. Did it solve every problem? No. But it did advance a set of common concerns. It did provide more structure and I think a heightened sense of urgency about certainly the humanitarian access and violations of the cessation that I think speak clearly and affirmatively about the concern that the international community continues to view the situation in Syria.

**QUESTION:** Thank you.

**MR KIRBY:** Yeah. Okay, thanks, everybody. Oh, listen, by the way, a programming note – there will not be a briefing tomorrow. There won't be a spokesperson in the building. Two of them are traveling back and I'm traveling over tonight, so there will be no briefing tomorrow.

**QUESTION:** Can I have two quick on the Western Hemisphere, please? Really quick.

**MR KIRBY:** Okay, really quick.

**QUESTION:** Right. One is on Venezuela. Do you have anything on the decision by the embassy to not to take new appointment for a visa application to the United States in response to the government's refusal to give U.S. personnel visas?

**MR KIRBY:** What I can tell you is that effective the 18th of May and until further notice, there'll be no appointments available for first-time applicants for tourist visas at the embassy. Our current inability to schedule appointments for first-time tourist visa applicants is a direct result of lengthy Venezuelan Government delays in issuing visas for incoming U.S. diplomatic personnel assigned to our embassy to replace those officers who have departed. So it's very much tied to a manning issue, a staffing issue. Okay?

**QUESTION:** And then in Nicaragua, do you have anything with the governments issued a electoral calendar without provisions for a electoral observation mission?

**MR KIRBY:** As we've said and made clear, allowing internationally recognized election observers to freely monitor elections will only strengthen Nicaragua. We urge the Nicaraguan Government to issue a timely invitation to credible international observation missions. Countries from the United States to Burma regularly invite electoral observation missions to validate the strength of their democratic institutions and to provide constructive and respectful recommendations on how to further improve the process and empower their citizens in determining the future of their country. We believe it's important for Nicaragua, and again, we urge them to make that kind of an invitation.

Thanks, everybody.

(The briefing was concluded at 2:12 p.m.)

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