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DPB # 84

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 2, 2023
(ON THE RECORD UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED)
Briefer: Matthew Miller, Spokesperson

1:33 p.m. EDT

QUESTION: Hello, Matt.

MR MILLER: Hello. You taking my picture? Thank you. Smile. (Laughter.)

QUESTION: You usually say (inaudible).

MR MILLER: Maybe I'm trying to change things up. Hello, everyone. Let me start with some brief comments at the top before moving to questions.

The United States Department of State-supported Conflict Observatory program released a report today on the naturalization of residents of Russia-occupied parts of Ukraine, known as passportization. The report details a disturbing campaign to compel residents to adopt Russian citizenship. The report – those who refuse to do so face limited access to public services, employment, and property ownership, with implications for their mobility, health, and livelihoods.

Parents face a grimmer challenge, as children born in occupied parts of Ukraine have limited access to the benefits of formal Ukrainian citizenship. Parents who refuse to register their children for Russian citizenship face reduced access to parental benefits. Some parents have been threatened with losing custody of their children and possible deportation to Russia.

Passportization also provides a pretext to further the Kremlin's imperial ambitions, ostensibly to defend the citizens it claims beyond its borders. This is a long-standing tactic, as seen in areas that Russia occupies within the internationally recognized borders of Georgia.

State-sanctioned intimidation will not change the facts: every inch of Ukraine's territory is and will remain Ukraine. Ukrainians living under Russian occupation in Ukraine are – and will remain – Ukrainian citizens. The United States reminds Russia of its obligations under international law, and we call again on Russia's leadership to end this illegal war.

And with that, who wants to start us off? Take – in the front row.

QUESTION: Thank you. If I could start with Niger. There's reporting that the U.S. is set to evacuate some staff and families from its embassy there, but that the mission will remain open and senior leadership will continue working from there. Can you confirm this?

MR MILLER: I cannot. I've seen the reports. I'm not in any position to make announcements at this point. I will say that the U.S. Embassy in Niamey is open. We intend for it to remain open. We remain committed to the people of Niger and our relationship with the people of Niger, and we remain diplomatically engaged at the highest levels. That's something that will continue.

I will also say that the safety and security of our personnel and of U.S. citizens overseas is our highest priority. We constantly monitor events on the ground and make decisions based on what's appropriate to safeguard our personnel. We're monitoring the situation on the ground and making the decisions we need to, to ensure their security now, but I don't have any further announcements at this time.

QUESTION: And what's your assessment of the security situation at the embassy?

MR MILLER: The security at the – I would say generally the situation in Niamey remains calm. It is a fluid situation. We continue to monitor it. And we will make whatever decisions are appropriate regarding the safety of our personnel in the embassy as well as U.S. citizens on the ground.

QUESTION: And do you know how many U.S. citizens there are working at the embassy and how many U.S. citizens there are in Niger generally?

MR MILLER: I don't have – I don't know the number of U.S. citizens in Niger generally. That's always a number that's impossible for us to track. There are citizens who register with the embassy when they come into the country, but we believe generally the vast majority in a country do not. I've seen this in previous situations where we don't know the number. With regard to the number who are working in the embassy, we obviously have that number. I don't have it at my fingertips here, but I'd be happy to get it for you.

QUESTION: Thank you.

QUESTION: Niger?

MR MILLER: Stick on the – stick on Niger. Let me --

QUESTION: Niger?

MR MILLER: Let Molly – or Olivia, sorry, go ahead. I don't know where Molly came from. (Laughter.) Olivia.

QUESTION: At yesterday's briefing you said that there were no indications of threats to U.S. persons or facilities. Has that assessment changed at all?

MR MILLER: It has not.

QUESTION: Okay. And earlier this week, senior officials here told us that there was a narrow opportunity to possibly reverse this takeover. Has that opportunity broadened or has it dwindled in the past few days?

MR MILLER: I would say that it is in the same place it has been in the past few days. Obviously, we've seen a military junta attempt to seize control of the country and attempt to remove the democratically elected leader from power. We have been trying our utmost to reverse that situation. Secretary Blinken has remained engaged with leaders in the region. He spoke with President Bazoum again yesterday. It was his fourth or fifth time to talk with him – to talk to him since this situation arose some 10 days ago or so. So we will continue to remain engaged – and not just with leaders in Niger but with leaders in the region – to attempt to reverse this attempted takeover of the country.

QUESTION: And finally, there were also some concerns that the Wagner mercenary group could aim to take advantage of some of the unrest that has ensued. Have you seen any indications that that has happened?

MR MILLER: We have not seen any indications yet that that is happening. I have – we have seen the reports, maybe, that – reports that we have not verified ourselves – that leaders of the junta have traveled to another country to seek Wagner's assistance. It's not something we've been able to verify.

I would not be surprised to see Wagner attempt to exploit this situation to their own advantage, as they've attempted to exploit other situations in Africa to their own advantage. And when I say to their own advantage, I mean to their own personal financial advantage as well as their attempt to expand their influence on the continent. But I would add that any attempt by the military leaders in Niger to bring the Wagner forces into Niger would be a sign – yet another sign that they do not have the best interests of the Nigerien people at heart.

Everywhere we've seen Wagner group arrive, death and destruction has followed in their wake; and not just death and destruction, but especially in Africa, we've seen them exploit local populations. We've seen them commit human rights violations. We've seen them extract minerals and extract wealth from countries. So the arrival of Wagner forces in Niger – which, again, we have not seen at this point – would be an indication that the military leadership does not have the best interests of the country at heart.

QUESTION: I have another one but not related to Niger so thank you.

MR MILLER: Okay. Niger. Yeah, go ahead, Kylie. Go ahead.

QUESTION: Can I just follow up on that quickly?

MR MILLER: Sure.

QUESTION: Have you guys --

MR MILLER: We talked about this yesterday. The – I'll – you will get your questions, but no shouting. Okay.

QUESTION: I understand that --

MR MILLER: You weren't shouting. Sorry.

QUESTION: -- that you're publicly saying that it wouldn't be a good thing for the Nigerien military to rely on Wagner in any way. But have you guys privately expressed that sentiment and those concerns to anyone in Niger at this point? Are there any direct lines of communication on that topic that are happening?

MR MILLER: I will not get into sensitive, private, diplomatic conversations, but I think our opinion about Wagner forces operating anywhere in the world is pretty well-known.

QUESTION: Okay.

MR MILLER: Said, coming next for Niger. Yeah.

QUESTION: You're still not calling it a coup, right?

MR MILLER: We are calling it an attempt to take power, which --

QUESTION: Okay.

MR MILLER: -- may still be reversed. And it is our – the work that we are pursuing every day is to ensure that it can be reversed.

QUESTION: So – and the fact that the head of the presidential guard, whatever it is, took over the country, that is not a coup?

MR MILLER: The – we do not have finality yet of this situation.

QUESTION: Okay.

MR MILLER: It remains a fluid situation. And the work that we are trying to effectuate is to ensure that the democratically elected president is restored.

QUESTION: And second, both Mali and Burkina Faso issued statements – the governments – that any attempt to interfere militarily on behalf of the incarcerated president and so on would be war on them. Do you have any comment on that?

MR MILLER: I would say – as I said with respect to other reports of potential military conflict yesterday, we are trying to resolve this situation peacefully. We think the – what is in the best

interest of the people of Niger is to resolve this situation peacefully. That is our policy and that is what we're trying to effectuate.

QUESTION: Okay.

MR MILLER: Anything else on Niger before we go on?

Okay. Janne, go ahead.

QUESTION: I have questions – NPT – on the NPT, about it. The NPT, non-proliferation treaty meeting, is underway in Vienna now. After North Korea withdraw the NPT, it eventually completed its nuclear weapons development. What efforts will the United States make to bring North Korea back to the NPT?

MR MILLER: We continue to encourage North Korea to stop its continued pursuit of ballistic missile technology, its continued pursuit of nuclear weapons, the advancement of a nuclear weapons program. As we have made clear from the outset of this administration, we are open to conversations. We would welcome conversations with North Korea about these issues, and they have refused to engage meaningfully with us.

QUESTION: How do you view North Korea's status nuclear – as a nuclear power state? How do you view – I mean, United States acknowledge North Korea as a nuclear power state?

MR MILLER: I would just refer to my previous comments on that.

QUESTION: And on China, do you have the latest information about the suspension of U.S. Government support for a university supported by China's foreign intelligence agency, the Confucius Academy? How it is currently going?

MR MILLER: I do not have any information on that. Sorry.

QUESTION: But can you take that questions --

MR MILLER: Sure. Sure. Go ahead.

QUESTION: Thank you.

QUESTION: On China.

MR MILLER: Let me --

MR MILLER: I'll come to you next.

QUESTION: Sorry.

MR MILLER: Oh, that's right. You did – yeah, go ahead. Go ahead.

QUESTION: I wanted to ask you, on behalf of a colleague --

MR MILLER: Yeah.

QUESTION: -- on China, which is what the State Department's reaction to the Ministry of State Security's encouragement of Chinese citizens to assist in counterespionage efforts? Are there concerns in this department that this could jeopardize the safety of American citizens or American businesspeople operating in China, especially in light of the ambiguous counterespionage implemented in July?

MR MILLER: We do have concerns over it. Certainly, encouraging citizens to spy on each other is something that's of great concern. We are closely monitoring the implementation of China's new counterespionage law, as we have been, which as written greatly expands the scope of what activities are considered espionage. In addition to being concerned about these new reports, we remain concerned about the risk of arbitrary arrest and detention in the PRC, as is reflected in our Level 3 Travel Advisory. And I will add that these are issues that the Secretary raised in his meetings with Chinese officials.

QUESTION: And have these concerns been raised more recently in meetings that have been subsequent to the Secretary's initial --

MR MILLER: I will say we have raised our general concerns about the anti-espionage law in our meetings with Chinese officials. With respect to this new report, I think it just broke overnight, so I would be – I don't know that we've had any meetings with them with which we could raise it so --

QUESTION: Can I follow up on this?

QUESTION: Thank you.

MR MILLER: Hands up and we'll – Alex, I was going to come to you next.

QUESTION: A few related to Russia-Ukraine, if you don't mind.

MR MILLER: Yeah.

QUESTION: Now I'm going back to your topic. But before that, on Belarus at Polish border, what happened yesterday – have you guys determined what happened? Are you still waiting for other shoes to drop?

MR MILLER: We have seen that the Polish Government has issued a statement on the matter. We expect all countries to respect the sovereign air space of other countries, and we will continue to take NATO security very seriously.

QUESTION: But was is it a provocation from the Belarus side? And what is your determination?

MR MILLER: I don't have any further determination. We've seen – I will let the Polish Government speak to the incident. It was in the – in their territory, and they've issued a statement on it.

QUESTION: When the United States says that we will defend every inch of NATO territory, when it comes to this sort of incident, what does that mean in practice?

MR MILLER: I am not going to get ahead of any announcements that we or any other NATO country might make. There is a process. There is a process that is in place for NATO countries to invoke Article 5. We are not at that stage at this point.

QUESTION: That being said, has there been any effort to reach out to Polish officials or any article for discussion?

MR MILLER: We are in constant communication with all of our NATO Allies.

QUESTION: Has the Secretary reached out to Polish colleague or not?

MR MILLER: I'm sorry?

QUESTION: Has the Secretary reached out to his Polish colleague or not?

MR MILLER: About this incident? Not that I'm aware of.

QUESTION: Okay. So let me move back to your topper --

MR MILLER: No, let me come back. That was four questions.

QUESTION: Okay. Yeah. Sure.

MR MILLER: So go ahead.

QUESTION: Thank you.

MR MILLER: I'm just going to try to, like, not – work the room a little bit, so --

QUESTION: Yeah, call on someone.

QUESTION: Iraqi prime minister yesterday said that his government is in close contact with the Washington about some 10 billion U.S. dollars that it owes to Iran in gas payment. And he spelled out that yesterday a delegation from Iraq went to Oman to discuss about how to transferring this 10 billion U.S. dollars to Oman. My question is: What's your response to this Iraqi call, and are you going to release all the Iranian money altogether?

MR MILLER: The electricity waiver provided to Iraq last month allows for the transfer of funds from Iran's restricted accounts in Iraq to restricted accounts in select third-country banks. This is something I've spoke to previously from the podium. Prime Minister Sudani has

demonstrated commitment to strengthening Iraq's energy security, and this mechanism is only one way we are seeking to alleviate Iranian pressure on Iraq. We work closely with Iraq to ensure these energy payments are managed in a manner consistent with U.S. sanctions and cannot be diverted for illicit means, and we remain supportive of transactions for humanitarian goods and will continue to engage with the Iraqi Government on these complex issues.

QUESTION: Just to be clear that you are transferring all 10 billion U.S. dollars from Iraq to Sultanate of Oman?

MR MILLER: I don't have an update on the amount that has been – that is – that may move.

QUESTION: Yeah. And one question on Syria. Türkiye has declared its intention to move about 1 million displaced Syrian back to Syria, and has already deported 950 refugees to northwest Syria, and also – in the past week, and also intends to settle large amount of the Syrian refugee in formerly Kurdish areas in northwest Syria, which the Kurdish leaders in the area says that this is an alter of the demographic on – in this area, especially in Afrin, because Türkiye has finished the construction of 50 apartments in Afrin, Sharran district. Then are you monitoring the situation in Afrin, and how do you see this call of the Kurdish leaders in the region that they are defining this intention of Türkiye to change the demographic of Afrin?

MR MILLER: First of all, let me again thank Türkiye and its host communities for generously supporting nearly 3.7 million refugees, 3.3 million of whom are Syrians who have sought refuge from a brutal conflict. We believe the rights of all Syrians should be respected, including the housing, land, and property rights of those remaining in Syria and those who have been displaced. We encourage all parties to act in a manner that promotes peaceful coexistence and the respect of human rights. And as we have said before, any refugee returns to Syria should be voluntary, safe, dignified, sustainable, and coordinated with UNHCR. And while we do not oppose individual voluntary returns, the conditions in Syria today do not allow for organized large-scale returns, and we have been very clear about this with our foreign partners, including Türkiye.

QUESTION: You don't see this that this is an alter – this is an intention to alter the demographic change in Afrin?

MR MILLER: No.

Said, go ahead.

QUESTION: Thank you. Very quickly on more issues on the I2U2 economic forum and summit, which was held back, I guess, on February 22nd of this year. And at the time, the Under Secretary of State for Economic Growth, Energy, and Environment Jose Fernandez talked about projects like rail and pipeline and other things. I wonder if you could update us on this. What is the status of this?

MR MILLER: Sure. The work on those fronts continues. You've seen the under secretary speak to it on a number of occasions; the National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan has spoken to it, as has the Secretary. I – we are in steadfast – we are – remain committed to our work to deepen the Abraham Accords and forge new coalitions like I2U2. The unique grouping of countries in this partnership – India, Israel, the United States, and the UAE – identifies projects and initiatives to tackle some of the greatest challenges confronting the world. It's attempting to mobilize private sector and enterprise to modernize infrastructure, advance low-carbon development pathways, improve public health, and we continue to work to make progress in all of those areas.

QUESTION: Okay. So it would be under the umbrella of the Abraham Accords. And what is the role of India in this case? I mean, we know that the U.S., Israel, and the UAE are part of the Abraham Accord. But how does India fit in?

MR MILLER: The role of India, I said – I said we work on the Abraham Accords and forging new coalitions like the I2U2. Not saying it was part of the Abraham Accords.

QUESTION: Okay. Okay.

MR MILLER: India is a member of I2U2.

QUESTION: Okay. And the other thing: There is a U.S. bipartisan bill that aims to enhance Israel's ability to counter Iranian drones and so on. They're increasing from 55 million – from 40 million to 55 million dollars. And in the meantime, they're – Senator Jim Risch of Idaho and Congressman Michael McCaul of, I think, Iowa – they are holding $75 million in food aid to the Palestinians. I've asked about this a couple weeks ago and so on. They are still holding it.

Now, I understand that they are increasing aid to Israel and so on, but on the other hand they're holding money that is going to assist in food deliveries to Palestinians. And my question to you: Is the State Department talking to these legislators about withholding this money and releasing it?

MR MILLER: Let me say with respect to the proposed legislation, as usual, we wouldn't have any comment on draft legislation. With respect to our – any conversations with members of Congress on this, I also wouldn't speak to that. Those would be private conversations.

QUESTION: Can I go to India?

MR MILLER: Yeah, go ahead.

QUESTION: Thanks. Have you heard from any Americans impacted by the religious violence in Gurugram near New Delhi? And do you have any comment on the Hindu-Muslim clashes in the region?

MR MILLER: I would say of – with respect to the clashes that obviously we would, as always, urge calm and urge parties to refrain from violent actions.

With respect to whether we've heard from any Americans, I'm not aware of that. I'm happy to follow up with the – with the embassy.

QUESTION: Thank you.

MR MILLER: Yeah. Go ahead.

QUESTION: As the U.S. took over the presidency of the UN Security Council, I'm wondering if there are any plans over the reform of the Security Council, because last year during the General Assembly President Biden called for expanding the Security Council's membership, saying that a permanent seat should be granted to nations in Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean. Is the U.S. planning to raise this issue during its presidency? Any plans on that?

MR MILLER: So that remains our policy, and we continue to reiterate it at every opportunity. I don't have any announcements to make about what we might do over the next month. Obviously stay tuned and pay attention to what the ambassador to the United Nations, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, does with the presidency over that month. I would also highlight that Secretary Blinken will be at the UN Security Council tomorrow to highlight a number of issues related to food security and make announcements in that regard.

QUESTION: About reforming the --

MR MILLER: About – about --

QUESTION: -- Security Council as well?

MR MILLER: No, tomorrow's session will be focused on food security and the Secretary will be making announcements about the U.S. commitment to expanding food security. But of course, with respect to any other events that we might plan over the next month, I'm not going to make any announcements today, but stay tuned.

Yeah, go ahead.

QUESTION: Thank you, Matt. First of all I want to tell you, Matt, that I've never intended to put you in any hard spot --

MR MILLER: You haven't.

QUESTION: Yes, thank you. And my kids live in this country, so I have great respect and I think it's one of the best in the world.

MR MILLER: We agree on that.

QUESTION: And that brings me to my yesterday question now. Did you find out how much money the U.S. spent on drugs control, narcotics control since last 20 years?

MR MILLER: No.

QUESTION: Okay.

MR MILLER: I looked and went and found that we spend approximately 4 to 5 million dollars annually on counternarcotics program – programs in Pakistan. But with respect to the last 20 years, I think you'd have to go digging around the budgets to find that.

QUESTION: Okay, sir. Now, in one country where the U.S. was for 20 years, one of the leader there under the U.S. control – Rashid Dostum – about whom just three days ago *Rolling Stone* did an interview of him and there's a paragraph that just simply says, "he became kingmaker under the U.S.-backed government, mobilizing legions of Uzbek supporters" and "notably the massacre of hundreds of Taliban," et cetera, et cetera. Twenty years ago, State Department had declared him the largest heroin dealer in the world, and of course State Department means the DEA had told her, right, said that he's the top. Then he was defense minister under the U.S. Now – right now – Pakistan, when we have a minister that was arrested last year, a federal minister, on heroin charges – so do you see something, like, wrong what I'm trying to point out here? And because of this, Matt, till today, till right now, every country has citizens who are dying, and this heroin has been coming for 20 years.

MR MILLER: Let's just get to the – the question, if you don't mind, the --

QUESTION: So would you say that the State Department has any reaction to one of the biggest drug dealer in the world being a defense minister under the U.S. rule?

MR MILLER: I would say that we typically don't comment on law enforcement matters.

Daphne, did you have something?

QUESTION: Yeah, thank you. On the Saudi-organized Ukraine talks, what is the U.S. expectation on the outcome from that, and what are possible deliverables that might come out of this?

MR MILLER: So we are not looking at these talks as generating any concrete deliverables at the end of them. The point of these talks is to continue the conversation with countries around the world about how we obtain a just and lasting peace at the end of this war. So officials from the United States will be traveling to attend these talks, including officials from the State Department. I'll make more announcements about that in the coming days. And we will be engaged in these talks, which, again, were called by the Government of Ukraine, to talk about how at the end of this conflict we can secure a peace that respects Ukraine's territory, territorial integrity, and Ukraine's sovereignty.

And so, from our perspective, it is a chance for a number of countries around the world who can attend these talks to hear directly from the Ukrainian Government about the horrors their country has suffered at the hands of Russian aggression, and how that aggression should not be rewarded at the end of this war.

QUESTION: And do you have hopes that some countries who have been on the fence will throw their support behind Ukraine as a result of these talks, or is it more just a conversation?

MR MILLER: So again, I would not – I would not be looking to anything concrete at the end of this – of these talks. This is still the start of the process. Remember, there's still active fighting in Ukraine, and for there to be any kind of peace negotiations, Russia has to show that it's willing to enter into peace negotiations, and it hasn't done so. So from our perspective, this is still a chance for countries in the world to hear directly from Ukraine. Obviously, we hope that every country in the world would support Ukraine's position and every country in the world would take the position that we do, that Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty ought to be respected.

So whenever we have conversations with other countries, we are encouraging them to adopt that point of view and we will be encouraging them to adopt that point of view in these talks. But we do look at this as part of a process, certainly not the end of any process.

QUESTION: I just have one last --

MR MILLER: Yeah.

QUESTION: -- question on Ukraine. Thanks for bearing with me. But there's some reporting that no European country has submitted a proposal to the U.S. for training of Ukrainian pilots on F-16s. Can you confirm that? And if that's the case, do you have concerns that the training is not moving forward?

MR MILLER: I can't confirm that. I would refer to the Pentagon to talk specifically about the training on what ultimately are Pentagon equipment, or equipment that the Pentagon has the most familiarity with. But I would say that we have made clear that that is a program – both the training of pilots on F-16s and the provision of F-16s to Ukraine – that we intend to move forward on.

QUESTION: One on Ukraine?

MR MILLER: Let me go – go ahead.

QUESTION: Thank you, sir. Jahanzaib Ali from ARY News in Pakistan. Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif says that Pakistan is ready to talk to India on bilateral problems if India is willing to address serious matters. Essentially he said that the two countries can no longer settle disputes through war. You always talk about peace and stability in the region. What is your message to the leadership of both the countries?

MR MILLER: As we have long said, we support direct dialogue between India and Pakistan on issues of concern. That has long been our position.

Yeah, go ahead.

QUESTION: Going back to the Belarus incident, were there any contacts directly connected with this incident between State Department and Poland? And more broadly speaking, this is – there's been a string of different reports and provocative comments from the Belarusian regime, and do you have any information as to whether Belarus is intentionally provoking tensions, perhaps ahead of upcoming elections in Poland?

MR MILLER: So we obviously remain in close communication with Poland – they're an important NATO Ally – remain in communication with them at a number of levels, chiefly through our embassy in the country. I don't have any specific conversations to read out at this point. And with respect to Belarus, I will just say that it is a situation that we continue to monitor.

Go ahead.

QUESTION: My name is (inaudible) News Pakistan. Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has recently announced schedule of – for general election in Pakistan. Reportedly, establishment of Pakistan trying to disqualify most popular leader and former Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan. U.S. – United States always has stood with the true values of democracy and free and fair elections. What is your comment?

MR MILLER: This is one that I do get fairly often at this podium – I see you smiling because I usually get it from you – and I will say, as I have said, many times, maybe more than I've said anything else from the podium, which is that we do not take the – we do not take positions on behalf of the United States supporting one candidate or another in other countries. We support free and open and fair elections.

Alex, go ahead.

QUESTION: Thanks, Matt. A couple questions on Ukraine, and I want to go back to Daphne's question on this week's talks. In light of the talks and also given what you just said about your expectations, can you please help us put Russia's – last couple of days, Russia's behavior – in a larger context, particularly intensified attacks or on Kharkiv, Kyiv, and most recently on grain facilities, like yesterday they damaged 40,000 tons of grains in Izmail. Is it like a finger-in-the-eye moment?

MR MILLER: It is, but not anything new. I mean, look, they have – it's hard to – it's hard to even – sometimes I find it hard to get up here and talk about – in terms that accurately capture the scale of events in Ukraine that Russia continues to inflict on the country. But I will say with respect to the last few days – not just the last day, but really the last few weeks since Russia exited the Black Sea Grain Initiative. So we saw President Putin last week, in what was a clear propaganda move, announce that he would send, I don't know, 25 to 50,000 tons of grain to African countries. Well, just since the end of the Black Sea Grain Initiative, strikes carried out by Russia have destroyed 180,000 tons of grain inside Ukraine, including, as you said, 40,000 tons of grain just in the past 24 hours.

So we have seen Russia, if anything, turn up its attacks so that they are not just targeting people inside Ukraine, but in fact the whole world, because when they target grain infrastructure, when they target shipping infrastructure, when they destroy grain, as they have in the past few weeks, they aren't just harming Ukraine. They're harming all the countries around the world, including, most particularly, developing countries who depend on those exports for survival.

QUESTION: Thank you. Back to your topper on "passportization," quote/unquote, listening to you – and correct me if I'm wrong – I did hear some intent from Russia's behavior. I heard plan of action you were talking about. What I did not hear, which I was hopeful to hear, is the g-word, genocide. Isn't that a sign of genocide?

MR MILLER: I will say that we have been very clear about the atrocities Russia has committed. And more importantly, we have been very clear about how there needs to be accountability for Russia's actions, accountability through a number of mechanisms – international mechanisms, as well as the mechanisms that Ukraine has stood up since the beginning of this war. And we will continue to be clear about that as this conflict goes on.

QUESTION: As you know, there's a congressional effort there. Both chambers of the Congress, Senators and Congress members, initiated a resolution on recognizing Russian actions as a genocide. What is the State Department's view on that?

MR MILLER: I just don't – I'm not going to comment on congressional legislation.

All right, we'll do Janne, finish us off, and then we'll --

QUESTION: Thank you. I will ask again: In the past the United States has made it clear, but your answer is not clear today. Does the United States recognize North Korea as a nuclear power state?

MR MILLER: I don't have anything to add to my previous comments.

Thank you all.

QUESTION: Can I follow – one really brief one on Travis King and North Korea?

MR MILLER: Yeah. Yeah. Go ahead.

QUESTION: Just because the Pentagon acknowledged yesterday or confirmed yesterday there was acknowledgment by the North Koreans of a situation involving Travis King. Was that a call that they made to the United States, or was it a response to a call that we made?

MR MILLER: It was a – my understanding – and I will mostly defer to the Pentagon on this, so I – because this was through a military channel – is that it was a call to the UN command at the demilitarized zone that came just in the last 48 hours. It was not a substantive call; it was an

acknowledgment call. The outreach that we have made to North Korea through diplomatic channels has still not been answered.

QUESTION: Okay. So is there an interpretation of their outreach, even via military channels, to us?

MR MILLER: Only that it wasn't substantive. And so because it wasn't substantive, we certainly don't see it as progress in any way.

QUESTION: Got it. And we have not efforted anything else on the diplomatic front?

MR MILLER: No, we have not, nothing at all.

QUESTION: Thanks.

MR MILLER: Thank you all.

QUESTION: Can I do one quick one on Ukraine?

MR MILLER: I think we're done. Thanks.

(The briefing was concluded at 2:04 p.m.)

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