

Palestinian Aid

Victoria Nuland

Spokesperson

Daily Press Briefing

Washington, DC

March 22, 2013

INDEX FOR TODAY'S BRIEFING

- **DEPARTMENT**
 - UN Commission of Inquiry on North Korea Human Rights Violations
 - Riots in Mandalay, Burma / U.S. Concern
- **SYRIA**
 - Claims of Use of Chemical Weapons / Support for UN Effort / Training / Investigation
 - Condemnation of Attack on Iman Mosque in Damascus
 - Assad Regime
 - Opposition Efforts
 - Russian Role
- **CHINA**
 - President Xi Jinping Vist to Russia
 - Oil Shipments to North Korea
- **CYPRUS**
 - Natural Gas Exploration
- **MIDDLE EAST PEACE**
 - Secretary Kerry's Travel to Jerusalem
 - Israeli and Turkish Relations
 - Palestinian Aid
- **EGYPT**
 - Violent Clashes
 - Reforms
- **JAPAN**
 - Land Reclamation in Okinawa
- **SRI LANKA**

- Reconciliation / UN Vote on New Resolution / Call to Fulfill Obligation
- **NORTH KOREA**
 - Human Rights Situation
- **PAKISTAN**
 - National Assembly Elections / U.S. Support
- **LEBANON**
 - Clashes / Role of Hezbollah
- **D.R.C./RWANDA**
 - Ntaganda Surrendering / ICC / Role of the U.K.
- **PAKISTAN**
 - Musharraf Return
- **RUSSIA**
 - Missile Defense / NATO
- **HOLY SEE**
 - Election of Pope Francis

TRANSCRIPT:

1:04 p.m. EDT

MS. NULAND: All right. Happy Friday, everyone. We haven't seen you in a couple of days so that you would focus on the President's trip to the region. The Secretary is with him, as you know. I have a couple of things at the top, then we'll go to what's on your minds.

The first is with regard to the establishment today of a commission of inquiry into the D.P.R.K.'s human rights violations. The United States commends the UN Human Rights Council for establishing an independent commission of inquiry to investigate North Korea's grave, widespread, systemic human rights violations. We're pleased that this resolution passed by consensus, sending a message that the international community is paying very close attention to the deplorable human rights situation in North Korea.

We were pleased to be joined by co-sponsors Japan, the European Union, and the Republic of Korea in this. The COI's mandate is a demonstration of our continued deep concern about the human rights situation in the D.P.R.K. as well as our compassion and support for justice for the North Korean people.

Let's go to the second issue, which is with regard to riots today in Mandalay, Burma. We're deeply concerned about continuing reports of communal violence, loss of life, and widespread property damage in and around central Burma's Meikhtila township in the Mandalay region. We extend our deep condolences to those affected by this violence, including the families of the victims. We welcome and encourage the efforts of government authorities and community leaders, civil society, and political party leaders to restore calm, to foster dialogue, and to increase tolerance in a manner that respects human rights and due process of law. Our Ambassador to Burma, Derek Mitchell, has raised our concerns directly with senior government officials, and our embassy has also been in close touch with community leaders. We're encouraging all sides to call for calm, to foster dialogue, tolerance, and mutual respect.

Let's go to what's on your minds.

QUESTION: Can you –

QUESTION: Since it's been a –

QUESTION: On Burma?

MS. NULAND: On Burma, yeah.

QUESTION: Has the State Department sent anyone on the ground to have a feel of the ground realities there?

MS. NULAND: I don't know whether any of our embassy officers have been in Mandalay. As I said, Ambassador Mitchell's been in touch with the government. We have, from our embassy, been working with all of the community leaders that we have contacts with, urging calm, as I said.

QUESTION: Thank you.

QUESTION: How about with Aung San Suu Kyi and senior democratic party leaders there?

MS. NULAND: I did mention that we're working with senior political leaders, yes.

QUESTION: But like last week, I had a question on the same thing, that is, they had warned the military government there and also asking the U.S. help and the UN international help that until and unless there is a military government's intervention and no UN or international community's commitment, more than commitment, there will not be a peace as far as minorities are concerned, or democracy cannot work in Burma.

MS. NULAND: Well, I think you know that on March 22nd, President Thein Sein issued an order which declared a state of emergency. They've put additional security forces there, police forces. That's the right way to approach this. They are working and a number of community leaders and political leaders are also working to restore calm, so that's the process that we want to see continue.

QUESTION: What are --

MS. NULAND: Brad, Brad.

QUESTION: Can we move on to Syria?

MS. NULAND: Yeah.

QUESTION: Since it's been a couple of days, where do we stand on chemical weapons? Ambassador Ford said at the time when he testified a couple days ago that there was no evidence. Is that the current assessment right now?

MS. NULAND: I don't think that our assessment has changed as -- from what I said here on Tuesday, I think it was, that we did not believe that the opposition had the capability to launch chemical weapons, that we were looking into allegations against the regime. As you know, yesterday, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon called for an investigation into the possible use of chemical weapons. We strongly supported that. Ambassador Rice made an announcement.

Our understanding is that the UN is now working with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons as well as the World Health Organization to organize that investigation. We

support an investigation that pursues any and all credible allegations of possible use of chemical weapons, and we demand the full cooperation of the Assad regime in letting the investigators in and letting them go wherever the trail leads them.

QUESTION: Okay. Before we get into that, when you say that you're looking into whether the regime might have used chemical weapons, is that through this UN investigation, or are you conducting your own investigation, and how might you be doing that?

MS. NULAND: Well, first, we're supporting the UN effort, obviously, but we are also working with allies, partners, contacts, to establish any independent information that we are able to. We will obviously feed that into the UN process, as well as try to continue to evaluate ourselves.

QUESTION: But is this something you can really investigate without going on the ground?

MS. NULAND: Well, this is the complicating factor for us, obviously, which is why we need to work with our Syrian contacts, we need to work with others who are on the ground, and we need to support the UN effort.

QUESTION: And you've done some training in the past, I remember you talking about it, in terms of helping the opposition prepare for any evidentiary work, collecting evidence. Is that right? And how far along did that go?

MS. NULAND: The training that we've been involved with has primarily focused on identifying weapons if you see them, on consequence management and preparedness for – in the event that there is use, how to treat patients, those kinds of things. I think this kind of investigation requires pretty specialized expertise, so obviously we'll work with those who we think have it, including the UN's effort to take advantage of the particular skills of the OPCW.

QUESTION: And I just have one last one. You said you want this UN investigation to look at any and all, I guess, allegations. Is this your understanding, that it's going to look at things like the Damascus suburbs, or is it only going to look at instances where the regime is alleging use? Are they going to have unfettered access throughout the country?

MS. NULAND: Our expectation in supporting Ban Ki-moon's effort was that this investigative group would have free, unfettered access anywhere in the country, would be able to investigate

any credible allegations by any side, and would be able to come back to the international community with its findings. That's what we expect of the Assad regime, that it will allow this group to do its work.

QUESTION: Toria --

QUESTION: Can we stay on – can we just stay on this --

MS. NULAND: Yes.

QUESTION: -- subject of chemical weapons for a moment? As you stand here, it does not sound like you yet possess any evidence that any chemical weapons were unleashed by either side; am I correct in that?

MS. NULAND: As I said, James, we don't believe that the opposition has the capability. With regard to the regime, they obviously do. We want to see a full investigation.

QUESTION: But you can't, as you stand here, tell us that you have any reason to believe that the regime used chemical weapons.

MS. NULAND: James, don't try to put words into my mouth. I said that we needed to investigate. I said that we supported the UN Security Council effort to investigate. That's what we need to do.

QUESTION: Okay. Let me ask a direct question and you can answer in your own preferred terms, as we would all prefer, and that is: Do you have any evidence that chemical weapons have been used at all?

MS. NULAND: We need to investigate the claims. I'm not able to say one way or the other until we have full results of the investigation, okay?

QUESTION: Toria, there's such a lack of clarity. I think that's one of the problems.

MS. NULAND: Right.

QUESTION: Mike Rogers, for instance, a couple of days ago, I think, indicated that he believed that in some fashion or another, chemical weapons had been used, then he kind of pulled that

back. Now he's talking about small incidents, and I'd like to get your reaction to that. And also, how do you define it? I mean, if there are chemical weapons, there are conventions, there are specific criteria by which you decide whether they've been used. Is that what you are doing? You're applying these strict criteria? Or could it be something like chlorine that happens to get hit by a shell?

MS. NULAND: Well, you're not wrong, Jill, that there are a range of chemical agents, obviously. The OPCW focuses primarily on those kinds of chemical agents that are considered weapons of mass destruction. But its investigators also have the capability to evaluate chemicals that could derive from lesser substances. You've seen some press reporting about – with regard to insecticide, with regard to mustard, other kinds of things. So until we have good, reliable reporting, I think we're just not going to have a full picture.

QUESTION: But it's really important, I think, to define the terms. If, let's say, with the redline that the President has drawn, does it have to be definitively – well, does it have to be defined as chemical weapons use according to all of these technical agreements? Or could it be something that is not a chemical weapon but is used in a malevolent way to injure people?

MS. NULAND: We've talked about the use or the transfer or the proliferation of chemical weapons. That is a pretty straightforward definition. Again, we need to know what we're dealing with here.

QUESTION: Toria, on this very point, I mean, it was asserted by Administration experts time and again that chemical weapons by the Syrian military to be used, there are certain logistics and so on that they are controlling. They will know – they said it time and again – we will know when they're about to use it and when they are – use it. So why cannot you say definitely that actually they have not used it thus far?

MS. NULAND: Again, I don't – I think the way you characterized that is not the way we have characterized it. In this case, there have been allegations that need investigation. We need – we're going to support the investigation that the UN is putting forward.

QUESTION: Okay. As part of the investigation on this issue, is it – does it require earth extractions, I mean, portions of different samples of earth from different areas? Now, the

Russians offered also their expertise. And since they are really the only ones that are with good stead with the Syrians, would you rely on the Russian finding?

MS. NULAND: As I said at the beginning, Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has called on the organization that holds the international expertise on this, the OPCW, to be a full participant in this, as well as the World Health Organization. We think all the expertise that is necessary resides in both of those organizations.

QUESTION: But certainly, the U.S. Government, through its own technology and capabilities and so on, is really monitoring what's going on where it can determine when chemical weapons have been used.

MS. NULAND: As I said, we are prepared to cooperate fully in this investigation. We're prepared to lend our expertise as appropriate, as necessary, as required. And we are also pursuing any and all evidence through our own channels.

QUESTION: Toria, could you explain what the difference is between this reporting that we've had in the last couple of days and the reports that were in early December, I believe, that there have been chemical weapons used, which were dismissed quite quickly as untrue?

MS. NULAND: Right.

QUESTION: What is the difference? What makes you believe that maybe this is a more credible fear?

MS. NULAND: In that instance, we were able, relatively quickly, to get some ground truth. This one has been a little bit more complicated and it's going to require a little more investigation.

QUESTION: Is that because of the location inside Syria?

MS. NULAND: I frankly don't know the answer to that. I think you had a relatively isolated claim of an incident which was quickly dismissed by other people in the area in the case of the December one. We have a number of competing allegations in this case.

QUESTION: Toria.

MS. NULAND: James.

QUESTION: Still on Syria?

QUESTION: Yeah, on Syria.

QUESTION: How long do you think this investigation needs to be done?

MS. NULAND: I would refer you to the UN. It's Ban Ki-moon's investigation. He's just getting started with the OPCW people.

QUESTION: It takes weeks, do you think? Months?

MS. NULAND: I just don't know, Michel.

QUESTION: Every senior U.S. official who has been asked in any public setting, "What specific consequences would befall any party in Syria that would cross the so-called redline," has retreated to ambiguity and declined to provide any specificity to the nature of those consequences. So often we hear from spokespeople like yourself "the President has been very clear on this," or, "we have made it very clear," et cetera. Why is it that in this instance, with this report of an allegation of chemical weapons use, clarity is not in the U.S. interests, and no one seems willing to define what consequences would befall the user of chemical weapons?

MS. NULAND: The President's been clear again in the last couple of days, in Jerusalem, in Ramallah, that the use or proliferation of chemical weapons would cross a redline. He has also declined to specify what the consequences will be. They'll obviously be evaluated if we need to go in that direction. I'm not going to telegraph here.

QUESTION: Note that I didn't ask you what the consequences would be. I've asked why no one is willing to discuss the consequences. Why is it important that the consequences remain vague when so often we hear that clarity is of the utmost importance?

MS. NULAND: James, I think it depends on what we're dealing with, obviously.

Said.

QUESTION: And?

QUESTION: Any comment on the assassination of the cleric Mohammad Said al-Buti?

QUESTION: I have one question on the chemical weapons.

MS. NULAND: This is with regard to the --

QUESTION: It was yesterday in the mosque.

MS. NULAND: -- the bombing in the Iman Mosque.

QUESTION: Yes.

MS. NULAND: Yeah. As you probably saw, the UN Security Council announced this morning in a press statement that members of the Security Council unanimously join together today in condemning in strongest terms yesterday's terrorist attack on the Iman Mosque in Damascus which caused over 40 deaths, including a Sunni Muslim cleric and dozens of civilians who were injured. We joined our Security Council colleagues in reaffirming that terrorism like this, or terrorism in any form, constitutes one of the most deadly threats to international peace and security, and condemned this terrorist act and any others.

QUESTION: Do you assign blame to one side or the other?

MS. NULAND: I don't know that we're in a position at this moment to assign blame in this case. There have been some -- I don't think there have even been claims of responsibility at the moment.

Jill.

QUESTION: Toria, I'm interested in the regime -- getting back to the chemical weapons -- the regime has accused the opposition of using chemical weapons. Now, I mean, if you think about that, that means that they don't have control of the chemical weapons in their own country. That would be a logical surmised from that, correct?

MS. NULAND: I'm not prepared to get inside the head of the regime, why they would accuse the opposition. We did say, I think it was on Tuesday, that we were concerned that the regime was shifting blame to muddy the waters with regard to its own capability here.

QUESTION: But do you have any indication that they are not in control of their own chemical weapons?

MS. NULAND: I don't have anything new to share on that front, Jill. As I said, we have to see where this investigation takes us.

Please, Michel.

QUESTION: Toria, two days ago you were asked that same question and you wouldn't answer it, so you're saying you still won't say if they are secure or not; is that correct?

MS. NULAND: I don't have --

QUESTION: Anything new would be --

MS. NULAND: I don't have anything new to share on any of this that I can share without getting into intelligence. I'm sorry.

Please, Michel.

QUESTION: But previously you have said that – sorry – previously it has not been a problem to say that the chemical weapons were secure. You have said it from the podium. Others have said it.

MS. NULAND: I think it's been about four months, hasn't it?

QUESTION: Right. So what I'm asking is, does that hold or has something changed?

MS. NULAND: I don't have anything new to share. I can't get into intelligence from here.

Michel.

QUESTION: Yeah. President Assad today has vowed to wipe out Muslim extremists in Syria after the assassination of Sheikh al-Buti. Are you worried or – of this, or is it a good sign that he will wipe out the extremists in Syria?

MS. NULAND: He could start by cutting his ties to Hezbollah and Iranian extremists who are standing and fighting with him and propping up his regime.

Said.

QUESTION: Toria, just a follow-up on this point: Haytham Manna, the head of the coordinating opposition council, was in town and he basically suggested that all these militant elements were really extremist Islamists, basically supported and aided and financed by Wahhabist clerics in Qatar and Saudi Arabia and others, and basically that this Free Syrian Army is no more than a banner. Those were his words.

MS. NULAND: He was talking about extremists within the opposition ranks?

QUESTION: The opposition, yes. He's talking about the opposition.

MS. NULAND: I didn't see his comments, but I don't think that is any different than what we've been saying for some months, that we are concerned about efforts by extremist elements, including those that we've already designated as Foreign Terrorist Organizations, to try to infiltrate the legitimate moderate political opposition, both on the political side and on the military side, and that we have been working hard in our contacts with the Syrian opposition, whether it's on the political side or the military side, to be extremely vigilant about efforts to hijack their movement by extremists. And we've talked about that a lot here, Said, as you know.

QUESTION: So what kind of regime would you have in place in terms of when you provide aid, financial aid or otherwise, humanitarian, that it doesn't really filter to these groups?

MS. NULAND: As I said, we've been working very hard over the last six to nine months – you know we've talked about this here – to try to vet all of the entities who we provide our nonlethal support to. We've also been working with our other allies and partners who support in their own way to ensure that there is vetting, that we share information about groups, and to the maximum extent possible, we are only supporting moderates.

Please.

QUESTION: One more on Syria?

MS. NULAND: Are you – still Syria? Yeah.

QUESTION: Yeah. Ambassador Ford's testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Committee this week included his answer to one congressman's inquiry about the role the Russians are

playing, in which the Ambassador stated that it is an ongoing conversation with the Russians to try to get them to cease their supply of weapons systems --

MS. NULAND: Right.

QUESTION: -- to the Syrians. That testimony comes almost a month after Secretary Kerry's sit-down with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov in Berlin. Is it safe to assume, therefore, that more -- that almost a month has passed and there has been no progress in our discussions with the Russians since Secretary Kerry had that meeting with Foreign Minister Lavrov?

MS. NULAND: James, I think it's fair to say that we've been trying to persuade the Russians to cut off material support to the Assad regime for two years. We've all been working on this, because the Russians assert that they don't want Syria to be torn apart, that they don't want extremists to prevail, that they have no love for Assad, and yet they are continuing to provide weapons and material support that keep him propped up and that perpetuate this violence.

So every time anybody at a senior level meets with anybody on the Russian side, we make the same points, that we don't understand how it is in Russia's interest to be continuing the policy it's continuing, and that we ask them to reevaluate.

They're a sovereign nation. They'll make their own decisions. We think they've made the wrong one.

QUESTION: Change topics?

QUESTION: Can I stay on Russia?

MS. NULAND: Yeah.

QUESTION: I wondered if there was any reaction or perhaps disappointment today that the Chinese new leader, Xi Jinping, has made his first overseas visit to Russia as president, instead of perhaps to the United States.

MS. NULAND: We are completely relaxed, as you know. Xi Jinping was in the United States last year or I can't remember when it was. It was about four months ago, right? He was the guest of the Vice President, he had a chance to meet with the President. He was welcomed here in this

building by then-Secretary Clinton. We got a chance to get to know him. He did a tour across the United States. So it's normal that he's going to visit his neighbors, obviously. So we are obviously relaxed about that.

QUESTION: So no worries then.

MS. NULAND: We're relaxed.

QUESTION: So you feel he came to you first --

MS. NULAND: We --

QUESTION: -- by preceding his--

MS. NULAND: We were privileged to get to know him before he was even named. And we expect that those relationships will continue to build and grow.

QUESTION: And did you have any concern about the nature of the remarks made by either of those two leaders which appeared to reflect a shared desire on their part to constrain American influence across the globe?

MS. NULAND: I didn't see the remarks by either of them. If you want to send me what you're concerned about, I'm happy to take a look.

QUESTION: Sri Lanka?

MS. NULAND: Yeah.

QUESTION: Can we do one last thing though with China?

MS. NULAND: Yeah. Please.

QUESTION: Have you anything to say about reports that the Chinese halted oil shipments to North Korea for the month of February?

MS. NULAND: We've seen those reports. We would refer you to the Chinese Government. We are also seeking further information from them about decisions that they may or may not have made.

I think you know that we have been in very close consultation, including Secretary Kerry's conversations with both State Counselor Yang and his new counterpart in the foreign ministry on the issue of the D.P.R.K. That led to our successful work on now two Security Council resolutions over the last three months, increasing the pressure on the D.P.R.K. But we continue to talk about what more we can do to get the leadership's attention and encourage them to change course.

QUESTION: Is this the kind of step we have been urging the Chinese to take? This reported action?

MS. NULAND: Again, we're not in a position to confirm these reports. We'll send you to the Chinese.

QUESTION: Is this the kind of thing we've urged them to do?

MS. NULAND: Again, they need to make their own decisions how they can get the attention of the D.P.R.K. Government, and I'm not going to comment on something that I'm not in a position to confirm.

Please.

QUESTION: Cyprus?

MS. NULAND: Yeah.

QUESTION: According to Cypriot officials, the Secretary spoke with the President of Cyprus and the Foreign Minister of Cyprus. Do you have any readout for these two conversations, please?

MS. NULAND: Well, thank you for that, because there's been some pretty wild reporting out there with regard to this conversation. The Secretary did talk to the President of Cyprus on Saturday last. It was Saturday the 16th. That call was first and foremost to congratulate him on his election. He, the Secretary, also spoke to him about the importance of trying to get back to advancing a settlement on the island so that we can get back to talk about a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation. They obviously talked about the economic situation, which the Secretary

made clear we're monitoring closely. They talked about the Hezbollah case in advance of the conviction, which has now come forward. We had a statement on that and on counterterrorism.

QUESTION: Can I ask you something else? What is the U.S. position on this energy game that Russia and other countries are playing in the Mediterranean Sea?

MS. NULAND: I'm not sure what you're referring to specifically in terms of the Russian game. Was there something --

QUESTION: There are a lot of countries, they have interests in the region -- Israel, Cyprus, and Greece, of course, now Russia. And do you have any position --

MS. NULAND: Are you talking about natural gas exploration? Is that what you're --

QUESTION: Yes. Yes.

MS. NULAND: As a general matter, the United States supports Cyprus's right to explore energy in its offshore areas. We continue to support, at the same time, a Cypriot-led negotiation process, under the UN's good offices, as I said, to reunify the island into a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation. We believe that the island's oil and gas resources, like any of its resources, should be equitably shared in the context of an overall settlement. But again, these are decisions that have to be made with all of those factors in mind.

QUESTION: On the Secretary's visit?

MS. NULAND: Go to --

QUESTION: The Secretary's visit?

MS. NULAND: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Okay. The Secretary's returning back to Tel Aviv tomorrow. Could you share with us what prompted that? That was unscheduled?

MS. NULAND: Well, as you know, the Secretary is travelling with the President now. The President in some of his public remarks, including with President Abbas yesterday, has made clear that he would like Secretary Kerry to follow up on the visit and to see what might be

possible going forward. So Secretary Kerry will go back to Jerusalem on Saturday evening to see Prime Minister Netanyahu to give him a sense of how the stops in Ramallah and Jordan went and to, again, see what might be possible going forward.

QUESTION: Is he going to meet with any of the Palestinian officials?

MS. NULAND: There is not a plan to do that because it's essentially reporting on the back end of the trip and seeing where we are. But obviously, as you know, he remains – he stays in extremely close touch with both President Abbas and Prime Minister Netanyahu.

QUESTION: Some ideas have been thrown about including sort of some – sort of an amendment to the Arab peace initiative to include where it says '67 – state on '67 borders, to include something like mutually agreed upon swaths of land. Is that likely to come up in the next couple days?

MS. NULAND: Well, I think if you read the President's speech yesterday, all of the public statements that he's made throughout his trip, he's been very careful to say that his first task was to listen and get a sense of what is possible. So he intentionally did not put down a plan. I would not expect a plan to be put down by Secretary Kerry in the next week or so. The Secretary has, in his various conversations with Arab leaders, with Gulf leaders, made reference to the importance – the important step, at the time, that the Arab peace initiative was, and his hope and expectation that there wouldn't be any sliding backwards from that. But I wouldn't over-read any of this at this stage.

QUESTION: The President suggested that the Israelis have a real partner with President Abbas and the Palestinian Authority. Are we likely –

MS. NULAND: Who? Who? Who?

QUESTION: The President. The President suggested that they do have a – the Israelis have a partner, a peace partner, with the Palestinian current leadership in Abbas and Fayyad and so on. Are we likely to see a more active engagement as result of that statement?

MS. NULAND: Again, the President is just finishing his tour. I don't want to get ahead of the conclusions that might be drawn by the party as they're out there.

QUESTION: On the Israeli-Turkish detente that appears to have erupted, was this something that Secretary Kerry worked on while he was in Ankara?

MS. NULAND: As you know, it has been of great concern to the United States for some time now that our two allies, Israel and Turkey, were not getting along well with each other. In virtually every meeting that every senior American has had with the Israeli side or the Turkish side, we have encouraged them to try to work this through.

The short answer to your question is yes. When Secretary Kerry was in Ankara and in his phone conversations with senior Israelis over the last month he has been encouraging both sides to try to take the kinds of steps that they took today, as has the President, as he made clear both in his meetings and phone calls with Prime Minister Netanyahu and his work with Prime Minister Erdogan.

So we are very gratified by this important step. I think you saw the President's statement about it. Both are close friends and partners of ours. We've always said that the relationship between them is important for security and cooperation across the region, especially given that they are both democracies. But we hope this opens the door for them to resolve the remaining differences.

QUESTION: On that score, was it something that Secretary Kerry specifically did? This is one of the first instances where we're seeing him actually actively involved in something that quite quickly had results. What did he bring to it that hasn't been brought before?

MS. NULAND: Well, again, I think, as I said, the President was involved at his level, and the Secretary was involved over the past month. The hope was that this visit would provide an opportunity to break through, and we are very gratified that these first steps were taken.

QUESTION: Can I ask on Palestinian aid? There's reporting out of the region that the funds have actually been unblocked kind of a bit quietly over the last couple of weeks, the 200 million that was held up in Congress, and that's now been received by the Palestinian Authority.

MS. NULAND: Jo, I don't – I'm just finding it here. I did go through this about a week ago in some detail. I can do it again for you. To date, we have moved \$295.7 million in Fiscal Year 2012 money, 200 million of that – see, this – numbers don't – oh, and 200 million in Fiscal Year 2013 assistance. So breaking that down again, 200 million in FY2013 ESF money was direct

budget support for the Palestinian Authority; 195.7 million in FY12 Economic Support money went for development and humanitarian assistance implemented by USAID; 100 million in FY2012 for International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement; and then in February – at the end of February we notified Congress about another 200 million that we'd like to move.

QUESTION: So you've moved the 295 --

MS. NULAND: Total of 295.7 in FY12 and 200 in FY13. Why don't we go through it again afterwards if you need to?

QUESTION: That's been moved, okay.

MS. NULAND: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: And then 200 is still – you want another further 200?

MS. NULAND: Correct. We've notified.

QUESTION: On Egypt?

MS. NULAND: Yeah.

QUESTION: There are clashes today between the opposition and the Muslim Brotherhoods in different provinces. Are you worried about the situation there?

MS. NULAND: Well, we're obviously always worried about violent clashes in Egypt. You know that we have encouraged anyone with grievances in Egypt to express themselves peacefully. We've encouraged the government to lead a wide, broad dialogue to deal with popular frustrations on the political side, on the economic side. I hadn't seen that we had fresh clashes today, but we would, as we always do, encourage protestors to do so peacefully, and security forces to exercise restraint.

QUESTION: It's almost three weeks now since Secretary Kerry visited with President Morsy. Have you yet seen any evidence that President Morsy is undertaking any of the reforms that he personally pledged to Secretary Kerry that he would undertake in order to justify Secretary Kerry's dispensing of \$250 million on that occasion?

MS. NULAND: Well, as you know, very soon after Secretary Kerry was there, the Morsy government invited the IMF team back. They had another round which concluded, I believe, earlier this week. They have not come to a resolution, but they are continuing to work and there had been some hiatus in that.

I would also note that when the court challenges came forward with regard to the election dates and the election procedures, and the courts called for a suspension of the elections until that could be worked through, President Morsy did accede to the wishes of the court. He also, however, filed an appeal, so he's using the justice system to redress these grievances rather than trying to jam through something that is a matter of contention. We're also, as I said, continuing to encourage him to invite in more of the constituencies with grievances, whether they're on the political side or whether they're on the economic side, and really hear from them. And we will see how that goes in the weeks going forward.

QUESTION: So you're encouraged by his actions to date since the visit?

MS. NULAND: I would say that he has taken some steps and we're continuing to watch.

Please.

QUESTION: On Japan?

MS. NULAND: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: The Japanese Government has officially applied for a land reclamation in Okinawa to start building the new base there, and this application has to go through the Okinawa governor --

MS. NULAND: Right.

QUESTION: -- who is quote opposed to this whole plan. So I'm wondering if you have any words of encouragement for him to keep this going, what you -- how you view this right now.

MS. NULAND: We do view it as a good step. Our colleagues at the Pentagon are going to have a statement later today. I will let them speak to it.

Please.

QUESTION: Toria, on North Koreans' --

MS. NULAND:

QUESTION: -- cyber terror, do you -- do United States have any damage from North Korean cyber attack?

MS. NULAND: I don't have anything I can share with you on that. I'm sorry.

QUESTION: Sri Lanka?

MS. NULAND: Yeah.

QUESTION: Madam, after this UN Security Council -- Human Rights Council vote on Sri Lanka, what are the consequences or what do you think the Sri Lankan Government should do now?

MS. NULAND: They should implement the plan that they have never implemented. They should listen to the words of the international community. As you know, we welcome the passage of this new resolution; 24 other countries also voted for it. We call on the Government of Sri Lanka to fulfill its obligations to its own people. The resolution very clearly expresses the support of the international community for Sri Lanka, addressing its outstanding issues related to reconciliation and for meeting its obligations for accountability, which it has not yet done.

QUESTION: Let me ask you, since this resolution has been going on for some time, and I'm sure there was ample warning and discussions and dialogue with Sri Lankan Government or officials, either from the U.S. or UN or other international community, was there any time when -- that Sri Lanka could have avoided this resolution against them?

MS. NULAND: We've talked about this for the past week here, Goyal, and I said that we had made clear, including when senior Sri Lankans had visited Washington, that if they didn't take steps that they could -- would see this kind of a resolution coming forward. That was about six months ago, and we didn't see any progress.

QUESTION: So finally, how can you enforce it now?

MS. NULAND: Again, we want to see the Sri Lankans take their own decisions. As we've said before, if those are not forthcoming, the international community will look at whether there are other steps we can take.

QUESTION: Thank you.

QUESTION: Like what? Like doing the same exact resolution next year?

MS. NULAND: No. We have talked in the past about whether there ought to be an international effort on this front rather than a Sri Lankan-led effort.

QUESTION: Just on North Korea, about your announcement earlier at the beginning of the briefing with respect to an investigation into North Korean human rights abuses, is it the view of the Department that the North Korean Government, either through starvation or any other means, is conducting genocide?

MS. NULAND: We have severe ongoing concerns about the human rights situation in the D.P.R.K. That's why we have taken this investigative effort from the status of a simple special rapporteur to a full-up commission. One of the difficulties we have, as you know, James, is that the D.P.R.K. regime has not allowed either the Special Rapporteur or anybody else to really do the kind of investigation that would give us the ability to make a full determination of the kind that you are talking about. But we all have extremely strong concerns. There's all kinds of UN data about stunted growth, about lack of – about the secret prisons. The list just goes on and on.

QUESTION: Can we go back to Syria for a minute, on the meeting of Haytham Manna with Ambassador Ford? They met – and Rim Turkmani. Was he able – Ambassador Ford – was he able to sort of lessen the gap between Mr. Manna and Moaz Khatib, for instance?

MS. NULAND: I don't have any details to indicate that Ambassador Ford met Manna. I understood that it was some of his who met Manna.

Please.

QUESTION: On Pakistan, elections have been announced. Do you have anything to say on that? And also, is the State Department, the U.S., sending any observers for the elections in Pakistan?

MS. NULAND: We do understand that Pakistan has announced the date for the National Assembly elections of May 11th. We look forward to timely, free, and fair elections that are going to result in the first civilian, democratic transition of power in Pakistan's history. We obviously will look to the Government of Pakistan with regard to any help or support they might need.

We do have a number of ongoing programs that support election – clean, fair elections in Pakistan. For example, we provide support through local organizations to encourage voter participation among groups that have historically low turnout, such as women. We also provide grants for two-way communication forums for citizens to discuss the election process. We also fund training for poll workers. The total amount of that assistance is about \$6.5 million. But to date, we haven't had any request from the Government of Pakistan for concrete support for the election itself.

QUESTION: And this assistance is under Kerry-Lugar-Berman bill?

MS. NULAND: I believe so. I believe that's the vehicle, yeah.

QUESTION: Toria, on Lebanon, to what extent are you concerned about the situation there? There are clashes in the north, and the Lebanese Prime Minister is going to resign as some news reports has said – have said.

MS. NULAND: Well, we're watching the situation in Lebanon very, very carefully, particularly with regard to the political dynamics today. I don't want to get ahead of decisions that may be made in Lebanon.

You know that our basic view of this is that we believe the Lebanese people deserve a government that reflects their aspirations and one that will strengthen Lebanon's stability, its sovereignty, and its independence. And we have grave concerns about the role that Hezbollah plays.

QUESTION: And do you think this government reflects the aspirations of the Lebanese people?

MS. NULAND: Again, they are in the middle of some pretty intense discussions with each other, so I'm not going to get ahead of that. But clearly, there is far more progress that needs to be made in Lebanon.

QUESTION: Can I ask on the D.R. Congo and Rwanda?

MS. NULAND: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: I saw that Mr. Ntaganda is now on his way, and I saw the Secretary's statement. I wondered if you were able to give us a bit more insight into what his motivations were for surrendering to the U.S. Embassy in Kigali?

MS. NULAND: Well, obviously he should speak for himself when he gets the chance. But as Assistant Secretary Carson said in some press interviews in the last couple of days, our sense of this from talking to him was that he felt that by coming to the United States Embassy he would more reliably and safely be assured that he would be able to surrender himself to the ICC, that he wouldn't be blocked from leaving the country, that he – his safety would be assured as he surrendered. And we are, as we said in the Secretary's statement, very pleased to see that this ICC indictee, this longstanding brutal rebel, has now left Rwanda and that we're able to turn the page.

QUESTION: Can you give us an indication of his state of mind and his state of health when he was in the Embassy?

MS. NULAND: Our – my understanding is that his physical health was fine. I believe he saw a French doctor while he was in the Embassy. With regard to his state of mind, we didn't perceive anything unusual. He regularly and repeatedly reaffirmed his desire to go to The Hague, including when some ICC officials visited him directly before he was moved to the airport.

QUESTION: He's been on the run – well, or evaded capture for about seven years now. Was there any indication as to why now he's decided to surrender to the ICC?

MS. NULAND: Again, I think he's going to have to tell that story. We did see, starting around March 15th, that a large number of the M23 fighters had moved back into Rwanda. At that time we didn't know whether he was among them or what their motivation was for that. But it is a good thing that he is now – seems – appears prepared to surrender himself to justice.

QUESTION: And just one more. I saw in the Secretary's statement that he was also – he was thanking Rwanda and Dutch authorities, but also Britain.

MS. NULAND: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: I just wondered if you could tell us what the British role was in this.

MS. NULAND: British diplomats on the ground in Kigali worked intensively with us to arrange the transfer, to encourage Rwandan authorities to let it go forward, to be an extra assuring power with regard to the intentions here. So we're very grateful as well to our British allies.

QUESTION: Madam, can we just go quick – Pakistan elections please?

MS. NULAND: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: General Musharraf, who ran the country for over 10 years under military rule, he is returning to Pakistan on Sunday and he's saying that he is the best candidate to run the country, which he did for 10 years, and nobody else but him can run the country in the best way. What I'm asking you is, madam: Is he having any kind of blessing from Washington, any kind of help? Or what do you think for him or about him now after 10 years, when you had some kind of sweet and sour relations with him?

MS. NULAND: The only thing I would say about this is that it is up to the people of Pakistan to decide who their representatives should be, according to their democratic process.

Jill.

QUESTION: Just a quick one on missile defense, if that's possible.

MS. NULAND: Yeah.

QUESTION: Do you --

MS. NULAND: A quick one whether missile defense can ever be quick? (Laughter.)

QUESTION: I know. But there have been some positive soundings from some Russians about missile defense recently. Just to – a quick update, where are we? Are they – is this the official line now, that they are going to be moving in a more positive way on missile defense?

MS. NULAND: You mean with regard to Russian statements?

QUESTION: Yes.

MS. NULAND: Well, first of all, with regard to American statements, you saw the Secretary of Defense's press conference where he laid out the revised planning which responds to the increased threat from the D.P.R.K. as well as other factors. We've seen – we have been in contact with the Russians to try to explain this. As you know, we have always maintained, across three administrations now, that missile defense was not about Russia. It was about the threat from Iran, the threat from the D.P.R.K., et cetera.

We have spent some time, including in Rose Gottemoeller's conversations and Wendy Sherman's conversations with senior Russian officials, explaining to them the changes. And we do always in those conversations reiterate our longstanding hope that Russia will agree to cooperate not just with the U.S. but with NATO in missile defense. They have missile defenses of their own because we believe that the threats that we face are shared.

QUESTION: All right but are you seeing – in other words, there have been a few comments that have been positive, but they haven't really been the official word, right?

MS. NULAND: What I've seen is Russians saying that they're studying the changes. I don't know whether you've seen more than that.

QUESTION: Are there more than few – a little bit more positive. Okay.

MS. NULAND: Yeah.

QUESTION: So they're still studying.

MS. NULAND: I would leave it to them to characterize, but we have been talking to them.

I have one last thing before we leave each other today for the weekend. I've been thinking about the exchange that Matt Lee and I had about a week ago on the election of Pope Francis, and I have to say that on reflection, that exchange did not sit very well with me. I just want to say unequivocally here, and for the record, that the election at the Vatican was to choose the head of the Catholic Church. How that is done is for the Church and for the faithful to decide. And I should've just left it there when Matt and I discussed it.

Thank you all very much.

(The briefing was concluded at 1:53 p.m.)