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MR. DUGUID: Good morning.

QUESTION: Good morning.

MR. DUGUID: I would like to once again lead off with a brief rundown of Secretary Clinton's activities in Brussels before going to your questions.

She had a bilateral meeting with the NATO Secretary General de Hoop Scheffer first thing this morning before attending a North Atlantic Council meeting. She also has on the schedule today a NATO-Ukraine Commission meeting and a NATO-Georgia Commission meeting. During the intervals of these different meetings, she will see individually the Supreme Allied Commander General Craddock, French Foreign Minister Kouchner, German Foreign Minister Steinmeier, the UK Foreign Secretary Mr. Miliband, and her – some of her other colleagues. This evening, we expect her to meet with the European Commission President Barroso.

With that, I would like to take your questions.

QUESTION: Do you have any reaction now to the expulsion of these aid groups who were working in Darfur, or Sudan, generally?

MR. DUGUID: The action was announced, and it's unclear whether it was announced by the government or the particular commission that oversees the aid groups in Sudan, seems to me to be against Sudan's own interest, and is certainly not helpful to the people who need aid in the country. They should reconsider their position on this, because the vulnerable populations throughout Sudan rely heavily on international organizations who deliver them much needed aid.

QUESTION: And are you doing anything – is the U.S. Government doing anything to try and convince the Sudanese Government to --

MR. DUGUID: A number of countries are trying to convince the Sudanese Government to reconsider this action.

QUESTION: And is the United States one of them?

MR. DUGUID: The United States is one of them.

QUESTION: And how exactly are you doing that?

MR. DUGUID: We are doing that both on the ground and in New York.

QUESTION: On the ground, meaning Khartoum?

MR. DUGUID: Meaning Khartoum.

Other questions? Yes, please.

QUESTION: The Chinese have come out and said that they would like the ICC to pull back on this and get rid of the warrant. What do you think about that?

MR. DUGUID: The – there are a couple of different moves that some nations have proposed. As the United States – as we noted yesterday, what we are looking for is a resolution to the conflicts in Sudan. This current move by the ICC has added a lever, if you will, with which to try and achieve that. Those who are guilty of crimes against humanity should face justice. The delay or deferment of the ICC warrant is not something that the United States is looking at right now.

Same subject?

QUESTION: Yeah, on this. I'm just – it's added a lever?

MR. DUGUID: Yes.

QUESTION: How?

MR. DUGUID: The fact that he is now – the president is now a fugitive from justice is a lever for the international community, just as it has been in many other cases.

QUESTION: Well, he's not – he's a fugitive from justice in the eyes of the United States?

MR. DUGUID: He's a fugitive from justice in the eyes of the ICC and --

QUESTION: Well, you're not a member --

MR. DUGUID: -- all of the people who supply to that.

QUESTION: -- of the ICC, so I --

MR. DUGUID: That is correct. But it is still, for the international community, a lever.

QUESTION: You do not – so you're saying that you recognize the jurisdiction of the ICC --

MR. DUGUID: We recognize --

QUESTION: -- over --

MR. DUGUID: -- that this is – we recognize that by the international community, this has been a move that will try and help resolve the problems in Sudan.

QUESTION: Gordon, sorry – just be specific. You recognize the ICC's jurisdiction over the head of state of a country that like your – like the United States, is not a member of the --

MR. DUGUID: I think I've given you my answer. We recognize that this move by the ICC and the members of the international community who support it is a move to try and resolve the problems in Sudan.

QUESTION: Yeah, but you say the United States considers him a fugitive from justice, but you don't recognize that --

MR. DUGUID: I just said that he is a fugitive from justice under the court issued by – the warrant issued by the ICC. You are correct. The United States is not a member of the ICC.

QUESTION: And neither is Sudan, so why – so if he – if his own country doesn't recognize the jurisdiction of this court, how can you?

MR. DUGUID: There are a number of leaders or instances in which the particular country did not recognize the jurisdiction of a court, and yet the leader was brought to trial and was brought to justice.

QUESTION: Right, but in most of those cases, the United States had – in fact, in all of them, the United States has supported them. You know, this (inaudible).

MR. DUGUID: In this particular instance, you are right – you are correct. On our position, or our relationship to the court, that does not lessen the members of that court's ability or determination to try and affect what they have said in --

QUESTION: Well, can someone check with the lawyers on this? I don't understand how it is that you are – you are basically supporting, or giving your backing to the – to ICC jurisdiction over --

MR. DUGUID: We are recognizing that --

QUESTION: -- over a person who's – over the head of a country that does not – that like yourself, doesn't recognize the ICC.

MR. DUGUID: We are recognizing that the international community, through the ICC, is taking actions to try and help resolve the problems in Sudan and try and bring to justice those who they charge with crimes against humanity. The United States also believes that crimes against humanity have been committed in Darfur.

QUESTION: And what – and the appropriate way to bring to justice those who committed those atrocities is through the ICC?

MR. DUGUID: That is one way that a number of members of the international community have moved forward.

Yes, Mr. Goyal.

QUESTION: A change of subject. A couple of questions on South Asia, please. One, at this time (inaudible), India has been facing some of the rogue nations around, and India has now declared elections next month. If they have asked any kind of assistance, help, or any role U.S. may be playing as far as elections in India?

MR. DUGUID: I am unaware of India's need or request for assistance in their elections. The Indians have been running successful and democratic elections for a couple of generations now.

QUESTION: And second, as far as terrorism in Pakistan is concerned, it has now gone beyond (inaudible), because now the visiting Sri Lankan cricket team was attacked and now, nobody has trust and faith in – as far as Pakistan is concerned. Are you thinking that now the time has come to declare Pakistan a rogue and also a terrorist state, and that it's not safe now to travel --

MR. DUGUID: Mr. Goyal, we work regularly with Pakistan to fight the threat of terrorism that Pakistanis suffer from as much as anyone else in the region. The people who were killed in the most recent attack were all Pakistanis. They were Pakistani policemen who gave their lives to protect their charges, which was the Sri Lankan cricket team. We commend the Pakistani police forces for their sacrifice.

Yes.

QUESTION: Yeah, on this related subject, the conference that Secretary Clinton has called for March 31st, can you tell us who in the region will be invited? Will Iran be one of them?

MR. DUGUID: Well, I think I'll leave the Secretary's words to stand for themselves. As far as Iran goes, Iran is one of the nations in the region who has had – which has had a, you know, role to play in the past. We have – we had consultations with Iran on Afghanistan in the early days of the conflict there. But Iran has to decide whether or not it's going to play a positive or a negative role in this region.

Would it be considered or is it possible? It is possible. Has any decision been made at this point? No decision has been made on who all in the region will be invited. But I leave the Secretary's words for herself.

Yes.

QUESTION: New subject. After the Iranian leader had spoken out yesterday about the U.S. and it's – how it's backing and supporting Israel, Secretary Clinton mentioned this and also accused Iran of interference with Palestinians' affairs and undermining their authority. Do you think that according to what has been stated so far and the possible plans of any kind of interactional dialogue between the U.S. and Iran, including on Afghanistan to begin with, do you think the recent statements would have any effect on that?

MR. DUGUID: I return to my main point with Lach. Iran has to decide whether or not it's going to play a positive or a negative role in the region. Our problems with Iran's foreign policy, our problems and deep concerns about Iran's role in supporting terrorism are well known. We have – the Obama Administration has said it is willing to engage at a time and in a manner which will be judged suitable. But Iran has to decide that it is going to play a positive role and not a strictly negative role as they are doing now.

QUESTION: May I follow up, please?

MR. DUGUID: Yes.

QUESTION: Iran is not only supporting terrorism, but also their nuclear program. Also they have not changed their views as far as wiping out Israel out of the global map. Where do these issues stand when Secretary was in the area and now in the future, when the deals are going on with Iran, whether they will be – the issue will be on the table or they are still on the table?

MR. DUGUID: We do not walk away from our principled stances, our support for Israel, and we let Iran know what we object to both in their international relations and with many of their domestic policies.

Yes.

QUESTION: On Sri Lanka, there are news reports --

QUESTION: Can I just ask a quick Iran question?

MR. DUGUID: Same?

QUESTION: Related.

MR. DUGUID: Okay, please. Yes.

QUESTION: Any movement on the Saberi issue?

MR. DUGUID: I have nothing new for you today. Thank you.

Yes.

QUESTION: On Sri Lanka, there are news reports in Sri Lankan media that U.S. Army is planning to assist the Sri Lankan Government in evacuation of civilians from the northern parts of the country. Can you confirm this, or there is no such plans involved?

MR. DUGUID: I know that there have been discussions. I refer you to the Department of Defense for any operational details. Thank you.

QUESTION: Different topic?

MR. DUGUID: Different topic, yes, and then we'll go back to --

QUESTION: On Zimbabwe, did -- before rolling over the sanctions, was any -- were there any discussions with the Government of South Africa, and was any consideration given to taking a step that would reflect in some way the changed political situation in Harare?

MR. DUGUID: Sorry, the question again? Are we --

QUESTION: On the Zim sanctions, the decision --

MR. DUGUID: Yes.

QUESTION: -- to roll them over. Was there a discussion with South Africa about -- did you seek their input on that, and was any consideration given to doing something that reflected the changed political environment in Harare?

MR. DUGUID: I am unaware that we've changed our position on Zimbabwe sanctions. In fact, we don't see a lifting of sanctions at this time as being particularly helpful, because we have not seen any change come out of the coalition government as far as the Mugabe side has concerned. We have not seen a release of political prisoners in as large numbers as there should be. We remain deeply troubled at ZANU-PF's consistent lack of commitment to the power-sharing agreement, and much remains to be done to gain the confidence of the international community.

The immediate steps are clear of what they should do: release all political detainees and end politically directed violence and intimidation; repeal repressive legislation; open access for humanitarian groups and NGOs; and have a commitment to macroeconomic reform.

We recognize the difficulty that the Zimbabwean people suffer. They are suffering because of the policies of their government, the previous government directly under Mugabe and those policies that have not changed under the current government. Those changes need to take place.

QUESTION: Gordon, same subject?

MR. DUGUID: Yes, please.

QUESTION: Yeah, the White House announcement continuing the sanctions yesterday talked about -- the presidential statement, "I am continuing the national emergency with respect to Zimbabwe for a year." Does that mean that there will be no consideration of changes in sanctions for a year?

MR. DUGUID: I would refer you to the White House for a specific question on their remarks there.

Yes, please.

QUESTION: On Senkaku Islands, because our reporter just -- in Japan just had an exclusive interview with spokesperson of Japan-U.S. affair.

MR. DUGUID: Yes.

QUESTION: And he indicated that U.S. has advised to Japan on Senkaku Islands issue very clearly, that Senkaku Islands actually includes in Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan. So can you confirm that statement?

MR. DUGUID: I can't confirm that statement right now. I'll try and get you something right after the briefing.

QUESTION: Thank you.

MR. DUGUID: Yes, please.

QUESTION: Do you have an update, perhaps, on Iraqi refugees asked about from yesterday? Specifically, what can the U.S. Government do to help them here in the U.S. who are facing fears of losing their homes and --

MR. DUGUID: Well, yes, I can tell you not what the government can do, but what the government is doing. Iraqi refugees receive the same resettlement benefits from the Department of State and the Department of Health and Human Services that are provided to all incoming refugees. All refugees are able to receive from the Office of Refugee Resettlement social services for up to 60 months, that is, five years. These services include employment services, employment assessment services and on-the-job training, English language instruction, vocational training, case management, translation and interpreter services.

QUESTION: If they do decide to return to Iraq, what can the U.S. do to help facilitate their return to Iraq or their re-integration into Iraq?

MR. DUGUID: I think that has to happen on a case-by-case basis. The question is what happens when they come to the United States should someone choose to return to their own country. That becomes an Iraqi question.

QUESTION: I mean, if someone has, you know, faced a fear, you know, letters threatening their lives or their families and they did come to the U.S. because of that with the assistance of the State Department and now wants to go back --

MR. DUGUID: I'm not in a position to adjudicate individual cases from the podium. I would refer you to the Department of Homeland -- Health and -- sorry, Health and Human Services to have a discussion on that.

Yes, and then David.

QUESTION: Yeah, do you have any -- have you seen these latest bellicose statements from North Korea threatening South Korean commercial aviation and accusing the U.S. and South Korea of wanting to start a nuclear war?

MR. DUGUID: Distinctly unhelpful. They are distinctly unhelpful. The North Koreans should be working on their commitments to the Six-Party Talks, to the Six Parties, and fulfilling their agreements under the Six-Party Talks rather than making statements that are threatening to peaceful aviation.

QUESTION: Do you read anything into the fact that these statements have come out while Ambassador Bosworth is in the region?

MR. DUGUID: These statements come out seemingly over the last few weeks at regular intervals, whether Ambassador Bosworth or another U.S. official is there or not.

QUESTION: Well, right. But this statement happened to come out as he is --

MR. DUGUID: And it was preceded by many others when he wasn't there, so I don't read any particular -- any particular significance to it.

QUESTION: There has been some suggestion that he might try to meet with North Korean officials.

MR. DUGUID: There have been those suggestions, not from this podium though.

QUESTION: No, no, I know. But does this mean -- you know, now that they've come out and, you know, they made this kind of a threat while he's there, presumably, you know, gauging the feelings of the other players about a possible meeting with the North Koreans, I'm wondering if that changes the calculus.

MR. DUGUID: There are no plans to meet with North Koreans right now. Ambassador Bosworth is in Tokyo today.

Yes.

QUESTION: Can I just go back to my question on Pakistan, and also a quick question on Bangladesh? What I meant was that terrorism in that country has been going on for so many years, and people are sick and tired. The Pakistanis themselves are sick and tired because now they think that they now in the past and now they have lost faith in the government. That's what they are asking, that someone should come and help them to have a peaceful nation.

MR. DUGUID: We are in touch through our Embassy and our other multifarious contacts with the Pakistani Government and Pakistanis all through civil society. We are working to help Pakistan deal with many of the problems that you describe.

QUESTION: And on Bangladesh quick, the situation is very (inaudible) and now the newly elected government, the prime minister, she is meeting with much of the army chief, and over 1,000 people have been arrested for various activities. What's going on there? Do you have any update?

MR. DUGUID: I would refer you to the Bangladeshis for an update on what's going on in their country.

QUESTION: A follow-up on Pakistan?

MR. DUGUID: Yes, please.

QUESTION: Has Pakistan sought assistance or any help from U.S. in the investigation into the attack on Sri Lankan cricket team?

MR. DUGUID: Not at this point.

QUESTION: Thank you.

MR. DUGUID: Yes.

QUESTION: This is a follow-up to the State Department report on narcotics last week. AP interviewed Mexican President Calderon, and he shot back, saying that U.S. corruption is also to blame. He said that there are U.S. officials who should be prosecuted for corruption who aren't. He also blamed the United States for not stopping the flow of weapons into Mexico. And finally, he says that there was not enough done to stop the consumption of drugs in this country. So just your reaction to his statements?

MR. DUGUID: I do believe that Ambassador Johnson was on the record speaking to many of these same issues in another context, and that the United States does recognize that we have a consumption problem and that we need to do -- we need to do a lot to solve that problem or resolve that problem.

The report itself is a tool for Congress to try and address the very problems that the president may have listed, but we are working with our partners to try and solve the problem of cross-border narcotics trades, which are a problem for us all.

QUESTION: Is there an issue of corrupt officials here, as far as you know?

MR. DUGUID: I would refer you to law enforcement -- you know, local law enforcement officials to talk about what the problems might be in different jurisdictions. The United States is working with its partners to try and control what is a cross-border problem. It's an international problem. We recognize that we have a consumption problem in the U.S. and that we have to do something about that to help our colleagues in other countries who are trying to fight this same problem in their country.

Yes, please.

QUESTION: This narcotic report, some -- there are some reports obviously North Korea is selling some drugs to Japan, and would you have some comments on that?

MR. DUGUID: I've not seen these reports, so I can't make any comment on it.

QUESTION: Okay.

MR. DUGUID: Sorry. Anything else?

QUESTION: Thank you.

MR. DUGUID: Thank you.

(The briefing was concluded at 11:30 a.m.)