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State Department Daily Press Briefing

13 September 2012

U.S. Department of State
On-Camera Daily Press Briefing Index
Wednesday, September 13, 2012
1:29 p.m. EDT

Briefer: Victoria Nuland, Spokesperson

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
DAILY PRESS BRIEFING

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 2012
(ON THE RECORD UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED)

1:29 p.m. EDT

MS. NULAND: All right, everybody. I apologize for being late. We had a lot of material to go through this morning before coming to see you.

Before we start, let me just take this opportunity to thank all of you in the press and everyone out there in the international community for their condolences, for their solidarity with us, in the face of the tragic events in Benghazi. And with that, let's go to what's on your minds.

QUESTION: Can you – just to begin, yesterday on the conference call, an official suggested that a lot of the information was preliminary and it could change. So the first thing I would like to know if there is anything in the timeline that was offered to us yesterday – if there's anything to add to that or if there's anything significantly different about what we were told yesterday.

MS. NULAND: I don't have anything significantly different from what you heard in the backgrounding call. I think the degree to which we're able to update this information or deepen it, it's going to be in the context of beginning to interview our employees who are coming out and beginning to participate in the investigation that the Libyans are doing. So frankly, I don't have anything that's particularly helpful.

QUESTION: So as far – okay. But as far as you know right now, everything that was in that timeline, including the specifics about there only being three people inside when the – and getting separated and all of that, and you don't have any more clarity on exactly when Ambassador Stevens died, i.e., at the compound or then later at the hospital – it was unclear yesterday – there's no new information (inaudible)?

MS. NULAND: Matt's referring to the fact that we gave a background briefing yesterday, where we outlined what we knew. But in the context of that, we made absolutely clear that we were operating on early reporting; we were operating on reporting before we had a chance to interview any of our people or any of the Libyans who might be involved.

And in that context, we said that the circumstances surrounding the death of Ambassador Stevens included the fact that he and two other people – Sean Smith and a regional security officer – were in the main building in Benghazi when it was hit and caught on fire, but in – that the regional security officer attempted to lead the other two out, that he got separated from Ambassador Stevens, that he then got – but when he got to Sean Smith, he was already dead. He pulled him from the building. He went back into the building with additional security forces, but was unable to locate Ambassador Stevens before the fire overcame the building.

We were then not able to locate Ambassador Stevens for many, many hours. We were later informed by some of our Libyan contacts that they understood he had been taken to a hospital in Benghazi. We were not able to confirm that, although there is a huge amount of reporting on it. And his body was later returned to us at the airport in Benghazi in the context of our evacuation of the rest of our people.

So in response to Matt's question, we don't have any definitive information of our own as to exactly when he passed or what the precise causes of death were. I would guess that this is

among the things that'll become clearer as the Libyans work on their investigation with our support.

QUESTION: Can you talk a little bit more about the security that was at the Embassy? It seems that for an area such as Benghazi, where there was a lot of instability, there were very few guards there. And can you talk about whether the U.S. asked Libya, the Libyan Government, earlier in the week for extra security precaution and whether that – extra security precautions or security personnel and whether that request was fulfilled?

MS. NULAND: Well, let me start by reminding you that we are extremely cautious in any circumstances about talking publicly about our security arrangements. You can understand that the more you talk about these things, the more difficult it is to maintain security at your facilities. So --

QUESTION: It does seem though that there were very few security personnel at this location.

MS. NULAND: I'm going to reject that, Elise. Let me tell you what I can about the security at our mission in Benghazi. It did include a local Libyan guard force around the outer perimeter. This is the way we work in all of our missions all around the world, that the outer perimeter is the responsibility of the host government. There was obviously a physical perimeter barrier, a wall. And then there was a robust American security presence inside the compound. This is absolutely consistent with what we have done at a number of missions similar to Benghazi around the world.

QUESTION: Could you talk about whether a request was made to the Libyan Government as early as Sunday or Monday and whether that – for additional security precautions, given the fact that there was some trouble in the area, and whether that request was fulfilled?

MS. NULAND: I'm not prepared to talk about specific diplomatic engagements between us and the Libyans on security, either before or after.

QUESTION: Well, I mean, I have to take issue with that, because there have been several incidents, including you from the podium, throughout the Arab Spring where you've said --

MS. NULAND: Right.

QUESTION: -- that you've talked about discussions with the various governments --

MS. NULAND: Right.

QUESTION: -- about needing additional security precautions -- the Syrians, for instance --

MS. NULAND: Right.

QUESTION: -- which was one of the reasons that you closed your Embassy, because those precautions were not taken. So why would this be any different?

MS. NULAND: Elise, I'm happy to see whether there's more that we can share on this, but I don't have it today.

QUESTION: (Inaudible) is it your understanding that you were satisfied with the security at the Embassy – at the consulate at the time of --

MS. NULAND: What I can say is that, as we did with all of our missions overseas in advance of the September 11th anniversary, and as we do every year, we did evaluate the threat stream and we determined that the security at Benghazi was appropriate for what we knew. But I can't speak to any other diplomatic conversations that might have gone on with the Libyans. But I'm happy to see if I can get any more information.

QUESTION: I just have one more question.

MS. NULAND: Yeah.

QUESTION: On this movie that seems to be the kind of genesis, at least in some of these other areas of protest in the country, did you know about this movie before these protests erupted? Did anybody notify you that this movie was coming out and to be on the lookout for potential protests?

MS. NULAND: Well, I don't want to get too much into this particular video, because it just gives it more credit than any of us want to. I think you heard the Secretary speak to this issue this morning and to make it clear that we absolutely reject both its message and its content, which we consider disgusting and reprehensible. She said it far better than I can here.

The interesting thing about this, as I understand it, is that this had actually been circulating at a relatively low level for some months out there in cyberspace and that it only caught fire in the region on the day or just before the day that we began to see these various protests.

QUESTION: Victoria --

MS. NULAND: And I can't, obviously, speak to why that might have been.

Let me go to Margaret, and then we'll come back to you, Said.

QUESTION: And can you give us an update on some of the staffers who were evacuated who are in Germany or elsewhere? There were some reports of a third one regaining consciousness in a hospital in Germany. And if you could also give us a sense of the two other fatalities. All of us have seen different names and different details. Can you give us some definitive information?

MS. NULAND: I don't have much to add on our three wounded in – who are now in Germany receiving treatment. That's for reasons of their privacy. If we understand that they're interested in sharing more of their condition with you all, I will get that for you.

With regard to the other two, as you recall, the Secretary spoke of four fallen comrades at the beginning of this. I have to say that one of the reasons we were late today was we were trying to see whether we were in a position to talk publicly about them. I regret that we are not yet ready to do that. You know that we have very sensitive and careful protocols that we do with the families, with the arrangements, before we go public with these things. So we will get that information to you as soon as we can, but I don't have it today.

QUESTION: So that means the family of one of these individuals has not been informed yet?

MS. NULAND: Again, I'm not going to go into the specifics, but we want to do this in a way that is completely respectful of both families and doesn't surprise anybody, and we're just not there yet.

Okay.

QUESTION: So the reports that have been out there and some of the names – is there any reason not to believe some of these people who have self-identified?

MS. NULAND: I'm just not in a position to speak to it. If people are interested in speaking to the press, that's their business.

Please, Said.

QUESTION: Yeah. Are major Libyan cities like Tripoli and Benghazi safe for diplomatic operations in the sense that there is a central authority that controls these cities? Or are there pockets or areas or sections of these cities that are under the control of rogue militant elements?

MS. NULAND: Well, I don't think it's possible to generalize, Said, which is why our security posture is varied in every place that we are. So we are constantly evaluating both the ability of the host government to provide the external security that is their undertaking under the Vienna Convention and our own security arrangements inside the perimeter. And we did that in the Benghazi context. We are doing it in Tripoli, obviously.

QUESTION: Was there any kind of special precautions, considering that 9/11 – the 11th anniversary of 9/11 was occurring? Were there any kind of special precautions that were taken to counter such a possibility?

MS. NULAND: Well, as I said, we reviewed our security posture at every mission we have around the world in the lead-up to September 11th. Every mission then makes whatever recommendations it thinks are necessary with regard to hardening and strengthening. But I'm not prepared to talk about the details, not there or not anywhere, today.

Please.

QUESTION: Within those limitations, I just wanted to be clear. When the President yesterday made his order to increase security, does that then require a new review or does that set forth a

new set of actions by missions around the world, or has that already been undertaken in the September 11th context?

MS. NULAND: Well, there are two different things here. The first, as we talked about on background yesterday, the night of the incident we sent a message to every diplomatic mission in the world asking them to again review security and take the necessary measures. Some of you will have seen that there were increased emergency warnings or security warnings that were also issued to Americans in some 50-plus missions around the world since that went out. That's part and parcel of the reviews that embassies and consulates and other missions around the world do.

With regard to Mission Libya, I think you've seen the Pentagon talk to the issue of evacuating Benghazi while we assess the security situation, which we've now done, to bringing in the fast team, which we very much appreciate, for Embassy Tripoli. And we are continuing to look at our posture.

Please.

QUESTION: Toria, can you tell us whether there's been any progress towards determining whether the Benghazi attack was purely spontaneous or was premeditated by militants, and also whether there's been any further determination about the extent to which the Cairo, Benghazi, and now Yemen attacks were related in some way other than just by theme?

MS. NULAND: Well, as we said yesterday when we were on background, we are very cautious about drawing any conclusions with regard to who the perpetrators were, what their motivations were, whether it was premeditated, whether they had any external contacts, whether there was any link, until we have a chance to investigate along with the Libyans. So I know that's going to be frustrating for you, but we really want to make sure that we do this right and we don't jump to conclusions.

That said, obviously, there are plenty of people around the region citing this disgusting video as something that has been motivating. As the Secretary said this morning, while we as Americans, of course, respect free speech, respect free expression, there's never an excuse for it to become violent.

QUESTION: Toria --

QUESTION: Just to follow up on that, though, this – these incidents all boiled out of the anniversary of 9/11 as well. There seems to be a detail that's kind of missed in all of this. Is there any indication in that that there's possibly al-Qaida sympathizers involved?

MS. NULAND: Again, I can't draw any conclusions as to the who and how they were affiliated. We just can't do that right now, and we won't until we have more information. What I would say is that, as you have probably seen, what we're seeing on social media, what we're seeing in some of the local commentary, is largely related to this reprehensible video.

QUESTION: Toria, can you give us a basic update on the investigation itself? Who is in charge? Why was the FBI called in when it's primarily a domestic law enforcement agency? Are you looking at possible – possibly holding any one here in the United States responsible for what happened in Benghazi two days ago?

MS. NULAND: First, on the question of the Libyan-led investigation, I'm going to let the Libyans speak to that. I think that they probably will in coming days. With regard to why the FBI is involved, the FBI always becomes involved when Americans – official Americans are killed. I'm also going to let the FBI speak in detail to its involvement, precisely what it's doing, but I can say that it has opened its own investigation into the death of these four U.S. citizens and the attack on the consulate, on the mission.

QUESTION: Now, is there also an investigation being conducted in house by diplomatic security? Is anyone being asked to come in to review the official security protocols for embassies and consulates?

MS. NULAND: Well, first of all, with regard to the larger review, I think I said in response to Andy's question that that was absolutely the first thing that we did, that we sent out a message worldwide to all of our missions to review security. And security protocols are constantly being reviewed, and they will continue to be. We are constantly also learning lessons, particularly in the wake of a tragedy, as we have in the wake of past tragedies like the bombings of our embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, so that, obviously, we can pledge to the American people and to our own work force, but I'm not in a position to give you any conclusions from any of that at this moment.

QUESTION: Now, when you say that those employees who are now in Germany are in the process of being interviewed, are they being interviewed by the FBI? Are they being interviewed by State? Are Libyan officials flying in to talk with them? What's the scope of what kind of evidence they're providing right now?

MS. NULAND: Well, first of all, you connected dots that I didn't connect. I simply said that we needed a chance to talk to our personnel. That will obviously be part of what we do internally. It'll be part of what we make available to the Libyans in an appropriate way. I'm not going to speak to the details. But as you can imagine, Ros, today, those people who arrived in Germany late last night are an extremely stressed and traumatized bunch, and they need some time to rest and recover. They were a very tight and close-knit group, and they were very close to Chris Stevens as well.

QUESTION: Sorry – they didn't arrive late last night.

MS. NULAND: I don't remember when they arrived.

QUESTION: It was the afternoon.

MS. NULAND: Afternoon.

Nadia.

QUESTION: And just one more, Toria.

MS. NULAND: Yeah.

QUESTION: Do you have any information about the repatriation of the remains of the Ambassador, of Mr. Smith, of the others? And how is the State Department going to recognize, beyond yesterday's gathering with the President and the Secretary?

MS. NULAND: Well, first of all, we thank the President for coming and standing with our employees yesterday. That was something that meant a huge amount to all of us. We are working on the appropriate formalities and ceremony for the repatriation. I'm not in a position to announce the details yet. Here again, this is a circumstance where it needs to be done properly, with the families involved, so we have a lot of moving pieces. But we will get that information to you as soon as we can.

Nadia.

QUESTION: I have two questions. President Morsi of Egypt has asked the Egyptian Government in Washington to open a lawsuit against the maker of this video. So far, we don't know who made this video, and is the State Department or anybody at the American Government level – are they likely to open an investigation to find out who's behind it, especially if it led to the direct death of U.S. officials?

And second, are you satisfied with the explanation that you're giving to the Arab world in terms of that it's not the U.S. Government who's making this video, that's actually individuals who did it, and under the Constitution everybody has the right to do whatever they want under the freedom of expression? Because this message doesn't seem to be coming across in the Middle East. They seem to believe that it's the U.S. Government who's behind it.

MS. NULAND: Well, first on the issue of whether anything will result from these investigations that leads to criminal charges in the U.S. or any other charges, I just can't speak to that at this point. It's very much premature. Frankly, I hadn't seen this assertion that you gave of – with regard to President Morsi's position.

We have what – and the second half of your question, I'm sorry, I lost it.

QUESTION: Is your message getting across to the Arab world that it's not the U.S. Government who was behind this video?

MS. NULAND: Well, I think one of the reasons that the Secretary wanted to speak so strongly and so directly today when she was with her Moroccan counterpart was we are concerned about this, that people in the region don't understand our culture and society, that this was in fact a private effort, that it has nothing to do with the U.S. Government, that we don't do these kinds of videos, and that in fact, as a government, we found it disgusting and reprehensible, as the

Secretary said. So I would commend to all of you, and I hope all of you will disseminate and broadcast as broadly as you can, the message that she gave today. It was extremely intentional, because we are concerned that we – that this is not understood well.

QUESTION: Can I follow up on that?

QUESTION: How much of a threat do you --

QUESTION: Can I follow --

MS. NULAND: Hold on, one at a time. Right here.

QUESTION: (Inaudible) on the video. How much of a threat did you think that – did the State Department think the video would be prior to September 11th?

MS. NULAND: Again, I think I spoke to that in response to Margaret that this had been out there in the ether for many months, and it caught fire quite suddenly and quite rapidly just on the day of the Benghazi and Cairo incidents.

QUESTION: And as a follow-up to that, do you think that the message put out, the statement put out by the U.S. Embassy in – I mean, I'm sorry – Cairo actually brought attention to the video, if it had been at low levels prior to that?

MS. NULAND: I can't speak to that. What I can say is what we said on background yesterday, that that message was not authorized by Washington, and we asked them to take it down.

QUESTION: Did that – that message didn't mention anything about the film, though, did it?

MS. NULAND: It didn't.

QUESTION: It did not?

MS. NULAND: Yeah.

QUESTION: And neither did the Warden Message that went out earlier that morning. But that – in fact, that was one of the numerous or number of reasons – the Warden Message didn't say anything specifically about what the protests would be about. It said there were a couple of reasons why. But in fact, the film – it had been noticed by the Embassy that this video was getting traction and that conservative Muslim leaders were calling for protests against it, correct? So it is not really an assumption to make that – the Embassy was aware that a protest over the film specifically was possible in the morning?

MS. NULAND: My understanding of the sequence of events – and I'm going to send you to Embassy Cairo for more detail – was that in the day --

QUESTION: At this point, referring us to Embassy Cairo is like referring us to the North Koreans, so please don't do that. (Laughter.)

MS. NULAND: My understanding of the sequence of events was that in the day or days prior to the protests that became violent at our Embassy in Cairo, the film had been shown on Egyptian television and was being quite heavily watched, and our social media tracking indicated that. And it was on that basis and the basis of a few other things that the Embassy put out the Warden Message and was concerned about protests. At that point, we expected it to be localized to Egypt.

QUESTION: Okay. And then just one other thing. After the briefing – and I don't expect you to read off this list now, but you mentioned that 50-plus embassies have put out messages. Is it possible to find out which embassies those were? Don't read the names now, but --

MS. NULAND: You don't want me to read the names? (Laughter.)

QUESTION: Well, if everyone else wants to hear them, but it just seems like --

MS. NULAND: What I'm going to do is refer you – and I'm going to find it after the briefing – there is a public website where you can find all of these Warden Messages.

QUESTION: I was on that website and it doesn't have all of them. It doesn't – certainly doesn't have 15 – 50. It's got 15.

MS. NULAND: Okay. Well, we'll make sure that it's updated and we'll get it to you. I looked over the list just before coming down.

QUESTION: Can you --

QUESTION: Well, can't you just send that – can't you just send us that list? I mean, presumably it's --

MS. NULAND: We'll get the website updated, which is the appropriate thing to do.

QUESTION: Well --

MS. NULAND: Because then it's available to everybody, Matt, and the public as well.

QUESTION: Well, you could put it out as a Taken Question and then it's available to everyone as well.

MS. NULAND: Okay. We'll work on this together.

QUESTION: I'm just telling you because I don't – I frankly don't think that in the time that – you're not going to be able to get the website updated in time.

MS. NULAND: Okay. We're going to work on this for you.

QUESTION: Thank you.

QUESTION: I may have missed this, but it sounded like you just said the film was shown on Egyptian television. Just a clarification – you mean that this entire film was shown on –

QUESTION: Clips.

QUESTION: -- or that the Egyptian media was doing news reports about YouTube clips that had been dubbed into Arabic?

MS. NULAND: It sounds like Nadia has more information than I do; but certainly, some of the more offensive pieces were out on Egyptian television and were inciting.

QUESTION: Yes, it was (inaudible).

QUESTION: (Inaudible.)

MS. NULAND: Can I – I'm going to go to Michele and then we're going to --

QUESTION: Thank you.

MS. NULAND: -- finish in this region before I come back to you.

QUESTION: I'd like to ask you about sort of a Twitter debate that's going on today between Embassy Cairo and the Muslim Brotherhood. The Muslim Brotherhood --

MS. NULAND: Oh, good.

QUESTION: -- Twitter feed wrote that they're relieved that no U.S. Embassy staff had been hurt, and the response was, "Thank you. Have you checked what's on your Arabic feeds? We read that too." What are you trying to do through social media to get this message – the messages that you're talking about out?

MS. NULAND: Michele, I frankly haven't seen the exchange between Embassy Cairo and the Muslim Brotherhood, so I'm not going to speak to it. I think I won't speak to anything of that kind until I check it myself.

QUESTION: Is that the – since this incident with the web posting, is U.S. Embassy Cairo in charge of its own social media and its own messaging and local embassies around the world doing that? Or has it been more centralized; the messaging is consistent from State?

MS. NULAND: Well, first of all, the messages that we send out through the social media from all of our missions overseas, first and foremost, should be amplifying messages from senior leadership in Washington. So in the last 24 hours, with so many statements by the President and

the Secretary and other senior principals, that is the primary focus – is to make sure, as we said in response to Nadia’s question, that we are understood, that our messages are getting out in multiple languages, et cetera.

That said, embassies do, under the authority of ambassadors, tailor their messages and work individually with the folks who follow their sites. I will tell you that Ambassador Patterson is on her way back to Cairo today.

QUESTION: Can I just ask you what about – you said that all these messages are supposed to be amplifying the message given in Washington, correct? What about this statement that was put out didn’t amplify the message from Washington? What – you’re going to great lengths – you and the White House are going to great lengths to say this was not authorized in Washington. I’m sorry, I don’t see the problem with what – what is it – what’s the divergence between what that message said and what the message is coming from Washington?

MS. NULAND: I don’t --

QUESTION: Because it seems to me it’s exactly the same thing as what the President and what the Secretary said over the last couple days.

MS. NULAND: I don’t think so, but I’m not going to sit --

QUESTION: Well, can you tell us what was wrong with it?

MS. NULAND: I’m not going to sit here and parse the two texts. I think from our perspective, the message was unbalanced, the words were mischosen, and they were not clearly comprehensible to all audiences.

Said.

QUESTION: Toria, are you concerned on this message issue that there may be a flip side to that thing, that anyone with a smart phone can actually put anything placed on the YouTube and they will be caught in this thing endlessly and sending these messages? I mean, as far back as I can remember, the United States has been making sure that the message gets across that it is not anti-Islam, that it condemns these things and so on. I am concerned that there may be a can of worms opened here.

MS. NULAND: I’m not sure quite --

QUESTION: My question is: What is the flip side? I mean, you can say this message time and time again, but on the other hand, there are many people – there are millions of people that can put anything together and place on YouTube and you’ll be caught in this kind of –

MS. NULAND: Look, I think that the Secretary was very frank this morning in the comments that she made with the Moroccan, that even if we wanted to control the internet – which we don’t, because we believe in free speech – it wouldn’t be possible to do so. So the question and

the shout out that she did today was that leaders, whether they are government leaders, NGO leaders, religious leaders, have a responsibility to draw a hard line at violence. There is never an excuse for expressing yourself violently.

Wendell.

QUESTION: What is your level of concern of the protest going on now in Sanaa?

MS. NULAND: Are we ready to switch to Yemen, generally?

QUESTION: I didn't consider that a switch, but –

MS. NULAND: Yeah, no, it's all –

QUESTION: (Inaudible.)

MS. NULAND: Yep, yep. Go ahead.

QUESTION: I was reading the background call yesterday.

MS. NULAND: Yep.

QUESTION: And it seems that for some hours you didn't know the fate of the situation that happened with the Ambassador. But in the press, very early that morning, we got two pictures from the Ambassador that were in all the media from international agencies. Do you know, or – do the Department know when these pictures were taken, and which – in what situation?

MS. NULAND: Well, we've seen those pictures. And thank you for the opportunity to say that it was very painful for those of us in this Department to see some of the more horrific images broadcast. I would just say that on a personal note, not an institutional note.

I'm not in a position to confirm one way or the other who those images were of. And frankly we don't confirm information we're not sure of.

QUESTION: Could you clarify this one thing about Libya – I know you were going to go on – and that is, just based upon what you had said before about security at the Embassy, the Embassy that was attacked, it sounds like much of this –

MS. NULAND: The mission in Benghazi.

QUESTION: The mission. Thank you for correcting me. The mission that was attacked – it sounds like much of the security at that mission – the security efforts there were ceded to Libyan security forces. Was that not the case?

MS. NULAND: That was not the case. And first of all, what you have to understand about embassies around the world, not just ours but those of foreign governments here in Washington,

is that the outer perimeter in any embassy is always the responsibility of local security. That's the way it is done in embassies around the world. So in this case, we had arrangements for Libyan security on the outer perimeter. We – as we do around the world – train them, work with them, obviously, and then we have additional American procedures inside the wall.

So this was situation normal for any embassy around the world. That said – I'm sorry, I've lost my train of thought in terms of what the rest of your question was. I'm having one of those days.

QUESTION: You answered it. But just, again, to clarify, were there no marines at this mission? No U.S. marines at this particular mission?

MS. NULAND: There were not marines at this mission.

QUESTION: Why not?

MS. NULAND: They – we have a number of posts around the world. We have – there are embassies without marines, there are other consulates of this type without marines. We make a decision based on the local conditions as to whether that makes sense, but this posture that we had, which was external security by the Libyans and then a strong U.S. security presence – but it didn't include that particular contingent of Americans – inside, in a number of other missions that look a lot like Benghazi.

QUESTION: Sorry, just to –

QUESTION: Is that for marines coming generally from the mission itself, or does the State Department say, you know, the situation's really bad right now in this particular section of the world, perhaps we should have marines based here.

MS. NULAND: It's not a matter of marines necessarily being a qualitatively different way of securing. There are many other ways to secure that are equivalent, too. It depends on the circumstances and it is different in every part of the world, and we evaluate it along with our friends at the Defense Department and other agencies individually, per mission.

Yeah.

QUESTION: Toria, do you have a rough estimate of how many missions do not have marine guards? Isn't it more than half?

MS. NULAND: I don't think it's more than half. But it's certainly more than people expect. I don't have a number.

QUESTION: Is it not the fact that there is actually a waiting list to get marine (inaudible)?

MS. NULAND: I can't speak to that at all.

QUESTION: Sorry, a quick follow-up to his question on the security. The Libyans are saying in press reports that they advised the U.S. Government that they wanted more security. Deputy Interior Minister Sharif told the New York Times that, “What’s weird is that the United States refrained from the procedure, depended instead on the simple forms of protection that they had.” And, “What happened later is beyond our control, they are responsible for part of what happened.”

MS. NULAND: I haven’t seen those quotes. I’m not going to respond to press reporting. As I said, we are in the process of an investigation with the Libyans, and we will see what that yields.

Anything else on this set of subjects before we go to Yemen, which – where Wendell’s been very patient.

Go ahead. Sorry, Catherine. Catherine, one more.

QUESTION: Just yesterday, President Obama gave an interview to Telemundo where he described the relationship with Egypt as “not an ally, not an enemy.” I’m wondering at what point did the description of the U.S. relationship with Egypt change? And he said this yesterday. Was it in response to the protests at the Embassy, or was this a decision that the Administration and the State Department had made earlier?

MS. NULAND: Well, obviously for parsing of the President’s comments, I’m going to send you to the White House. But as a matter of fact and practice, the word ally generally is used with a treaty ally, which is a different matter than the fact that we have a very close and longstanding partnership with the government of Egypt, and we are working together to support their democratic transition.

QUESTION: Well, wait a second. Egypt is an ally. It’s a Major Non-NATO Ally.

MS. NULAND: Correct, yeah.

QUESTION: And you neglected to mention that. And that Major Non-NATO Ally status is something that you guys have celebrated ever since the ‘70s, when they were among the first batch of countries, along with Israel, to get that distinction. So is Egypt an ally, or is it not an ally? And if it is not an ally, in that sense of the – in the sense of their being a Major Non-NATO Ally, is Israel not an ally either? Is Japan not an ally?

MS. NULAND: Well, Japan has a treaty –

QUESTION: Okay, because they have a treaty.

MS. NULAND: – alliance with the United States.

QUESTION: So other countries – so, Pakistan and India that don’t have mutual defense treaties with the United States, they’re major Non-NATO allies, but you guys don’t really think they’re

allies. Is that the message you're trying to send? Because that's the message the President did last night, unless you've decided that Egypt no longer qualifies as a Major Non-NATO Ally.

MS. NULAND: Well, that was certainly, I don't think, the intention. I'm going to refer you to the White House for further parsing on this.

QUESTION: So forget about the President's words. You're saying that the Administration, the State Department, still regards Egypt as a Major Non-NATO Ally and it is still a recipient of all the – of the privileges that that entails?

MS. NULAND: Yes.

Wendell.

QUESTION: I have another question on Egypt, actually. Sorry, Wendell, if I may.

MS. NULAND: Poor guy.

QUESTION: Just briefly, did Secretary Clinton meet with the Libyan Ambassador to the U.S. yesterday?

MS. NULAND: She did. Ambassador Aujali was scheduled to come in for a regularly scheduled call with Deputy Secretary Nides yesterday and, given the circumstances, that turned into a condolence call and a call about how we move forward together. And the Secretary decided that it was absolutely appropriate for her to take over the meeting, and she did. And I think we released a picture yesterday.

QUESTION: This is just a quick follow-on on that.

MS. NULAND: Yeah.

QUESTION: We saw on her schedule today also she's due to meet – and maybe meeting now – Tunisian, Libyan, and Egyptian students. Was that a – can you tell us anything more about that meeting and was that arranged prior to the events in Benghazi?

MS. NULAND: I think it was. I don't think it was put on the schedule just recently.

Now, we're going to go to Wendell.

QUESTION: Could I just --

MS. NULAND: Oh, goodness. Maybe we're not.

QUESTION: No. One more thing on that – on the ally thing. Do you know if the Egyptians inquired with the Embassy about their status?

MS. NULAND: I don't know the answer to that. I doubt it.

QUESTION: Do you know if anyone from this building has gotten in touch with the White House to say that the President misspoke?

MS. NULAND: Well, I'm not going to speak to our internal discussions, obviously.

QUESTION: Well, did – I mean, do you – if you believe that – if as it is – as you just said, that Egypt is still a Major on-NATO Ally, the President misspoke when he said that Egypt is not an ally, correct?

MS. NULAND: I am not going to speak to our internal discussions.

Wendell.

QUESTION: Well, wait --

MS. NULAND: Matt --

QUESTION: -- I don't want to know about the internal discussion. I don't – frankly that – leave that to you. But Egypt is still a Major Non-NATO Ally, correct?

MS. NULAND: I think I answered that question a minute ago.

QUESTION: If that – okay. But if that is correct, then it's also correct that the President misspoke, is it not?

MS. NULAND: I am not going to parse the President's words.

Go ahead, Wendell.

QUESTION: Yemen protests.

MS. NULAND: Yes.

QUESTION: What's your level of concern? Do you see a tie with the – what happened in Libya and Egypt?

MS. NULAND: Well, again, I can't speak precisely to the motivation of some of these people. We have, as I said, also seen some of this – some of these comments with regard to the film moving in social media there. We are, obviously, doing what we can now with the Yemenis to restore security there. All of our personnel are safe and are accounted for. There was a small breach of the compound perimeter earlier today, but there was no breach of the Embassy buildings. And as I was coming down here, my understanding was that we were in the process of – or the Yemeni security was in the process of restoring order.

QUESTION: Increased security there in light of the protest?

MS. NULAND: In light of these protests? Well, again, Wendell, I'm not going to speak to the precise measures that we're taking, but obviously we're taking measures there today to make sure our folks are safe.

Please.

QUESTION: If I may, I want to ask a question about Asia.

MS. NULAND: Amazing. Moving to Asia.

QUESTION: (Laughter.) Well, Japan has concluded that – concluded what it calls the purchase and nationalization three out of the five Diaoyu Islands. So it looks like Japan has already taken the first step towards a confrontation. But --

MS. NULAND: I've spoken to this issue several times. I spoke to it last week. I spoke to it this week. I don't have anything new for you on this issue. I'm sorry.

QUESTION: Okay. Just a quick question. So according to U.S., you said U.S. and as you said the U.S.-Japan Mutual Defense Treaty is applicable to the Diaoyu Islands. So does that mean if there's a conflict between Japan and China, the U.S. will join Japan in fighting China?

MS. NULAND: We have spoken to this issue before. I don't have anything new on it. I'm sorry.

Said.

QUESTION: Yes. Very quickly, today marks the 19th anniversary of the Oslo Accord signing at the White House. And --

MS. NULAND: I didn't remember that. Thank you, Said.

QUESTION: -- which committed you to financing the Palestinian Authority. I wanted to ask you to clarify the status of the \$200 million. Because I know it's not – it's been approved, but somehow is caught up in whatever machinations and so on. Could you explain what is the status of the money?

MS. NULAND: Well, you know that we feel strongly that this money needs to move. We are working with the Congress on that. There have been some holds on the money in the Congress.

Please.

QUESTION: I have a different question regarding Secretary Clinton's recent meeting with Japanese Prime Minister. Japanese government is going to announce within hours about the new energy policy, which include the goal to have no nuclear plant by 2030s. And according to the Japanese Government press briefing, the Secretary Clinton raised this issue and expressed to

Japanese Prime Minister that United States is interested in ongoing debate regarding Japanese nuclear energy policy. So my question is, first of all, why United States is interested in Japanese nuclear energy policy? And the second of all is whether or not United States is not happy about or concerned about that Japan is trying to rely not on a nuclear plant in the future.

MS. NULAND: Well, let me start by saying obviously it's a sovereign decision of any nation, the choices that they want to make with regard to meeting their national energy needs. I don't have any memory of the precise issue coming up in the Secretary's meeting with the Prime Minister. There were a number of subjects covered. If I didn't get that right, we'll get back to you.

Anything else? Margaret.

QUESTION: Can you just give us an assessment of some of the protests and – that you've been seeing throughout the region yesterday? There were reports of related protests in Algeria and some of North Africa. What is it that you're seeing at some of the facilities in the Middle East right now?

MS. NULAND: I know that we don't have anything in Algeria today. We've spoken to what we saw in Yemen earlier today. In Cairo, we have now peaceful, I believe, demonstrations of some 500 to 1,000 outside the walls. Let me see if I have anything else here. Yeah. In Tunis, we had small-scale peaceful protests yesterday that were about 40 to 150. The police dispersed when the crowd moved towards the Embassy wall. There are no protests today. No protests at all, I have, in Algiers.

Consulate Casablanca had a small-scale peaceful protest yesterday. I don't have information about what's going on there today.

QUESTION: Can you tell us about pro-American demonstrations in Libya? I've heard that there are.

MS. NULAND: Thank you for that, Said. I should have reached for that earlier. First of all, around the world we've had an enormous outpouring of condolence messages, of messages of solidarity, which we very much appreciate, the American people very much appreciate. In Libya, it's been absolutely overwhelming. And I think you've seen some of these images that are moving on Flickr of school children holding up placards saying "we're sorry" in English and expressing support for the U.S.-Libyan relationship on social media in Libya. It's been unbelievably supportive. So that speaks to the progress that we're making in building bonds with the Libyan people, and we so appreciate it.

QUESTION: Do you – you're under the impression that these children holding up signs saying "we're sorry" in Libya are doing this on their own and haven't been told by their teachers or whatever to go out into the streets to wave U.S. flags and --

MS. NULAND: Our – I can't speak to that, but what it appears is that this issue has been discussed in classrooms and families and in homes and that whether they are being encouraged

by parents, they're at least being encouraged to be supportive of this relationship, which is important for both of our futures.

QUESTION: And you haven't noticed anything like this in Egypt. Obviously, the situations are a little bit – are a lot different in terms of what actually happened at the mission. But are you similarly pleased or encouraged by any spontaneous pro-American – not demonstrations, but any kind of popular surge in pro-American sentiment in Egypt?

MS. NULAND: Well, let me start by saying that we have also seen in Egypt and in other parts of the region messages of condolence moving on social media, which means a lot to us. As you may know, President Morsi gave a speech today in Brussels in which he underscored that expressing opinions, the freedom to protest, and announcing positions ought to be guaranteed without assaulting private or public property or diplomatic missions. So he spoke against the kind of moves that we've seen at our mission in Cairo and also in Benghazi, and we very much appreciate that. But we have to see how this goes.

QUESTION: There were also Libyans that died fighting back along with their American comrades, correct?

MS. NULAND: Another very, very important point. Libyan security forces lost people in the battle at Benghazi. We also had, as I think we said in the backgrounding call yesterday, spontaneous volunteering by a local militia – the 17th of February Brigade to come to our assistance. We also had, we believe, acts of mercy and generosity later at the hospital in Benghazi, et cetera, and we very, very much appreciate this.

QUESTION: There are just no detail on the American – robust American security presence within the perimeter? Were those mostly contractors? Are you able to say?

MS. NULAND: Let me say that there was a robust State Department regional security officer presence, and beyond that I'm not going to get into details.

QUESTION: Do you have any information on reports that some Libyans have arrested in regards to the attack?

MS. NULAND: I saw those press reports before I came down. I was not able to confirm them. But obviously, it would be a good thing if we're starting to move forward on the justice piece.

QUESTION: When you speak about robust, I just want to – you're talking about more than one person, not just one enormous guy?

MS. NULAND: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

Samir.

QUESTION: Did you say before what was the purpose of Ambassador Stevens to the consulate in Benghazi?

MS. NULAND: Again, we talked about this a little in the backgrounding call yesterday. You know that Ambassador Stevens relationship with the people and the groups in Benghazi was very deep and very strong because he had been the Secretary and President's representative to the Transitional National Council. He had lived in Benghazi during the end of the Qadhafi period when – during the liberation of Libya. He made it his business to travel all over the country, but he made regular trips back to Benghazi to check on how things were going in the east, and he was on one of those regularly scheduled trips when these events happened.

Steve. Steve. Steve.

QUESTION: Could I just follow up? You mentioned acts of mercy at the hospital, but I thought we didn't really know what had happened at the hospital. Could you clarify?

MS. NULAND: We don't know what happened with Chris Stevens. We have other reports of generosity that I'm not prepared to get into here.

Please.

QUESTION: There is reporting that it is precisely because of the Ambassador's relationship to the people of Benghazi – his comfort there, his ties to the region – that he felt he didn't need the security that perhaps even some Libyan officials felt would have been more advisable. Would you care to address that?

MS. NULAND: That is absolutely inaccurate. He made this trip with the normal security precautions that were assigned to him throughout Libya. I would note that he was inside the mission when this happened. Having been a protectee myself, once you're inside the mission, the actual circumstances change somewhat. So we don't have any information to indicate that Chris was anything less than completely appropriate in the way he handled himself.

Please.

QUESTION: Regardless of the connection during this attack in Benghazi and extremist al-Qaida, generally speaking, how do you evaluate that recent situation inside Libya of the affiliate of the al-Qaida? How do you view? Are they getting bigger or getting more active?

MS. NULAND: Again, I think I said that we're not prepared to draw connections until we've had a chance to investigate.

Thank you all.

(The briefing was concluded at 2:19 p.m.)

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