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## TRANSCRIPT

# Joint Press Conference by Secretary Carter and Secretary Michael Fallon

Sept. 7, 2016

Secretary of Defense Ash Carter; U.K. Secretary of State for Defence Michael Fallon

**U.K. SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE MICHAEL FALLON:** Well, good evening everybody and thank you for coming along.

Let me begin by welcoming Secretary Carter back to London and thank him publicly for his exemplary leadership and friendship and cooperation, particularly through our strategic defense and security review last year. That review was good news for the United Kingdom and good news for the United State as we committed to the two percent NATO target and to increase our defense spending year on year.

Our discussion today has focused on three areas. First, on maximizing the opportunities that that strategic defense review opened up; on capability, where we're buying maritime patrol aircraft and the next generation of Apache helicopters; on operability -- interoperability, where today I can welcome the commitment of the United States to deploying F-35s on the first operational deployment of Queen Elizabeth -- the HMS Queen Elizabeth in 2021. And in the fullness of time, we expect our F-35s to be

welcome on the American carriers in -- in -- like for like.

We've also looked at the opportunities for more collaboration on cyber, where we have signed today a joint memorandum of understanding enhancing an unparalleled relationship by sharing more information, carrying out joint research into offensive and defensive cyber and sending together a very powerful signal to our enemies that the United States and the United Kingdom will always stay one step ahead.

And we've also reviewed innovation where we collaborate on everything from quantum clocks to robotics, and where next week, we here in the United Kingdom will be launching our own new innovation drive to increase our investment in disruptive technologies to augment our skills base and to bolster our leading edge partnership with the United States.

Secondly, we've today reviewed progress on joint operations, notably against the Daesh. We -- in recent times, we have both felt the devastating effects of totalitarian terror, our own innocent citizens attacked and slaughtered on a beach in Tunisia or in a nightclub in Orlando. So we are determined together to defeat this extremist enemy.

Since the beginning of the year, the United Kingdom has upped its game in Iraq and Syria. The Royal Air Force is now operating at a sustained operational tempo in single theater that it hasn't done for a quarter of a century. We have now deployed some 1,100 military personnel to the region.

At the end of June, I announced a further 250 would be added to that training effort and I can confirm today that the first of those 250 additional troops have now started to deploy in Iraq.

Those joint efforts and those of the rest of the coalition are now having an effect. Daesh is clearly on the backfoot, now lost some 40 percent of its territory. And following the Washington conference hosted by Secretary Carter, we are now pressing home our advantage, pushing Daesh back to Raqqah and Mosul,

where eventually they will be defeated.

Third and finally, we reviewed United Nations' peacekeeping. Work in the Middle East shows that while we may be leaving here the European Union, we are not abandoning our global responsibilities. Like the United States, Britain remains committed to projecting our global influence for the global good.

So we concluded our talks today by discussing tomorrow's peacekeeping conference. Better peacekeeping means less instability, fewer lives destroyed by conflict and fewer ungoverned spaces for extremists to hide.

At President Obama's summit last year, many nations made an unprecedented commitment to increase the capability of the United Nations' peacekeeping. But we've agreed today that it is time for nations to go further, to honor the pledges they've made, to improve the United Nations' planning and to up the performance of those peacekeepers on the ground, increasing the number of women in the ranks of peacekeeping and modernizing the way we do peacekeeping for the 21st century.

So let me say in conclusion, we are continuing to tighten our ties in between our two countries. As the world gets more dangerous, we continue to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the United States, fronting up to our enemies and continuing to defend across the world the values we believe in.

Secretary Carter.

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE ASH CARTER: Thank you, Michael. And thanks everyone for being here. And Michael, thank you for inviting me here today. It's always a pleasure to be with you, a very strong and capable partner.

Before I turn to our productive meeting this afternoon, I -- I'd first like to say how much I enjoyed returning

to Oxford this morning to speak with students and faculty about the U.S.-U.K. defense relationship. Being back on campus reminded me of what I first saw during my time at Oxford, something I still appreciate and it is still worth noting. And that Britain's and its people's global view and its willingness to lead economically, politically, militarily an independent, principled and powerful force in the world, physical and moral power in a world where few nations are capable or inclined to do that.

We value very much having such a partner in the United Kingdom because that's a commitment the United States shares as well, one that both of our countries, in fact, has stood for together and stood for together 75 years ago this month when President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill issued the Atlantic Charter, announcing the common principles on which they based their hopes for a better future for the world.

This, before they had won the war, even had a plan for winning the war, before the United States had even entered the war, they were thinking about principle and a world after war.

I spoke with the students today at Oxford about what our two nations have done together to promote and defend those principles over the last seven decades, as well as some of the challenges we face today and the steps we're taking together to address them.

As I made clear to Secretary Fallon in our conversations this afternoon, President Obama and I and many other Americans know we can continue to count on a strong United Kingdom to be a staunch ally. That was true the day before the Brexit vote and it's true today.

Thanks to the steps we're taking together as allies, thanks to all the United Kingdom is doing to promote stability worldwide, thanks to its continued commitment as expressed in its strategic review and its funding commitments, and thanks to our continued work together to uphold the principle of international order, we will remain that well into the future.

The United States respects the decision of the British people on Brexit. And we're committed to continuing and building upon our broad-ranging military, political and economic cooperation. That's because Brexit does not change at all all that our countries have to do together. It doesn't change all that binds our people together. And it certainly does not change how we will partner together to meet the challenges and seize the opportunities and defend the principled order in a rapidly changing world and amid new threats to the trans-Atlantic community.

Indeed, we're going to start partnering together in new ways and in new domains to strengthen our longstanding alliance. Our special relationship is, as Michael noted, also becoming a cyber relationship. Just today, we concluded a memorandum of understanding, the first of its kind, to share more information and carry out vital research and development together to advance our offensive and defensive cyber capabilities.

This agreement sends a clear message to our adversaries that the two nations who partnered together at Bletchley Park decades ago to crack German codes are going to be doing more together in yet another arena, namely cyberspace.

And this agreement is only one example of the British military's continued commitment to global leadership and to using its moral and physical range to take independent action in support of security in Europe and around the world. Others, just to acknowledge a few, include its impending and -- excuse me -- including its implementing and funding, as I noted, its ambitious forward-looking strategic defense and security review; its modernization of the U.K.'s continuous at-sea nuclear deterrent; maritime patrol aircraft and attack helicopters.

And Secretary Fallon's new defense innovation initiative, which similar to my own innovation agenda at the U.S. Department of Defense, and I very much admired what Michael has been doing here, would help keep

our U.K. military allies, as well as us, strong and on the cutting technological edge.

And that's important because the British military is doing so much around the world on its own as part of NATO and with the United States, all three. It's increasing its personal -- excuse me -- personnel contributions to NATO's Resolute Support mission in Afghanistan. We're grateful for that. It's also strengthening our collective deterrence against Russia, as well as leading in the NATO alliance not only by keeping its pledge to spend 2 percent of GDP on defense, but also in the field.

And it's making critical contributions to our military campaign to deliver ISIL a lasting defeat. Secretary Fallon in particular has played a critical role in shaping that coming defeat. From my first conversations with him, we resolved to accelerate our coalition's military campaign. We set in motion a series of deliberate steps to gather momentum and put ISIL on a path to lasting defeat.

And since then, thanks to the contributions and sacrifices of our local partners in Iraq, Syria and elsewhere, and service members from across this coalition, our campaign has accelerated, pressuring and squeezing ISIL, rolling it backwards towards Mosul in Iraq and Raqqah in Syria.

This week's peacekeeping ministerial is another demonstration of the U.K.'s continuing global leadership role. I appreciate Britain's efforts to raise awareness and drive reforms and commitments to U.N. peacekeeping. And I look forward to discussing that further this evening when I join Prime Minister May, Secretary Fallon, and other defense ministers to begin this important summit.

As I close, I want to thank Secretary Fallon once more for your friendship, your unwavering commitment to the cherished values that President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill committed our nations to defend more than seven decades ago. And we've been doing just that all this time and will for a long time to come.

Thank you, Michael.

SEC. FALLON: Thank you, Ash.

Now, I know our U.K. colleagues will understand, as a good host, I'm going to give priority first to our American guests. And call first from AP Bob Burns.

Q: First to Secretary Carter, in your speech this morning at Oxford, you said that while the United States does not seek a new cold war with Russia, you said the United States will not ignore attempts to interfere with, quote, "our democratic processes," unquote.

I'm wondering if you could say exactly what you meant by that term? Are you referring to interference -- suspected interference with the U.S. election or other elections?

SEC. CARTER: Well, this is a common concern across all the NATO countries. And something that we discuss frequently at NATO. It's part of what we call hybrid warfare -- (inaudible) -- little green men-type phenomenon, which is interference in the internal affairs of nations short of war. So that's -- that is a -- a concern in NATO, has been for some time among all the NATO nations.

Q: So you're not referring to -- (inaudible)?

SEC. CARTER: No, not referring to the United States only. It's a common concern of all the countries here in Europe.

SEC. FALLON: Okay, let's get some more in. From Reuters, Philip Stewart

Q: Hi. Thanks.

First to Secretary Carter, if you could speak a little bit about Libya for a second. There's been a lot of progress on the ground there. How close do you believe the forces that are being supported by U.S. strikes are to eliminating the Islamic state in Sirte?

And then I have a question for Secretary Fallon.

SEC. CARTER: Well, with the support of our airstrikes, those forces, the GNA-aligned forces, have now cornered ISIL in one small section of the city of Sirte. And I expect that they'll eliminate that -- any remaining opposition shortly.

And that's a good thing. That means Sirte will have been rid of ISIL, which was its principal concentration in Libya. That doesn't end our continuing efforts in Libya, both military and political. We'll continue to support those who combat ISIL there, as everywhere else around the world.

And, of course, we're also trying to participate in getting a political settlement in Libya. Because the Libyans have differences among themselves, and they need to be resolved for the sake of the country. But one thing I have no doubt of is that when those differences are resolved, they're going to get rid of ISIL from Libya, because they don't like foreigners, they're very patriotic in Libya, and when they unify, they will even more effectively operate against Libya.

That's a good thing. You don't see that everywhere. But that level of determination -- it's very important to get the various parties together, too. That's a very complicated thing to do, but I just wanted to mention that because that needs to be said alongside what is the prospect of the final elimination of ISIL in Sirte.

Q: Thank you.



Secretary Fallon, could you speak a bit to the earlier question about Russia meddling in politics, and specifically looking at Europe? To what extent do you think that there is interference in the politics of -- of European states by Moscow?

SEC. FALLON: Well, we've seen some pretty intensive interference, for example, in the Netherlands during the referendum they held there on the Association Agreement with Ukraine over some fairly -- over evidence of -- of interference there.

And you see this -- Secretary Carter has referred to little green men, but we've seen the use of hybrid warfare to put pressure on social media on -- on the Baltic states as well. So it's something, you know, we have to be aware of and in NATO we have to be better at responding to.

Okay. Now, Wall Street Journal. We've got Paul -- (inaudible) -- microphone.

Q: Thanks. The first -- I have two questions. One for each of you, if that's okay.

The first for Secretary Carter. Judging by some of the comments coming out of the G20 in Laos, it seems like we might be at the end of the road with this potential deal on Syria between the U.S. and Russia. And there's a -- there's a theory of thought that the U.S. needs to increase the costs from the conflict for Syria.

In the event that this deal fails, there's a theory that the U.S. needs to -- (inaudible) -- to increase the cost of the conflict for Syria and Russia in order to force a political agreement, otherwise there's not necessarily any incentive for that to happen. Do you agree with that approach?

SEC. CARTER: Well, I mean, first of all, you ask is it the end of the line? I think the President's indicated that this wasn't going to go on forever without an agreement, that he was willing to have Secretary Kerry give it another try. And I commend Secretary Kerry's energy in pursuing this, but you're right.

At the end of the day, it's going to depend upon whether Russia does what it said it was going to do when it came into Syria, which is fight terrorism and support a political transition that brings an end to the Syrian civil war, which is necessary and essential to stop the Syria -- suffering in Syria.

Now -- now, every day that it doesn't do that, it makes Russia responsible for the prolongation and the intensification of civil war there. And that, all by itself -- all by itself and all other considerations aside, ought to be enough to make the Russians make the contribution that we're -- we're suggesting they're doing.

And you see -- saw what happened this morning and they are obligated to use the -- the influence they have to put an end to the Syrian civil war. We all know that that's absolutely necessary to end the suffering there. And by the way, also to end extremism emanating from there, which affects Russia.

So it's in Russia's interests in terms of protecting its own people, as well as its moral standing being complicit in these things that are going on there, and -- and sharing responsibility for them. It would be better if they got on the other side and did what they said they were going to do when they entered Syria.

SEC. FALLON: Thank you -- (inaudible).

Q: Secretary Carter, thank you -- (inaudible).

A couple of weeks ago, the United Nations concluded categorically that President Assad had used chemical weapons in Syria. Yesterday, we saw pictures and the likelihood that yet another chlorine attack had taken place in Aleppo.

We've heard a lot about how Russia -- you just said it there -- had been standing in the way. But the United

States is the world's most powerful military and one of the world's most powerful political states. Can you tonight look the people of Syria in the eye and say they will never be attacked by chemical weapons again?

SEC. CARTER: Well, I don't think anybody can make that promise as long as the Assad regime isn't put on the path to ending the civil war there. And the key to that is Russia. They're the principal supporter of the Assad regime.

And the -- that kind of behavior and all of the other ways that the Syrian regime has inflicted suffering upon its own people and prolonged the Syrian civil war, that is the dynamic that Russia is contributing to, rather than putting an end to.

And that's why it's so important to give one more try, as President Obama said, to seeing if Russia will get on the right side of this and use its influence to stop this terrible suffering. I mean, meanwhile the United States and its coalition partners continue to prosecute the war on ISIL. And as Michael indicated and I indicated, we have real results there.

But the conflict in Syria can't end until a political -- political disposition is made of the regime there. And Russia has the influence there and has in fact acted to try to increase its influence. It needs to use it to bringing an end to all this suffering.

SEC. FALLON: BBC?

Q: Thank you. If I could ask, first of all Secretary Carter, a question about -- I mean, the speech in Oxford, which I listened to, and your comments here about Russia, suggest that you basically don't see a way forward with Russia; that I think tomorrow -- (inaudible) -- Secretary Kerry are meant to be meeting. But you're saying -- I didn't get the sense that you believe any progress could be made on trying to get a cease-fire in Syria.

So -- (inaudible) -- just the -- skepticism -- and how do you answer that?

SEC. CARTER: Well, we're a long way from getting there, but that's why Secretary Kerry is going. That's why the president said he wanted to give it one more try. So if we didn't believe that was worth doing, we wouldn't be doing it.

And I'll say one other thing I said in the speech in Oxford, which you may have noted as well, which is I have been in the course of my career in a very different place with working with Russia -- a place where we were cooperating together actively. There was a time in between the Cold War and today's tension where that was possible. That was a very fruitful thing to do.

So I -- we -- we have great differences, and I have not minimized them, including right here today. At the same time, we remain, and this is true of the NATO alliance as well, willing to leave the door open with Russia where our interests align. We have found instances of that in recent times. Iran and the nuclear deal is such an instance.

But they're much fewer than they were in the 1990s. And that is an opportunity that Russia is missing.

Q: And I have a question for Secretary Fallon as well.

(CROSSTALK)

Q: Just on -- just on Yemen and Saudi Arabia. There is a select committee that is calling for Britain to suspend, to halt its arms sales to Saudi Arabia while investigations are underway about the use of -- potential use of British weapons that may have violated humanitarian and human rights laws.

Would you -- I'm not asking you to comment on a leaked report. I'm asking you to comment on the principle, that would you be willing to halt arms sales while that investigation -- independent investigation is underway?

SEC. FALLON: Well, we apply principles to our arms exports all the time. And you know the criteria that we've set out. We keep those arms licenses under review the whole time. There are investigations going on by the Saudi authorities into the latest allegation by -- (inaudible).

And we await the result of those investigations. Our arms control, export control criteria are some of the strictest in the world. And, you know, we won't hesitate to -- to stop sales to any country if those criteria are infringed. But we need to await the investigation first.

Finally, we have some -- I have some 30 defense ministers to go and greet downstairs as they arrive. But we must make time for the London Times.

Q: Thank you.

Secretary Carter, our newspaper did a piece last week by one of our correspondents, Anthony Lloyd, who was kidnapped in Syria a couple of years ago and he was -- (inaudible) -- and escaped. And actually John Kerry had made some very nice remarks about the incident after he was -- he managed to get -- be freed.

And he -- Anthony found out that this guy that perpetrated the kidnapping is now -- seems to be working for one of the U.S.-backed rebel factions in Syria. And I was wondering, he reported this over the weekend. Has that triggered any -- any review of the way that Syrian rebels are vetted and the processes that the U.S. undertakes -- (inaudible)?

SEC. CARTER: I don't have anything for you on that case. If you -- if you wait here, I'll see whether anybody

in my traveling party, my press party does. I don't have anything for you. I understand the meaning of your question, but I don't have anything for you on that. But we'll provide something if we can.

SEC. FALLON: Thank you all very much.

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