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## CHAPTER 9

### Diplomatic Relations, Succession, Continuity of States, and Other Statehood Issues

#### A. DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

##### 1. Iraq

On September 28, 2018, U.S. Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo made the determination to order the departure of U.S. personnel from the U.S. Consulate in Basrah, Iraq. See Department spokesperson press statement, available at <https://www.state.gov/on-ordered-departure-at-consulate-basrah/>. Secretary Pompeo explained the rationale for the determination in an additional September 28 press statement, available at <https://www.state.gov/threats-to-american-personnel-and-facilities-in-iraq-share/>, which includes the following:

Threats to our personnel and facilities in Iraq from the Government of Iran, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Quds Force, and from militias facilitated by and under the control and direction of the Quds Force leader Qasem Soleimani have increased over the past several weeks. There have been repeated incidents of indirect fire from elements of those militias directed at our Consulate General in Basrah and our Embassy in Baghdad, including within the past twenty-four hours.

I have advised the Government of Iran that the United States will hold Iran directly responsible for any harm to Americans or to our diplomatic facilities in Iraq or elsewhere and whether perpetrated by Iranian forces directly or by associated proxy militias. I have made clear that Iran should understand that the United States will respond promptly and appropriately to any such attacks.

Given the increasing and specific threats and incitement to attack our personnel and facilities in Iraq, I have directed that an appropriate temporary relocation of diplomatic personnel in Iraq take place. We are working closely

with our partners in the Government and Security Forces of Iraq to address these threats. We look to all international parties interested in peace and stability in Iraq and the region to reinforce our message to Iran regarding the unacceptability of their behavior.

## 2. Iran

On October 3, 2018, Secretary Pompeo announced that the United States is terminating the 1955 Treaty of Amity with Iran. See remarks to the media, available at <https://www.state.gov/remarks-to-the-media-3/>. As discussed in Chapter 7, the International Court of Justice ordered provisional measures in a case brought by Iran against the United States regarding the reimposition of certain sanctions on Iran after U.S. withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on Iran's nuclear program. In addition, as discussed *supra*, the United States ordered the departure of personnel from its consulate in Basra, Iraq due to attacks by Iranian-supported forces. Secretary Pompeo's remarks regarding relations with Iran are excerpted below.

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... Iran is the origin of the current threat to Americans in Iraq. It is to blame for the attacks against our mission in Basra and our embassy in Baghdad. Our intelligence in this regard is solid. We can see the hand of the ayatollah and his henchmen supporting these attacks on the United States.

On Friday, I ordered the temporary relocation of U.S. Government personnel from our consulate general in Basra. I also warned the Iranian Government that we will hold it directly responsible for any harm to Americans or our diplomatic facilities, whether perpetrated by Iranian forces or by associated proxies or elements of those militias.

These latest destabilizing acts in Iraq are attempts by the Iranian regime to push back on our efforts to constrain its malign behavior. Clearly, they see our comprehensive pressure campaign as serious and succeeding, and we must be prepared for them to continue their attempts to hit back, especially after our full sanctions are re-imposed on the 4th of November.

The United States will continue to stand with the people of Iraq as they chart a future based on Iraqi interest, not those dictated by Iran. Even with the temporary relocation of our staff, we are supporting the delivery of clean water to the 750,000 residents in Basra.

Now let me turn to the ICJ ruling from today. I'm announcing that the United States is terminating the 1955 Treaty of Amity with Iran. This is a decision, frankly, that is 39 years overdue. In July, Iran brought a meritless case in the International Court of Justice alleging violations of the Treaty of Amity. Iran seeks to challenge the United States decision to cease participation in the Iran nuclear deal and to re-impose the sanctions that were lifted as a part of that deal. Iran is attempting to interfere with the sovereign rights of the United States to take lawful actions necessary to protect our national security. And Iran is abusing the ICJ for political and propaganda purposes and their case, as you can see from the decision, lacked merit.

Given Iran's history of terrorism, ballistic missile activity, and other malign behaviors, Iran's claims under the treaty are absurd. The court's ruling today was a defeat for Iran. It rightly rejected all of Iran's baseless requests. The court denied Iran's attempt to secure broad measures to interfere with U.S. sanctions and rightly noted Iran's history of noncompliance with its international obligations under the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

With regard to the aspects of the court's order focusing on potential humanitarian issues, we have been clear: Existing exceptions, authorizations, and licensing policies for humanitarian-related transactions and safety of flight will remain in effect. The United States has been actively engaged on these issues without regard to any proceeding before the ICJ. We're working closely with the Department of the Treasury to ensure that certain humanitarian-related transactions involving Iran can and will continue.

That said, we're disappointed that the court failed to recognize it has no jurisdiction to issue any order relating to these sanctions measures with the United States, which is doing its work on Iran to protect its own essential security interests.

In light of how Iran has hypocritically and groundlessly abused the ICJ as a forum for attacking the United States, I am therefore announcing today that the United States is terminating the Treaty of Amity with Iran. I hope that Iran's leaders will come to recognize that the only way to secure a bright future for its country is by ceasing their campaign of terror and destruction around the world.

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### **3. Somalia**

In a December 4, 2018 press statement, the State Department announced that the United States had reestablished a permanent diplomatic presence in Somalia. The press statement, available at <https://www.state.gov/reestablishment-of-a-permanent-diplomatic-presence-in-somalia/>, says:

On December 2, for the first time since the closure of the U.S. Embassy in Mogadishu on January 5, 1991, the United States reestablished a permanent diplomatic presence in Somalia. This historic event reflects Somalia's progress in recent years and is another step forward in formalizing U.S. diplomatic engagement in Mogadishu since recognizing the Federal Government of Somalia in 2013. Our return demonstrates the United States' commitment to further advance stability, democracy, and economic development that are in the interest of both nations. Ambassador Donald Yamamoto and his staff look forward to working closely with the people and the Federal Government of Somalia to strengthen our already close bilateral relationship in furtherance of these shared goals.

#### 4. Cuba

On March 2, 2018, the State Department announced in a media note, available at <https://cu.usembassy.gov/end-ordered-departure-u-s-embassy-havana/>, that the ordered departure of U.S. Embassy Havana staff instituted in 2017 would end on March 4, 2018 and a new staffing plan would take effect. See *Digest 2017* at 372-74 regarding the departure of U.S. personnel from Cuba. The full text of the March 2, 2018 media note follows.

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The U.S. Embassy in Havana has operated under ordered departure status since September 29, 2017, due to health attacks affecting U.S. Embassy Havana employees. It will reach the maximum allowable days in departure status on March 4.

On Monday, March 5, a new permanent staffing plan will take effect. The embassy will continue to operate with the minimum personnel necessary to perform core diplomatic and consular functions, similar to the level of emergency staffing maintained during ordered departure. The embassy will operate as an unaccompanied post, defined as a post at which no family members are permitted to reside.

We still do not have definitive answers on the source or cause of the attacks, and an investigation into the attacks is ongoing. The health, safety, and well-being of U.S. government personnel and family members are of the greatest concern for Secretary Tillerson and were a key factor in the decision to reduce the number of personnel assigned to Havana.

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On June 14, 2018, the United States and Cuba held their seventh Bilateral Commission meeting. The Bilateral Commission previously met in September 2017. See *Digest 2017* at 372. The seventh meeting was held in Washington, D.C. and included a U.S. delegation led by Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs John Creamer and a Cuban delegation led by Carlos Fernandez de Cossio, the Foreign Ministry's Director General for U.S. Affairs. See State Department media note, available at <https://cu.usembassy.gov/united-states-and-cuba-hold-seventh-bilateral-commission-meeting/>. The media note relates the concerns that the United States raised during the meeting as well as other subjects of discussion:

The United States reiterated the urgent need to identify the source of the attacks on U.S. diplomats and to ensure they cease. We also reiterated that until it is sufficiently safe to fully staff our Embassy, we will not be able to provide regular visa services in Havana. We expressed our continued concerns about the arbitrary detention of independent journalists and human rights defenders. The United States acknowledged progress in repatriating Cubans with final orders of removal from the United States, but emphasized Cuba needs to accept greater numbers of returnees.

The delegations also reviewed other areas for engagement that advance the interests of the United States and the Cuban people including combatting trafficking in persons; facilitating safe civil aviation; law enforcement cooperation; agricultural cooperation; maritime safety and search and rescue cooperation; resolution of certified claims; advancing understanding of environmental challenges; and protecting the national security and public health and safety of the United States.

On July 10, 2018, the United States and Cuba held the fourth Law Enforcement Dialogue in Washington, DC, at which the United States and Cuba addressed topics of bilateral interest on national security matters. See *Digest 2017* at 55 for background on the Law Enforcement Memorandum of Understanding and the Dialogue. The proceedings at the July 10 Dialogue are summarized in a State Department media note, available at <https://www.state.gov/united-states-and-cuba-hold-fourth-law-enforcement-dialogue-in-washington-dc/> as follows:

The United States and Cuba held the fourth Law Enforcement Dialogue in Washington, DC on Tuesday, July 10. During the dialogue, the United States and Cuba addressed topics of bilateral interest on national security matters, including fugitives and the return of Cuban nationals with final orders of removal. The delegations also discussed the health attacks against diplomatic personnel at the U.S. Embassy in Havana, including two recent cases. The U.S. delegation reminded the Cubans of their responsibility to protect U.S. diplomats from harm.

During the Dialogue, the delegations reviewed recent progress in the law enforcement relationship, such as new bilateral cooperation that resulted in the conviction of a Cuban national who murdered an American citizen and who had fled prosecution in the United States, as well as areas where there is more work to be done, such as trafficking in persons.

On July 11, 2018, the United States and Cuba held biannual Migration Talks in Washington, DC. The previous Migration Talks were held in December 2017. The January 2017 Joint Statement on Migration between the two countries is discussed in *Digest 2017* at 30-32. A State Department media note, available at <https://www.state.gov/united-states-and-cuba-hold-biannual-migration-talks-in-washington-dc/>, summarizes the talks as follows:

The delegations discussed the significant reduction in irregular migration from Cuba to the United States since the implementation of the January 2017 Joint Statement. Apprehensions of Cuban migrants at U.S. ports of entry decreased by 88 percent from fiscal year 2017 to 2018. The United States again raised the need for increased Cuban cooperation in the return of Cubans with final orders of removal from the United States.

The United States also reiterated that until it is safe to fully staff our Embassy, we are able to adjudicate only official and emergency visas in Havana.

A strong migration policy is vital to the United States' national security. The Migration Talks, which began in 1995, provide a forum for the United States and Cuba to review and coordinate efforts to ensure safe, legal, and orderly migration between Cuba and the United States.

## 5. Russia

On March 26, 2018, the State Department spokesperson issued a press statement regarding U.S. measures to hold Russia accountable for destabilizing actions it has taken in other countries. The statement is excerpted below and available at <https://www.state.gov/holding-russia-accountable-for-its-destabilizing-behavior/>.

On March 4, Russia used a military-grade nerve agent to attempt to murder a British citizen and his daughter in Salisbury. This attack on our [a]lly the United Kingdom put countless innocent lives at risk and resulted in serious injury to three people, including a police officer. In response to this outrageous violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and breach of international law, today the United States will expel 48 Russian officials serving at Russia's bilateral mission to the United States. We will also require the Russian government to close its Consulate General in Seattle by April 2, 2018. We take these actions to demonstrate our unbreakable solidarity with the United Kingdom, and to impose serious consequences on Russia for its continued violations of international norms.

Separately, we have begun the process of expelling 12 intelligence operatives from the Russian Mission to the United Nations who have abused their privilege of residence in the United States.

The United States calls on Russia to accept responsibility for its actions and to demonstrate to the world that it is capable of living up to its international commitments and responsibilities as a member of the UN Security Council to uphold international peace and security.

Also on March 26, 2018, Ambassador Haley provided a statement on the expulsion of Russian intelligence operatives from the United States. The press statement is available at <https://usun.usmission.gov/press-release-ambassador-haley-on-the-expulsion-of-russian-intelligence-operatives-from-the-united-states/> and states, in part:

...After a review, we have determined that the 12 intelligence operatives engaged in espionage activities that are adverse to our national security. Our actions are consistent with the United Nations Headquarters Agreement.

Separately, President Trump ordered the expulsion of 48 Russian intelligence officers and the closure of the Russian Consulate General in Seattle.

... Beyond Russia's destabilizing behavior across the world, such as its participation in the atrocities in Syria and its illegal actions in Ukraine, it has now used a chemical weapon within the borders of one of our closest allies. Here in

New York, Russia uses the United Nations as a safe haven for dangerous activities within our own borders. ...

## 6. Libya

On June 27, 2018, a joint statement on Libyan oil facilities was released by the Governments of the United States of America, France, Italy, and the United Kingdom. The text of the joint statement, below, is available as a State Department media note at <https://www.state.gov/joint-statement-on-libyan-oil-facilities/>.

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The governments of France, Italy, the United Kingdom, and the United States are deeply concerned about the announcement that the Ras Lanuf and Sidra oil fields and facilities will be transferred to the control of an entity other than the legitimate National Oil Corporation. Libya's oil facilities, production, and revenues belong to the Libyan people. These vital Libyan resources must remain under the exclusive control of the legitimate National Oil Corporation and the sole oversight of the Government of National Accord (GNA), as outlined in UN Security Council Resolutions 2259 (2015), 2278 (2016), and 2362 (2017). UN Security Council Resolution 2362 (2017) condemns attempts to illicitly export petroleum, including crude oil and refined petroleum products, from Libya by parallel institutions which are not acting under the authority of the GNA.

Any attempts to circumvent the UN Security Council's Libya sanctions regime will cause deep harm to Libya's economy, exacerbate its humanitarian crisis, and undermine its broader stability. The international community will hold those who undermine Libya's peace, security, and stability to account. We call for all armed actors to cease hostilities and withdraw immediately from oil installations without conditions before further damage occurs. In September 2016, the LNA supported the legitimate National Oil Corporation's work to rebuild Libya's oil sector for the benefit of the Libyan people. This action served Libya's national interest. The legitimate National Oil Corporation must be allowed again to take up unhindered work on behalf of the Libyan people, to repair infrastructure damaged after the attack by forces under the direction of Ibrahim Jathran, and to restore the oil exports and production disrupted by that attack.

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On September 1, 2018, a further joint statement on Libya—this one on the situation in Tripoli—was released by the same group of governments. The text of the joint statement, below, is available as a State Department media note at <https://www.state.gov/joint-statement-on-libya-on-the-situation-in-tripoli/>.

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The Governments of France, Italy, the United Kingdom, and the United States strongly condemn the continued escalation of violence in and around Tripoli that has caused many casualties and continues to endanger the lives of innocent civilians. We reiterate that the targeting of civilians and indiscriminate attacks are prohibited under International Humanitarian Law.

These attempts to weaken the legitimate Libyan authorities and hamper the course of the political process are not acceptable. We urge armed groups to immediately cease all military actions and warn those who tamper with security in Tripoli or elsewhere in Libya that they will be held accountable for any such actions.

We reaffirm our strong and continued support to the United Nations Action Plan, as recalled by the President of Security Council on June 6th and by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ghassan Salame on July 16th. We call on all actors to refrain from any action that would jeopardize the political framework established by the UN-led mediation to which the international community is fully committed.

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On September 10, 2018, the State Department spokesperson issued a press statement in response to a terrorist attack that day on Libya's National Oil Corporation. The statement, which is available at <https://www.state.gov/attack-on-libyas-national-oil-corporation/>, reaffirms U.S. support for the Government of National Accord. It includes the following:

...We commend the efforts of the Government of National Accord to restore security and ensure that the National Oil Corporation is able to fulfill its mandate on behalf of all Libyans.

We stand in solidarity with the National Oil Corporation and all Libyans as they fight against terrorism and for a better and prosperous future. Libyan oil facilities, production, and revenues belong to the Libyan people. The National Oil Corporation and all sovereign state institutions must be allowed to work on behalf of all Libyans, free of threat and intimidation. Libya's oil resources must remain under the exclusive control of the legitimate National Oil Corporation and the sole oversight of the Government of National Accord, as outlined in UN Security Council Resolutions 2259 (2015), 2278 (2016), and 2362 (2017).

On December 4, 2018, Secretary Pompeo met with Libyan Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj in Brussels. The State Department released a readout of the meeting, which follows, and is available at <https://www.state.gov/secretary-pompeos-meeting-with-libyan-prime-minister-al-sarraj-2/>.

The Secretary thanked the Prime Minister for the Government of National Accord's strong partnership with the United States. The Secretary reiterated the United States' committed support for UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ghassan Salamé and his plan, as briefed to the UN Security

Council, for a Libyan-led National Conference to be held in the first weeks of 2019 and the subsequent electoral process to begin in the spring of 2019. The Secretary and the Prime Minister agreed on the importance of the Government of National Accord swiftly implementing comprehensive economic reforms, enhancing fiscal transparency, ensuring greater security for all Libyans, and stabilizing oil production. The Secretary and the Prime Minister reaffirmed their shared commitment to the U.S.-Libya counterterrorism partnership.

## **7. Armenia**

On April 24, 2018, the State Department spokesperson issued a press statement, available at <https://www.state.gov/the-united-states-urges-constructive-dialogue-in-armenia/>, expressing the U.S. view on the formation of a new government in Armenia. The statement says:

We urge all sides to engage constructively, within the legal framework of the Armenian constitution, to ensure a peaceful transition of power that follows the rule of law. We look forward to working closely with a new government on the many areas of shared interest between the United States and Armenia. As a friend and partner to Armenia, we commend the Armenian people for engaging in dialogue to forge their sovereign future through democratic and peaceful means.

On December 10, 2018, the State Department issued another press statement on Armenia, offering congratulations on the December 9, 2018 parliamentary elections. The statement, available at <https://www.state.gov/armenias-2018-parliamentary-elections/>, is excerpted below.

... We welcome the assessment by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's (OSCE) Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights that Armenia's parliamentary elections were competitive and that candidates were able to campaign freely. The United States concurs with the OSCE's preliminary conclusions that the elections process enjoyed broad public trust and respected fundamental freedoms. We encourage the authorities to address OSCE and Venice Commission recommendations for future elections.

This year has been a time of remarkable change in Armenia. For 27 years, the United States has sought to support the development of democratic processes and institutions in Armenia, and we will continue to do so. We look forward to working with the new Armenian Parliament and Government to deepen our bilateral partnership and cooperation to strengthen the rule of law and democratic institutions, combat corruption, promote trade and investment, and safeguard regional and global security.

## **8. Venezuela**

The United States repeatedly voiced its concerns in 2018 about the Maduro regime's antidemocratic actions in Venezuela. See Chapter 7 of this *Digest* for U.S. statements on Venezuela at the Organization of American States ("OAS"). On February 24, 2018, the State Department issued a press statement about its concerns for democracy in Venezuela. That statement is excerpted below and available at <https://www.state.gov/concerns-for-democracy-in-venezuela/>.

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The United States respects the decision by Venezuelan opposition parties, most recently the Democratic Unity Roundtable, to reject President Maduro's terms and conditions for April presidential elections. We reject ruling party calls to replace the democratically elected National Assembly simultaneously, rather than in 2021, as provided for under the 1999 Constitution. Deepening the rupture of Venezuela's constitutional and democratic order will not solve the nation's crises.

We reiterate our call for the establishment of a legitimate and independent National Electoral Council, selected by the National Assembly as required by the Constitution. We renew our call for the establishment of an electoral calendar in compliance with the Constitution and in consultation with the legitimate National Assembly. We note that the lack of agreed terms for an election seriously compromises the integrity of the process. A free and fair election should include the full participation of all political parties and political leaders, the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners, a proper electoral calendar, credible international observation, and an independent electoral authority.

The United States stands with democratic nations around the world in support of the Venezuelan people and their sovereign right to elect their representatives through free and fair elections.

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## **B. STATUS ISSUES**

### **1. Ukraine**

For discussion of U.S. sanctions in response to Russian actions in Ukraine, see Chapter 16. On March 14, 2018, Acting Under Secretary of State and Department Spokesperson Heather Nauert provided a statement repeating U.S. respect for the territorial integrity of Ukraine and condemning Russia's purported annexation of Crimea. Her statement ("Crimea is Ukraine") follows and is available at <https://www.state.gov/crimea-is-ukraine/>.

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Four years ago this week, Russia held an illegitimate, fabricated “referendum” in Ukraine in a futile attempt to legitimize its purported annexation of Ukrainian territory. Crimean residents were compelled to vote under scrutiny by heavily armed Russian troops. Russia’s claim that Ukrainians made a free choice in that sham “referendum” has always lacked credibility.

In his campaign rally in Crimea today, President Putin reiterated Russia’s false claims to Ukrainian territory in another open admission that the Russian government disdains the international order and disrespects the territorial integrity of sovereign nations.

In light of Putin’s remarks, it is important to call attention to the illegitimacy of the staged “referendum,” but also to the tremendous human costs the Russian government has imposed on the people of Crimea. Over the past four years, Russia has engaged in a campaign of coercion and violence, targeting anyone opposed to its attempted annexation. Russian occupation authorities have subjected Crimean Tatars, ethnic Ukrainians, pro-Ukrainian activists, civil society members, and independent journalists to politically motivated prosecution and ongoing repression, while methodically suppressing nongovernmental organizations and independent media outlets.

We stand behind those courageous individuals who continue to speak out about these abuses and we call on Russia to cease its attempts to quell fundamental freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly and association, and religion or belief.

We reaffirm our commitment to Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. Crimea is part of Ukraine and our Crimea-related sanctions will remain in place until Russia returns control of the peninsula to Ukraine.

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On May 15, 2018, Department Spokesperson Heather Nauert issued a press statement condemning Russia’s construction and partial opening of the Kerch Strait Bridge between Russia and occupied Crimea. The statement is excerpted below and available at <https://www.state.gov/the-opening-of-the-kerch-bridge-in-crimea/>. For background on UN General Assembly Resolution 62/262, U.N. Doc. A/RES/68/262 (Apr. 1, 2014), referenced below, see *Digest 2014* at 345-46.

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[The construction and opening were] done without the permission of the government of Ukraine. Crimea is part of Ukraine. Russia’s construction of the bridge serves as a reminder of Russia’s ongoing willingness to flout international law.

The bridge represents not only an attempt by Russia to solidify its unlawful seizure and its occupation of Crimea, but also impedes navigation by limiting the size of ships that can transit the Kerch Strait, the only path to reach Ukraine’s territorial waters in the Sea of Azov. We call on Russia not to impede this shipping.

The United States has sanctioned numerous individuals and entities involved in this project. These and our other Crimea-related sanctions will remain in place until Russia returns control of the peninsula to Ukraine.

We once again reaffirm our commitment to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity and recall the international community's expression of that commitment in UN General Assembly Resolution 68/262.

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On July 25, 2018, the State Department issued the "Crimea Declaration" as a press statement by Secretary Pompeo. The declaration follows and is available at <https://www.state.gov/crimea-declaration/>.

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Russia, through its 2014 invasion of Ukraine and its attempted annexation of Crimea, sought to undermine a bedrock international principle shared by democratic states: that no country can change the borders of another by force. The states of the world, including Russia, agreed to this principle in the United Nations Charter, pledging to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state. This fundamental principle—which was reaffirmed in the Helsinki Final Act—constitutes one of the foundations upon which our shared security and safety rests.

As we did in the Welles Declaration in 1940, the United States reaffirms as policy its refusal to recognize the Kremlin's claims of sovereignty over territory seized by force in contravention of international law. In concert with allies, partners, and the international community, the United States rejects Russia's attempted annexation of Crimea and pledges to maintain this policy until Ukraine's territorial integrity is restored.

The United States calls on Russia to respect the principles to which it has long claimed to adhere and to end its occupation of Crimea. As democratic states seek to build a free, just, and prosperous world, we must uphold our commitment to the international principle of sovereign equality and respect the territorial integrity of other states. Through its actions, Russia has acted in a manner unworthy of a great nation and has chosen to isolate itself from the international community.

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On August 30, 2018, the State Department spokesperson issued a further press statement on Russian activity regarding Ukraine. The statement is available at <https://www.state.gov/russias-harassment-of-international-shipping-transiting-the-kerch-strait-and-sea-of-azov/> and condemns Russian harassment of international shipping in the Sea of Azov and the Kerch Strait. The statement includes the following:

Russia has delayed hundreds of commercial vessels since April and in recent weeks has stopped at least 16 commercial ships attempting to reach Ukrainian ports.

Russia's actions to impede maritime transit are further examples of its ongoing campaign to undermine and destabilize Ukraine, as well as its disregard for international norms.

The United States supports Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders, extending to its territorial waters.

We call on Russia to cease its harassment of international shipping in the Sea of Azov and the Kerch Strait.

In a September 12, 2018 press statement from the State Department spokesperson, the United States condemned the Russian-backed sham elections announced for what the Russian government refers to as the "Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics." The press statement, available at <https://www.state.gov/russia-backed-sham-elections-in-ukraine/>, includes the following:

Given the continued control of these territories by the Russian Federation, genuine elections are inconceivable, and grossly contravene Russia's commitments under the Minsk agreements. By engineering phony procedures, Russia is once more demonstrating its disregard for international norms and is undermining efforts to achieve peace in eastern Ukraine. The so-called "people's republics" that Russia created have no place within the Ukrainian constitutional order.

The United States remains fully committed to diplomatic efforts to resolve the Russia-instigated conflict in eastern Ukraine. U.S. support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity remains unwavering.

The United States fully supported the addition of a new agenda item at the UN General Assembly on Ukraine on September 21, 2018. Mark Simonoff, Minister Counselor for the U.S. Mission to the United Nations, delivered the U.S. explanation of vote, which is excerpted below and available at <https://usun.usmission.gov/explanation-of-vote-on-the-inclusion-of-a-new-agenda-item-on-ukraine-in-the-un-general-assemblys-agenda/>.

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The United States' position on Ukraine is consistent and clear—we condemn Russia's ongoing occupation of Crimea and call on Russia to release the approximately 70 Ukrainian political prisoners it holds, including Oleh Sentsov, who remains on hunger strike and whose health is deteriorating.

We also condemn Russia's ongoing aggression in eastern Ukraine. Russia exerts direct control over anti-government forces in eastern Ukraine and has introduced thousands of pieces of heavy military equipment into the conflict zone.

We remain committed to the resolution of the conflict and call on Russia to fully implement its commitments under the Minsk agreements, including through the "withdrawal of all foreign armed formations" from the territory of Ukraine.

We urge all Member States to vote in favor of adding this item to the General Assembly's Agenda.

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On November 12, 2018, the Department issued a further press statement on Ukraine, condemning sham "elections" in eastern Ukraine on November 11. The statement is available at <https://www.state.gov/condemning-sham-elections-in-russia-controlled-eastern-ukraine/>, and includes the following:

The United States joins our European Allies and partners in condemning the November 11 sham "elections" in Russia-controlled eastern Ukraine. Yesterday's illegitimate processes were an attempt by Moscow to institutionalize its Donbas proxies, the so-called "Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics." These entities have no place within the Minsk agreements or within Ukraine's constitutional government, and they should be dismantled along with the illegal armed formations.

If Russia calculated the November 11 illegal "elections" would lead to international respect for its proxies, the international reaction proves it was mistaken. The OSCE refused to monitor yesterday's farce. Russia's actions have been denounced in capitals on both sides of the Atlantic and on the floors of the UN Security Council and the OSCE. The United States and the European Union have spoken with one voice against yesterday's violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. We will continue to impose Ukraine-related sanctions against Russia until Moscow fully implements the Minsk agreements and returns control of Crimea to Ukraine.

On November 26, 2018, the State Department issued a statement expressing concern over an incident in the Black Sea on November 25 when Russian vessels blocked Ukrainian vessels attempting to transit the Kerch Strait. See press statement, available at <https://www.state.gov/russias-dangerous-escalation-in-the-kerch-strait/>. The press statement is excerpted below.

Reports that Russian vessels rammed and fired on the Ukrainian ships, injuring Ukrainian crewmen, before seizing three vessels, represent a dangerous escalation and a violation of international law.

The United States condemns this aggressive Russian action. We call on Russia to return to Ukraine its vessels and detained crew members, and to



respect Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders, extending to its territorial waters.

...

The United States supports Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders, extending to its territorial waters, as well as the right of its vessels to traverse international waters. As stated in our Crimea Declaration, the United States rejects Russia's attempted annexation of Crimea.

On December 4, 2018, a senior State Department official briefed the press after a meeting of the North Atlantic Council on Ukraine and Georgia at which the Secretary of State and others spoke. The official's remarks are excerpted below and available at <https://www.state.gov/on-the-meeting-of-the-north-atlantic-council/>.

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I just came out of a meeting of the North Atlantic Council on Black Sea security. This is the format focused on Georgia and Ukraine. You may remember, and I want to call everyone's attention to the fact, that Hungary has been blocking participation of Ukraine in certain formats at NATO, a habit that we strongly object to. ...[I]t's now the second time this format has met, and it is a format that we put together to have these two countries continue to engage NATO, but it's a workaround to Hungary's blockage, which we continue to object to.

In that session, there were strong expressions of support for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine and Georgia. The United States in particular sent a very clear and strong message of support for both of these countries, joining them in their stand against Russian aggression, both externally with regard to territorial acts of aggression and internally with regard to the building of democracy and continued efforts at reform.

There was a special focus in the NAC session just now on the November 25th incident outside the Kerch Strait. I know all of you have followed that closely and are aware of everything that happened. It's a serious concern for the United States for a couple of reasons. One is Ukraine itself. It marks an unmistakable escalation of the conflict there, not least because it's the first time that the Russian Government has openly and unapologetically used its own forces without any attempt at claiming it was done by so-called separatists; but secondly the demonstration effect of what happened in Kerch. There are a lot of international ... maritime passageways in the world.... We have principled reasons to be concerned about ... the demonstration effect like this sinking in, but also very practical and interest-based reasons to be concerned about a lot of places in the world where U.S. troops and commerce pass through, and we don't want this precedent to stick.

...[T]he Russian action in Kerch is both a clear military escalation and a violation of international law and freedom of the sea. Long before this latest incident in Kerch, the United States has been raising our concerns about Russian behavior in Azov and with the construction of the Kerch Bridge. We've had State Department statements on Kerch and Azov on numerous occasions, most recently in May, August, and November prior to this incident. We have raised



concerns about Azov and Russian behavior there in the OSCE Permanent Council on five occasions since last year.

I think all of you know [about] ... the President's decision some months ago to reverse the previous administration's blockage of lethal aid to Ukraine[.] [W]e've provided two cutters to enhance maritime security of Ukraine, and a senior State Department official was present at the handoff ceremony. We recently held a meeting of the U.S.-Ukraine Strategic Partnership Commission, which I chair, co-chaired with ... Foreign Minister Klimkin, and that included a special focus on Azov.

I would also note that the Russian entities who are involved in the Kerch Bridge construction and who are operating in Crimea, a number of those—at least a dozen by my count—are already sanctioned entities. In the period since this incident, we demarched all 28 EU members as well as Russia. We have pressed publicly and privately alongside allies for release of the crew and a reopening of the strait. The Secretary has made very strong and clear statements about this and has tweeted about it on numerous occasions. The President has spoken about this. Ambassador Haley made a statement about this. I think all of you know that the President canceled a Putin meeting because of his concern about this incident. We put out a G7 foreign ministers statement, we had a NATO-NAC statement on November 27th, and we're now working very closely with allies to assess the way forward.

And the final thing I would say is I think the Russians have this message; but if they don't, it should be abundantly clear to them that for as long as they hold these crew members, we will continue to raise the costs. They need to release the crews, return the ships, and this is not something that we're going to turn our attention away from.

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...[W]e are talking and working very closely with European allies right now to chart a unified way forward where the West is not only speaking with one voice, which I think we are right now, but what we're working on and a big part of why we're here today is charting the way forward in terms of actions.

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On December 6, 2018, A. Wess Mitchell, Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs, addressed a Ukraine-hosted side event at the 2018 OSCE Ministerial Council on Crimea, the Kerch Strait, and the Sea of Azov, held in Milan, Italy. Assistant Secretary Mitchell's remarks are excerpted below and available at <https://www.state.gov/remarks-to-the-first-plenary-of-the-2018-osce-ministerial-council/>.

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The past four years of Russian aggression against Ukraine I think have been a wake-up call for all of us. If ever in the OSCE's history there were a reason for its existence, it's today, in

Ukraine. Recent events in the Black Sea and Sea of Azov should give us all a new sense of urgency.

Russia's unprovoked attack on Ukrainian naval vessels in the Black Sea near the Kerch Strait is a dangerous escalation. Russia's aim is to debase Ukraine's sovereignty and negate its territorial integrity. Russia's aggression includes its self-described annexation of Crimea. The world pays far too little attention to the abuses occurring every day against countless Ukrainian civilians in Crimea and Donbas. Altogether, this conflict has so far taken the lives of more than ten thousand people. This has happened in the 21st century, at the height of the modern era, in full view of international institutions like the OSCE.

Russia's blocking of the Kerch Strait on November 25 constitutes an unambiguous violation of international law. Europe and America must respond firmly to Russia's latest unjustified and unprovoked attack on a European state.

The United States calls on Russia to immediately release the 24 captured Ukrainian crew members and the three vessels it has unlawfully seized, and to keep the Kerch Strait open to vessels transiting to and from Ukrainian ports. Russia has reportedly charged the crew members with illegally crossing Russia's maritime border.

This is an astonishing claim given that Crimea is Ukrainian territory. In essence, the Russian government is charging the Ukrainian sailors with illegally crossing the Ukrainian border. This from a Russian government that claims to champion the principles of national independence and sovereignty.

In reality, Russia has violated international law by blocking the Kerch Strait and then launched an unprovoked attack as the three Ukrainian vessels attempted to withdraw to their home port in Odessa. Ukrainians chose not to return fire. This is not a situation in which both sides are to blame. One party is to blame and that is Russia.

The United States' response to Russian aggression has been firm. As Russia has ramped up its aggressive activities in the Sea of Azov over the past several months, the United States transferred two Coast Guard vessels to Ukraine to enhance its maritime security. We conducted the Sea Breeze naval exercise with Ukraine in conjunction with NATO Allies and issued multiple statements condemning Russian illegal maritime actions. We have also committed to maintaining sanctions against Russia for its aggression in eastern Ukraine and attempted annexation of Crimea. We have raised concerns about Russia's action in the Sea of Azov on numerous occasions at the OSCE Permanent Council in the months leading up to the latest incident.

As Secretary Pompeo stated in his July 25 Crimea Declaration, we will never recognize Russia's attempted annexation of Ukrainian territory. We will continue to impose costs for Russian aggression. We urge our European allies to show vigilance, unity, and moral clarity in the face of this latest aggression.

The United States encourages the OSCE to enable the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to increase reporting on the Sea of Azov and Kerch Strait. This effort can begin immediately and without a change to the SMM's mandate. If, as the Russian Federation claims, its attacks on the retreating Ukrainian vessels off the coast of Ukrainian Crimea were somehow "provoked" by Ukraine, it should follow that the Russian Federation would support increasing the OSCE's ability to monitor activities in and around the Kerch Strait.

The United States encourages the OSCE to confront the polite fiction at the heart of this institution that allows Russia to attack fellow OSCE member states, kill their civilians, shoot down SMM drones, deny SMM access to Crimea, and hold habitual snap exercises while

impeding normal OSCE business, paying a paltry 4 percent of the budget of this organization, and claiming to be an OSCE participating State in good standing. The OSCE must confront this reality or expect to lose relevance in the 21st century.

Russia's aggression near the Kerch Strait was a miscalculation. It has strengthened Western resolve to maintain sanctions against Russia and has galvanized the international community's efforts to ensure respect for international law and lawful maritime passage.

By continuing on this path of aggression, Russia only further isolates itself and reduces the possibility of a better future for itself and its neighbors. It is time for Russia to rethink this approach, respect international law, and fulfill its commitments as an OSCE state and would-be member of the community of civilized nations.

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On December 17, 2018, in connection with the discussion of a draft resolution on Ukraine at the UN General Assembly, Mr. Simonoff delivered the following statement, available in the record of proceedings at the 56<sup>th</sup> plenary meeting of the 73<sup>rd</sup> session of the General Assembly, U.N. Doc. A/73/PV.56 at p. 18 (Dec. 17, 2018), *available at* <https://undocs.org/en/A/73/PV.56>:

The United States will vote against draft amendment A/73/L.68 and urges all delegations to do the same. We reject the notion of equivalency contained in the draft amendment. We do not support the General Assembly calling on both States to take action when the Russian Federation is the sole Member State to have repeatedly and shamelessly engaged in aggressive activities directed against Ukraine, including the purported annexation of Crimea and the aggressive activities in the Kerch Strait.

The United States is pleased to co-sponsor draft resolution A/73/L.47, which highlights serious concerns about the militarization of Crimea and Russia's recent unprovoked attack on Ukrainian naval vessels in the Kerch Strait. Russia's attack is a dangerous escalation in its ongoing aggressive activities towards Ukraine. The United States reiterates its call on the Russian Federation to immediately release the 24 captured Ukrainian crew members and the three detained vessels.

In short, the United States calls on all Member States to vote against the draft amendment and to vote in favour of the draft resolution.

## **2. Georgia**

On January 26, 2018, State Department Spokesperson Heather Nauert issued a press statement regarding the Russian Federation's actions in violation of Georgia's sovereignty. The statement is excerpted below and available at <https://www.state.gov/russias-violations-of-georgian-sovereignty/>.

The United States condemns the Russian Federation's ratification of an agreement with the de facto leaders in Georgia's breakaway region of South Ossetia regarding a joint military force. We do not recognize the legitimacy of this so-called "treaty," which does not constitute a valid international agreement.

The United States' position on Abkhazia and South Ossetia is unwavering: The United States fully supports Georgia's territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.

The United States views ratification of this agreement as inconsistent with the principles underlying the Geneva International Discussions, to which Russia is a participant. The United States urges Russia to withdraw its forces to pre-war positions per the 2008 ceasefire agreement and reverse its recognition of the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

On May 8, 2018, the United States expressed its concerns about the decision by de facto South Ossetian authorities to temporarily close controlled crossing points in Russian-occupied Georgian territory. The press statement on the issue, available at <https://www.state.gov/closure-of-controlled-crossing-points-in-russian-occupied-georgian-territory-of-south-ossetia/>, includes the following:

These closures coincide with Georgia's celebration of Victory Day and restrict freedom of movement for residents living on both sides of the administrative boundary line. In addition, the United States calls for an immediate halt to the ongoing illegal detentions of Georgian citizens by de facto and Russian authorities along the administrative boundary lines with the Russian-occupied territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

On May 30, 2018, State Department Spokesperson Heather Nauert issued a further statement on Georgia's territorial integrity in response to the Syrian regime's announcement that it would establish diplomatic relations with the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The statement follows and is available at <https://www.state.gov/statement-on-georgian-territories-of-abkhazia-and-south-ossetia/>.

The United States strongly condemns the Syrian regime's intention to establish diplomatic relations with the Russian-occupied Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. These regions are part of Georgia. The United States' position on Abkhazia and South Ossetia is unwavering. We fully support Georgia's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders, and call on all states to be mindful of their obligations under the UN Charter and do the same. And once again, the United States urges Russia to withdraw its forces to pre-war positions per the 2008 ceasefire agreement.

Section 7070(c)(1) of the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2018 (Div. K, Pub. L. 115–141), requires the State Department to make a determination when another government recognizes or establishes diplomatic relations with the Georgian territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. On March 6, 2018, the State Department made such a determination regarding Venezuela. 83 Fed. Reg. 9571 (Mar. 6, 2018). On July 30, 2018, the Department made such a determination regarding the Government of Nauru. 83 Fed. Reg. 39,806 (Aug. 10, 2018).

On December 7, 2018, Ambassador Natasha Cayer, Permanent Representative of Canada to the OSCE, delivered a joint statement on behalf of the Group of Friends of Georgia on the Russia-Georgia conflict at the 25th OSCE Ministerial Council closing plenary session. The statement, made on behalf of Bulgaria, Canada, Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Sweden, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America, follows.

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We reaffirm our unwavering support for Georgia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.

We condemn that ten years since the Russian military invasion of Georgia, Russia’s occupation of Georgia’s Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions continues as the security and humanitarian situation on the ground in the conflict-affected areas further deteriorates.

We express our staunch support for the non-recognition policy with regard to these regions and call on all OSCE participating States to do so as well.

We call upon the Russian Federation to reverse its recognition of the so-called independence of Georgia’s Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions.

We underline the need for the peaceful resolution of the conflict, based on full respect for the UN Charter, the Helsinki Final Act, and the fundamental norms and principles of international law.

We welcome the progress made by Georgia in strengthening democracy and good governance, improving transparency of its institutions, and upholding human rights, as well as in the process of European and Euro-Atlantic integration and economic development. It is disappointing that these benefits cannot be enjoyed by the residents of Georgia’s Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions. We believe a peaceful resolution of the Russia-Georgia conflict would have a transformative effect not only on Georgia but on the region as a whole.

We express our deep concern over the increase of Russia’s military exercises and its further military build-up in Georgia’s Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions. Continuous violations of the EU-mediated 12 August 2008 Ceasefire Agreement by Russia destabilize the situation and erode the principles and norms upon which our security depends.

We reiterate our firm support to the Geneva International Discussions as a unique and important negotiation format to address the security, human rights and humanitarian challenges stemming from the unresolved conflict between Georgia and Russia. We regret the lack of progress on the core issues of the discussions, including the non-use of force, establishment of international security arrangements in Georgia’s Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions aimed at

providing security and stability on the ground, and ensuring the safe, dignified, and voluntary return of IDPs and refugees. We underline the crucial importance of participants in good faith to find durable solutions for the security and humanitarian challenges of those affected by the conflict and to reach tangible results on core issues of the negotiations.

We express our strong support for the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms (IPRMs) and emphasize their important role in preventing the escalation of the conflict. We express our great concern over the latest disruptions of the IPRMs in both Gali and Ergneti and call upon the participants to resume the IPRMs without further delay in full respect of the founding principles and ground rules. We encourage the participants to find proper solutions for the safety and humanitarian needs of the conflict-affected population.

We commend the valuable contribution of the EU Monitoring Mission in preventing the escalation of tensions on the ground and once again call upon the Russian Federation to allow the EUMM to fully implement its mandate and enable the Mission's access to Georgia's Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions.

We condemn the killings of Georgian Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) Archil Tatunashvili, Giga Otkhozoria, and Davit Basharuli, and urge the Russian Federation, as the state exercising effective control over Georgia's Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions, to remove any obstacles to bringing the perpetrators to justice. In this context, we support preventive steps by Georgia aimed at eradication of the sense of impunity and abuses of human rights in Georgia's Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions, and we take note of the adoption of the Decree of the Government of Georgia on approval of the Otkhozoria-Tatunashvili list based on the relevant Resolution of the Parliament of Georgia.

We are deeply concerned over the ethnic discrimination against Georgians residing in Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions and condemn the abuses including allegations involving torture and cruel or degrading treatment or punishment, undue restrictions on rights related to freedom of movement and residence, housing, land and property, as well as the restriction of education in one's native language. We are concerned about the impact of closures of so-called crossing points.

We condemn the mass destruction of houses of IDPs, which illustrates Russia's purposeful policy aimed at completely erasing the traces of ethnic Georgian population and cultural heritage in Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions. We support the voluntary return of internally displaced persons and refugees to the places of their origin.

We underline that the ongoing process of fortification of the occupation line through installation of barbed and razor wire fences and other artificial obstacles, further aggravates the humanitarian conditions of conflict-affected population on the ground.

In this context, we call upon the Russian Federation to allow the unhindered access of international human rights monitoring mechanisms to Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions.

We support the peaceful conflict resolution policy of the Government of Georgia. We welcome Georgia's compliance with the EU-mediated 12 August 2008 Ceasefire Agreement and call upon the Russian Federation to respect its international obligations and fully implement the aforementioned Ceasefire Agreement, inter alia, to withdraw its military forces from the occupied territories of Georgia.

We welcome Georgia's unilateral commitment not to use force and call on the Russian Federation to reciprocate, to affirm and implement a non-use of force commitment.

We welcome the Georgian Government's efforts aimed at reconciliation and confidence building between divided communities. We reiterate our strong support to the peace initiative of the Government of Georgia, "A Step to a Better Future," aimed at fostering confidence building and interaction among the divided communities and improving the humanitarian and socio-economic conditions of people residing in Georgia's Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions

We welcome the Georgian Government's policy of dialogue with the Russian Federation in order to de-escalate tensions with full respect for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.

We encourage the OSCE's further active engagement in the process of peaceful resolution of the Russia-Georgia conflict and facilitation of confidence building and engagement between the communities divided by war and occupation line.

We encourage the OSCE participating States to agree on the opening of an OSCE cross-dimensional mission in Georgia for the benefit of the conflict-affected persons including a monitoring capacity able to operate in both the Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions. The mission will considerably strengthen the OSCE's engagement in the GID and IPRMs, as well as in implementation of confidence-building measures.

The Friends will redouble their efforts to keep the issues related to the Russia-Georgia conflict high on the international agenda, raise awareness of developments in Georgia's Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions, and emphasize the urgent need for peaceful resolution of the conflict.

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### **3. Macedonia**

On June 12, 2018, the United States congratulated the prime ministers of Greece and the Republic of Macedonia on their agreement to resolve the dispute over the name Macedonia. The U.S. statement, excerpted below, is available at <https://www.state.gov/agreement-on-macedonia-name-issue/>.

This resolution will benefit both countries and bolster regional security and prosperity. Prime Ministers Zaev and Tsipras demonstrated vision, courage, and persistence in their pursuit of a mutually acceptable solution. We also commend the commitment of UN mediator Matthew Nimetz for his steadfast efforts over more than two decades to end this dispute.

We stand ready to support this agreement, as requested by the two countries.

### **4. Moldova**

The United States affirmed its commitment to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Moldova in a press statement by State Department Spokesperson Heather Nauert on April 24, 2018. The statement, available at <https://www.state.gov/welcome-step-forward-in-transnistria-peace-process-in-moldova/>, includes the following:

The United States supports a comprehensive settlement of the Transnistria conflict, and we welcome this week's agreement to allow vehicles from Transnistria to legally travel on roads outside of Moldova. This will bring real benefits to the lives of people on both sides of the Nistru River. We urge all sides to capitalize on this agreement and implement the three remaining "Package of Eight" deliverables that the sides reaffirmed in the 2017 Vienna Protocol. This is the only path to a settlement of one of Europe's longest-running conflicts. Any such settlement must be based on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Moldova, with a special status for Transnistria within Moldova's internationally recognized borders.

## 5. Jerusalem

As discussed in *Digest 2017* at 391-97, the United States recognized Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Israel and announced that it would move its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. The State Department spokesperson issued a press statement on February 23, 2018 regarding the opening of the U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem. The statement is available at <https://www.state.gov/opening-of-u-s-embassy-jerusalem/> and includes the following:

In May, the United States plans to open a new U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem. The opening will coincide with Israel's 70th anniversary. The Embassy will initially be located in the ... building that now houses consular operations of U.S. Consulate General Jerusalem. ... Consulate General Jerusalem will continue to operate as an independent mission with an unchanged mandate .... By the end of next year, we intend to open a new Embassy Jerusalem annex .... In parallel, we have started the search for a site for our permanent Embassy to Israel, the planning and construction of which will be a longer-term undertaking.

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On October 18, 2018, Secretary Pompeo announced in a press statement, available at <https://www.state.gov/on-the-merging-of-u-s-embassy-jerusalem-and-u-s-consulate-general-jerusalem/>, that the merger of U.S. Embassy Jerusalem and U.S. Consulate General Jerusalem was underway. Excerpts follow from the October 18, 2018 press statement.

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I am pleased to announce that following the May 14 opening of the U.S. Embassy to Israel in Jerusalem, we plan to achieve significant efficiencies and increase our effectiveness by merging



U.S. Embassy Jerusalem and U.S. Consulate General Jerusalem into a single diplomatic mission. I have asked our Ambassador to Israel, David Friedman, to guide the merger.

We will continue to conduct a full range of reporting, outreach, and programming in the West Bank and Gaza as well as with Palestinians in Jerusalem through a new Palestinian Affairs Unit inside U.S. Embassy Jerusalem. That unit will operate from our Agron Road site in Jerusalem.

This decision is driven by our global efforts to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our operations. It does not signal a change of U.S. policy on Jerusalem, the West Bank, or the Gaza Strip. As the President proclaimed in December of last year, the United States continues to take no position on final status issues, including boundaries or borders. The specific boundaries of Israeli sovereignty in Jerusalem are subject to final status negotiations between the parties.

The Administration is strongly committed to achieving a lasting and comprehensive peace that offers a brighter future to Israel and the Palestinians. We look forward to continued partnership and dialogue with the Palestinian people and, we hope in the future, with the Palestinian leadership.

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**Cross References**

*ICC and Libya*, **Ch. 3.C.1.c.**

*Termination of Treaty of Amity with Iran*, **Ch 4.B.1**

*Efforts of the Palestinian Authority to accede to treaties*, **Ch. 4.B.4**

*Agreement to amend the Compact Review Agreement with Palau*, **Ch. 5.E**

*Certain Iranian Assets (ICJ case relating to Treaty of Amity)*, **Ch. 7.B.2**

*Relocation of the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem (Palestine v. United States)*, **Ch. 7.B.3**

*Venezuela*, **Ch. 7.D.1.a**

*Closure of Seattle Consulate of the Russian Federation*, **Ch. 10.C.1.a**

*Venezuela*, **Ch. 10.C.2**

*The Downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17 in Ukraine*, **Ch. 11.A.2**

*Venezuelan Navy's actions in Guyana's EEZ*, **Ch. 12.A.3.b**

*Libya cultural property*, **Ch. 14.A.1**

*Venezuela sanctions*, **Ch. 16.A.4**

*Russia sanctions*, **Ch. 16.A.5**

*Sudan sanctions*, **Ch. 16.A.11.c**

*South Sudan sanctions*, **Ch. 16.A.11.d**

*Libya sanctions*, **Ch. 16.A.11.e**

*Export controls on South Sudan*, **Ch. 16.B.3**

*Closure of the PLO office in Washington*, **Ch. 17.A.1**

*Ukraine*, **Ch. 17.B.3**

*Sudan*, **Ch. 17.B.7**

*South Sudan*, **Ch. 17.B.8**

*Libya*, **Ch. 17.B.9**

*Open Skies Treaty application to Abkhazia and South Ossetia*, **Ch. 19.C.6**

*Russia's use of chemical weapons*, **Ch. 19.D.4**