

Beat: Politics

FINAL PART - JOHN KERRY GIVING FULL REMARKS ON UNITED STATES STRATEGY IN SYRIA

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USPA NEWS - Secretary of State John Kerry : ' I want to be clear: The Syrian people will be the validators of this whole effort. UN Envoy Staffan de Mistura has met with representatives of more than 230 Syrian groups. Our own Special Envoy, Michael Ratney, has also been in constant communication...

Secretary of State John Kerry : ' I want to be clear: The Syrian people will be the validators of this whole effort. UN Envoy Staffan de Mistura has met with representatives of more than 230 Syrian groups. Our own Special Envoy, Michael Ratney, has also been in constant communication with Syrian representatives, and I have met with Syrian opposition leaders myself. So this is not about imposing anything on anyone.'

'We are trying to come together as stakeholders to create a framework which can ignite the United Nations negotiating process. But the Syrians will be the first to tell you that they need help from the international community to get there; and what they especially need is a consensus about how to achieve a political transition that will free them from the stranglehold of extremists on the one side and the stranglehold of a dictator on the other, and allow them to shape their own destiny.'

'Now, I want to underscore: The leaders of the responsible Syrian opposition are not focused on revenge; they have no desire to prolong the war; and they understand that compromise will be required. But at the same time, it's simply not possible to go back to the situation that existed before the conflict began. Who in the world truly believes that's possible? Not after month upon month of indiscriminate violence and torture and bloodshed; not after 40 years of dictatorship. '

'Asking the opposition to trust Assad or to accept Assad's leadership is simply not a reasonable request, and it is literally, therefore, a non-starter. And even if we wanted to, my friends, even if you made the worst deal with the devil, as one says, and said, "Well, that's what you have to do to try to make this process go forward," I got news for you, it will not stop. Because there are those invested in what has happened and in what has been done to them, who see Assad as the critical component of the transition. That's why we are pushing so hard for a real transition. Because without a real transition, no matter how much we want it, the fighting will continue and the war will never end.'

'On this point, I acknowledge that we are still working through with Russia and Iran the question of Assad and his role. It has not been settled, and we acknowledge that. But we believe that through this organic process of Syrians defining the future of Syria, we and our partners believe that we can find a road ahead. We can believe that neither peace nor the defeat of Daesh is possible with Assad in power, and that four and a half years of bitter civil war has made the position on the Syrian people on this subject very clear.'

'So even while divided on this critical issue, the United States and Russia and other countries involved have decided, wisely, I think, not to let that disagreement prevent us from trying to build on the common ground that we have established, build a legitimate, organic, negotiating process. Our goal is to develop a timetable for action based on interim steps, the participation of a broad range of Syrian parties, including both men and women, and the kind of political transition that will empower the center against the extremes.'

'Now, I cannot say this afternoon that we are on the threshold of a comprehensive agreement, no. There remains a lot of work to be done. The walls of mistrust within Syria, within the region, within the international community are thick and they are high. But those walls will never be breached unless we make a concerted effort and a creative effort to surmount them. Our meeting at the end of October showed that the agreed basis for action is much wider than many had supposed.'

'And looking ahead, it should be crystal clear that Daesh can never again be allowed to gain any control of territory or even "" perish the thought "" control of Syria and equally clear that Assad lacks the ability either to unite, to wipe away the crimes of war and govern a country or end the war. So if the war is to end, we must find an alternative. That logic is compelling and it provides a basic unifying

principle for our efforts going forward.'

'So on Friday evening, I will return and be in Vienna. Assembled there will be representatives from the Arab League, China, Egypt, the European Union, France, Germany, Iran, Iraq, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, the UAE, the United Kingdom, and the United Nations "" an extraordinary group. And with those many people gathered around the principles that we've already agreed on, our hope and prayer is that we will be able to find a sensible way forward.'

'America's message to each is that we all have a responsibility, not to dig in our heels, but to take the next step forward, so that the bleeding can stop and the building can begin, and so that the habits of civilization can once again take hold in the region where civilization itself was born.'

'There are moments in managing world affairs, as all of you know, when the elements required for progress simply do not exist. But time and turbulence can generate new possibilities. We do not know for sure whether the right possibilities have yet come together in connection with Syria.'

'We do not know for certain whether the kind of political transition we seek in that country can be achieved. We do not know for certain how long it will take before we can say that Daesh has been defeated.'

'But we do know for certain that we have an obligation to ourselves, to friends throughout the region, and, above all, to Syria's next generation, to test those possibilities to the fullest "" and even more, not to accept no for an answer. We have a responsibility to do everything we can, for as long as we must, to fulfill the high aspiration enshrined in the very name of this institution. We have a duty to peace.'

THE END..... FINALLY !

Ruby BIRD
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