

## 《Tillerson to raise US human rights concerns in Philippines》

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US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson speaks during a press conference after talks with Chinese diplomatic and defense chiefs at the State Department in Washington, US June 21, 2017. [Photo/Agencies]

MANILA, Philippines — The United States' top diplomat is expected to raise concerns about human rights in the Philippines when he visits Manila this week for Asia's biggest security forum, including during possible talks with President Rodrigo Duterte.

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson will raise all relevant issues in the US alliance with the Philippines, including concerns about human rights, Acting US Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Susan Thornton said in Washington on Wednesday. She said a meeting with Duterte is being arranged.

Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs spokesman Robiespierre Bolivar said Thursday the Philippines is open about its rights record. "So definitely if Secretary Tillerson wishes to raise that, the Philippines has always been open and committed to protecting human rights." Duterte, however, has lashed out at critics of his war on illegal drugs, which has left thousands of suspects dead in the past year. When then-US President Barack Obama raised concerns about the mounting death toll, Duterte told the president to "go to hell." Thornton said Tillerson's trip to Manila will provide a chance for a robust bilateral program with the Philippines on the sidelines of the security meetings.

She said there will be much to talk about, including a siege by Islamic State group-linked militants in the southern city of Marawi and growing threats of international terrorism.

"But certainly, we will be talking about governance, about human rights issues, and about how we can increase our economic and other kinds of people-to-people engagement with the Philippines," she added.

Duterte's spokesman, Ernesto Abella, said no announcement has been made of a meeting between Tillerson and Duterte.

Human rights advocates have accused Duterte of unleashing "a human rights calamity" with his war on drugs. They say his recent threat to bomb tribal schools he accused of teaching students to become communist rebels could constitute war crimes, prompting Duterte to clarify that the schools would only be bombed when the buildings are empty.