

# Press Releases: Secretary Pompeo's Travel to Iceland

Fact Sheet  
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC  
February 15, 2019

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- The United States was the first country to recognize Iceland's independence in 1944. Over the past 75 years, the United States has developed a close relationship built on our strong defense cooperation, growing trade and investment, and people-to-people ties.

## **PARTNERS IN SECURITY**

- Under the 1951 Defense Agreement, the United States is committed to Iceland's defense, a commitment that is sacrosanct. In 2016, our governments signed a Joint Declaration reaffirming our commitment and partnership.
- Iceland's Keflavik Air Base supports U.S. and NATO operations in the North Atlantic and provides critical maritime and aerial domain awareness. The Icelandic Coast Guard operates Keflavik and undertakes crucial Search and Rescue operations in the Arctic.
- Iceland is a founding member of NATO, and together the United States and Iceland support pressing global priorities, including the Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan and the Coalition to Defeat ISIS.

## **PARTNERS IN ECONOMIC PROSPERITY**

- The United States recently became Iceland's largest single trading partner, and our overall trade in 2017 topped \$800 million.
- Many U.S. brands and franchises have thrived in Iceland, including Costco, Hard Rock Café, KFC/Taco Bell, and Domino's. U.S.-based Carpenter & Company is currently constructing the first 5-star hotel in Reykjavik, which will be operated by Marriott.

## **PARTNERS IN VALUES AND PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE TIES**

- In 2018, 694,814 U.S. tourists visited Iceland, the largest group of foreign tourists to visit the island.
- The United States and Iceland maintain close ties in education and scientific research. In 2018, more than 400 Icelanders studied in the United States. Each year a collaboration between the U.S. Fulbright

Program and the National Science Foundation sends up to 10 American researchers to Iceland to conduct research on Arctic-focused topics.

- The United States and Iceland enjoy a rich history of supporting freedom and democratic values. In 1986 during the height of the Cold War, Iceland hosted the historic summit meeting between President Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev.

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## **Press Releases: U.S. Sanctions on Venezuelan Individuals and Entities**

Press Statement  
Robert Palladino

Deputy Spokesperson

Washington, DC  
February 15, 2019

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The United States remains steadfast in its support of Venezuelan Interim President Juan Guaido, the transitional government, and the Venezuelan people. We will continue to use the full weight of U.S. economic and diplomatic power to press for the restoration of Venezuelan democracy.

Today, the United States took action to continue to hold corrupt officials of the former illegitimate Maduro regime accountable by imposing sanctions on five current or former officials of the illegitimate Maduro regime. The corrupt officials include individuals of the Cuban-sponsored Venezuelan intelligence forces (SEBIN), the military counter-intelligence (DGCIM) unit, and the brutal special actions force (FAES). Additionally, the United States is taking action against the current President of Petroleos de Venezuela, S.A. (PdVSA).

These actions are in addition to the visa restrictions and revocations announced February 7 on members of the illegitimate Constituent Assembly, which usurped many of the constitutional powers of the legitimate National Assembly, and in addition to the visa restrictions and revocations announced on February 13 on members of the illegitimate Supreme Court, for undermining Venezuela's democracy.

While the United States is holding certain officials responsible for their actions repressing the Venezuelan people and subverting their democracy, we reiterate our calls for the recognition of Juan Guaido as Interim President and call on all Venezuelan officials, including military and security forces, to help return Venezuela to the democratic country its citizens demand and deserve.

U.S. sanctions need not be permanent; they are intended to change behavior. The United States will continue to take appropriate action to respond to the situation in Venezuela as it develops.

For further information, the Department of Treasury's press release can be found [here](#).

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## **[Press Releases: Interview With Bret Baier of Fox News](#)**

Interview  
Michael R. Pompeo  
  
Secretary of State

Sheraton Hotel  
Warsaw, Poland  
February 14, 2019

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**QUESTION:** Earlier today, I asked the secretary about efforts by some European allies to help Iran circumvent U.S. sanctions.

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** Bret, we have made clear since our withdrawal from the JCPOA that we thought it was a horrible deal and one that was not good not only for America but good for the Europeans as well. We've encouraged them to leave the deal since the very day that we did. The Europeans have chosen something different, and we've urged them too not to disrupt the sanctions regime that's out there. They've now come up with this thing called the SPV. I'm very hopeful that it'll be what they say it is and no more, where – a place where unsanctioned goods, humanitarian aid, can move through. If that's the case, it'll have nearly no impact on the important deliverable from our sanctions, which is to deny Qasem Soleimani and his terrorist regime the resources to inflict so much terror and tragedy all around the world.

**QUESTION:** So what beyond sanctions does the U.S. want Europe to do on Iran?

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** Bret, they've actually over the last month, done more than they had done in all the previous time before. We've begun to – begun to have good discussions around the missile program and how we might deny Iran the capability to develop their missiles. The Germans shut down Mahan Air from traveling; it's an airline that is connected to the Qods Force, the Iranian Qods Force, the terror element of the Iranian army. Other European countries have called out the Iranians for their assassination campaign that continues to take place throughout Europe. These are things that the Europeans had been disinclined to do before and now they're doing.

I must say, this ministerial that we had with 60-plus countries, we talked about Iran a fair amount, and not a single country objected to the fact base. They all understood the threat that we collectively face throughout the world from the Islamic Republic of Iran and were committed to jointly figuring out the best ways to push back against it and reduce that risk.

**QUESTION:** Is one of the ways to try to sabotage Iran's missile program?

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** I don't talk about lots of the activities that countries may take covertly. But make no mistake about it, America is using all of its levers of power to reduce the capacity for Iran to build out a missile program. Look, we see what happens when countries join up a nuclear program with the capacity to deliver those nuclear warheads at long range, whether it's through an ICBM missile or one of even shorter range. We are – we're doing everything we can to slow down Iran's capacity to build out those missiles, and we've done it with the blessing of the UN Security Council under 2231, the UN resolution. It's very clear that Iran is violating that by building out its missiles, and we're working to stop it.

**QUESTION:** Yeah, because some of those, a lot of those rocket launches, are failing lately.

Why did the Trump administration wait until yesterday to talk about this former U.S. Air Force intelligence specialist defecting to Iran in 2013?

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** I'll have to defer to the Department of Justice on that. It's a criminal prosecution, and I just don't have anything I can add for you there, Bret.

**QUESTION:** Do you have a sense of Iranian spies working this way inside the U.S.?

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** Make no mistake about it, the Iranian intelligence service – both the IRGC's intelligence service and their main MOIS, their main intelligence service – are working actively not only against the United States but working against European countries, working against Arab states. They are a powerful intelligence service and one that our intelligence service, that I used to have the privilege to run, is working hard to make sure does no damage to the United States of America.

**QUESTION:** I know you can't get into specifics, but I mean, is there a broad estimate how much – how many spies Iran has inside the U.S.?

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** Bret, if there's one, there's too many.

**QUESTION:** I want to talk to you about a couple more things. One is North Korea. We're nearly six months after Singapore, obviously heading towards Vietnam. The Vice President acknowledged the U.S. is still waiting on North Korea to take concrete steps to dismantle its weapons. What does the U.S. need to see from North Korea to say there's progress here on that front?

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** Yeah, I think the Vice President summed it up pretty well, Bret. We've had some good things that followed from the Singapore summit. We haven't had a missile test; there haven't been the testing of nuclear explosive devices. Those are good things. But the ultimate objective, the complete and final denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, there's still a lot of work to do. And we hope – I guess it's only two weeks off now. We hope when the two leaders get together again they can make substantial progress along that objective, which I think the entire world shares.

**QUESTION:** How much does the formal ending of the Korean War factor in?

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** Bret, it's something we've had a lot of talks about. In fact, my team will redeploy to Asia here in a day or two to continue conversations around all elements that were discussed back in Singapore. Remember we not only discussed denuclearization, but we talked about creating security mechanisms, peace mechanisms on the Korean Peninsula. I hope the two leaders have a chance to talk about that as well. I fully expect that they will. We also talked about a brighter future for the North Korean people, if we can successfully get the result that Chairman Kim promised President Trump. Remember he made that commitment that they would denuclearize. And so we hope to make real progress along each of those elements of what the two leaders agreed to back in June.

**QUESTION:** But there is a time or something on the calendar that says we're going to wait this long, and if Kim does nothing on denuclearization, we're going back to maximum pressure. Is that still in the cards?

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** Bret, one of the core principles of the Trump doctrine is we don't tell our adversaries what we're going to do. And so we've had lots of conversations about how we hope this proceeds, but I just don't have anything I can say about a deadline like you're supposing.

**QUESTION:** The President is going to say that almost all of the ISIS caliphate in Syria is gone, we're hearing. What happens to the foreign fighters in Syria whose countries refuse to take them back in?

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** It's a real challenge. It's one of the reasons my team's been working now for weeks to get each of those countries to agree to take back the foreign terrorist fighters that traveled to Syria from their nation. And so we're continuing to work. We've had some successes. We've already had some returns. We need to make sure that we have a solution, and there are many options on the table. I don't want to discuss them further here, but there's many options on the table about how we might address it.

But the most important thing, Bret, we've got soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines that did good work to take these terrorists from the battlefield. We cannot let them out. We can't let their children have to recapture these folks. It's unacceptable. It presents real risk to the United States, and the Trump administration is determined to prevent that from happening.

**QUESTION:** Afghanistan. How long are you prepared to sit at the peace table with the Taliban?

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** We've made real progress, not just with the Taliban but with other Afghans as well. I think they all have a view that 17 years of death and misery is not in the best interest of their nation. I will say that other countries around the world too see that that's not in their best interest. And so Ambassador Khalilzad, under my direction and the direction of President Trump, is actively engaged to see if we can't find a means by which we can get a political resolution in Afghanistan that provides the security elements that are so richly needed and a political solution that can ultimately take down the risk that Afghanistan has presented to the United States for now 17-odd years.

**QUESTION:** Last thing, Mr. Secretary. Up on Capitol Hill there's been some recent votes, including by Senate Republicans, on Saudi Arabia and Yemen, on war powers, on Russia sanctions, at some points undercutting the President's foreign policy. Is this a growing trend, and what do you think about it?

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** I must say the conversations I have on Capitol Hill are, in most cases, supportive of what the administration is doing. There's places that various senators disagree. You highlighted a couple. But the policy on Venezuela is – goodness – nearly unanimously accepted as being a good policy. The threat that China poses to the United States is widely recognized as making sense. I think President Trump has real support for most of the foreign policy objectives that we've laid out over these first two years.

On those others, we'll continue to work with members of Congress. On Yemen, I must say I'm surprised. To the extent we prohibit things taking place in

Yemen, we're only benefiting the Iranians. They're the ones that have caused all the strife. The humanitarian crisis is a direct responsibility of Iranian bad behavior. And I think as we continue to inform members on Capitol Hill of that fact, they'll come to see it the way that President Trump does.

**QUESTION:** Mr. Secretary, we appreciate your time. Safe travels.

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** Thank you, Bret. We'll see you before too long. So long.

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## [Press Releases: Eight-year Anniversary of the Detention of 2009 Iranian Political Opponents](#)

Press Statement  
Robert Palladino

Deputy Spokesperson

Washington, DC  
February 14, 2019

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This week marks the eight-year anniversary of the detention of 2009 Iranian presidential election candidates Mehdi Karroubi and Mir Hossein Mousavi, as well as Mousavi's wife and women's rights advocate Zahra Rahnava. We condemn the continued house arrest of these three individuals, which contradicts Iran's own laws and its international obligations, including those under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to provide minimum fair trial guarantees and not to subject individuals to arbitrary arrest or detention.

As Iran marks the 40th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution in 1979, it is

an opportunity for the world once again to reflect on the regime's refusal to protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of Iranians. In addition to Karroubi, Mousavi, and Rahnavard, the Iranian regime continues to imprison hundreds of its people for political reasons. In fact, this past year was called Iran's "year of shame" due to the regime's ongoing ruthless crackdowns on the individuals living inside its borders. The regime arrested at least 7,000 peaceful protesters and held them in the country's notorious prisons. The victims of the regime's abuses include farmers, journalists, members of ethnic and religious minorities like Ahwazis and Gonabadi Sufis, teachers, truckers, environmentalists, students, and women demanding to choose what they wear. At least 26 protesters lost their lives, some under suspicious circumstances while held in custody.

Iranians must be able to live without fear of arbitrary arrest and detention, denial of fair trial guarantees, or even losing their lives for exercising their basic human rights. We condemn the continued arbitrary detention of the 2009 election candidates, along with those hundreds of other individuals being held arbitrarily or without fair public trials across the country. We demand their immediate release and the release of all prisoners of conscience.

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## **Press Releases: Terrorist Attack on Indian Security Forces Convoy**

Press Statement  
Robert Palladino

Deputy Spokesperson

Washington, DC  
February 14, 2019

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The United States condemns in the strongest terms the terrorist attack today on an Indian Central Reserve Police Force convoy in the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir. We extend our deepest condolences to the victims and their families, and wish a speedy recovery to those injured. The United States is resolutely committed to working with the Indian government to combat terrorism in all its forms. The UN designated, Pakistan-based terrorist group Jaish-e-Muhammad has claimed responsibility for this heinous act. We call on all countries to uphold their responsibilities pursuant to UN Security Council resolutions to deny safe haven and support for terrorists.

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