

Press Releases: Remarks With Qatari Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani at a Press Availability

Remarks

Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Dukhan Hall

Doha, Qatar

January 13, 2019

FOREIGN MINISTER AL THANI: (Via interpreter) In the name of God, most gracious, most compassionate, at the outset I would like to thank His Excellency the Secretary of State Mr. Mike Pompeo for visiting Doha, and I would like to welcome him on his first visit as a secretary of state. We are looking forward towards further such visits. We highly value and appreciate his partaking in the second U.S.-Qatari Strategic Dialogue, which reflects the excellent historical relations between our two countries and the alliance that was built in the last decades.

Today we are here to build on the outputs of the first Strategic Dialogue, and during our conversation, seven sessions are being held for further expanded discussions on different sectors: commercial, business, education, defense, security, and others. Our partnership with United States is a strong partnership based on very strong premises, based on an understanding and – mutual understanding and interests. We have signed three agreements today on education, culture, and an MOU for supporting defense activities in Al Udeid Air Base, and we are looking forward towards the tangible results of this dialogue for our strategic relations to witness a quality bond, a quality progress.

I've had – we have had a bilateral meeting with the Secretary of State, and we've discussed all the issues of interest for our countries, regional issues, regional security issues starting with the Gulf Cooperation Council and the peace process in the Middle East, as well as the reconciliation in Afghanistan, along with other issues such as Syria and counterterrorism. We are looking forward to the outputs of this meeting to be the foundation of a stronger future phase of relations between our two countries, and we hope

that further political coordination continues on all issues of regional security of interest to both our countries.

Thank you, Your Excellency, for your attendance, and thank you for participating with this important Strategic Dialogue and this visit.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you. Thank you, Foreign Minister Al Thani. Thanks for hosting the team here today in Doha. It was an honor to participate in the Strategic Dialogue. I know our teams did great work as well. Your country has been a great friend to the United States in many ways, and we're deeply appreciative of that.

As President Trump noted when he hosted His Highness the emir at the White House last year, great things are happening in the relationship, and that's certainly still true. Both of our governments have taken concrete steps to implement agreements signed at last year's inaugural Strategic Dialogue in Washington, including in the fields of counterterrorism, combating trafficking in persons, cybersecurity, nuclear safeguards, and energy cooperation. Today we reached a few new agreements that will grow and make our relationship even more robust.

We focused first and foremost on security and defense partnership. We signed a new MOU on the expansion of our presence at Al Udeid. As the host of hundreds – excuse me, as the host of thousands of U.S. military personnel and the CENTCOM forward headquarters, this base is key to American security and our shared efforts to promote regional stability. We thank Qatar for its dedication to improving and modernizing it.

Today in our conversations I stressed the importance of unity among the Gulf Cooperation Council members. President Trump and I both believe the ongoing dispute in the region has dragged on for too long and the dispute benefits adversaries and harms our mutual interests. Our nations do important work and we have important work to continue to do together, and the United States hopes the parties involved will see once again the benefits of cooperation and take actions necessary to rebuild unity in their ranks.

A united GCC is essential to the success of the Middle East Strategic Alliance, which we hope will include the GCC, Egypt, and Jordan. The United States has continued to advance discussions on this alliance since the initial meeting of the GCC+2 at the UN General Assembly back in the fall in September, and I raised this topic again with Minister Al Thani and will do so with His Highness as well.

But in addition to defense and security partnership, we also discussed our steadily expanding trade and investment relationship. We are proud to have more than 120 of our companies operating here, creating opportunities for our people and yours. I know there's more to follow. Your impressive efforts to improve labor regulations, to promote transparency, and to protect the dignity of over 2 million foreign workers here was also a focus of our efforts today.

We had several other agreements that the dialogue yielded. On education,

we've agreed to share best practices and expertise with each other. This cooperation will help enrich, strengthen – and strengthen educational practices, and we will conduct exchange programs to promote educational opportunity and development.

We also signed a statement of intent to promote our cultural ties. You can expect to see new events, youth engagement exchanges for rising leaders in a variety of fields, and relationships between cultural institutions that will allow Americans and Qataris to learn more about each other.

Our growing partnership with Qatar continues America's long record of helping Middle East nations live in peace and prosperity. The United States looks forward to building on this momentum, strengthening our ties, and promoting our sustained cooperation. Thank you very much, Foreign Minister, for hosting me and my team here today.

QUESTION: (Via interpreter) My question to Your Excellency: Anthony Zinni's resignation, does it mean that the United States is no longer focused on the Middle East? And what has the U.S. done regarding the humanitarian issue when it comes to the GCC crisis with families being separated forcefully?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So two questions there. The first question is the departure of Mr. Zinni in no way reflects any change in America's Middle East efforts, our strategy, or our ongoing commitment to the region. It was a time when it was time for change. He made this decision to move on, but America's commitment remains unchanged. We will continue to have a robust set of dialogue around the very issues that he was handling on our – on the United States' behalf.

And with respect to humanitarian issues here and elsewhere in the region, I think the United States stands second to none in the – not only the amount, the dollars that we have committed to avoiding humanitarian crises in the region, but also our personal commitment, the things that my team on the ground here in Doha and throughout the region does to make sure that we're responding to humanitarian challenges wherever we find them.

QUESTION: (Via interpreter) Said Boukhafa from Al Jazeera. My first question is to Mr. Al Thani. We've recently saw a lot of Qatari diplomacy being active, starting with the Doha Forum that has hosted a number of high-level officials, mainly the UN secretary-general. Is Qatar still concerned with the issues of mediation that it had led before?

My second question is to the Secretary of State, Mr. Pompeo. You've announced that the United States is currently working on preparing an international conference to discuss Middle Eastern issues in Poland. I would like to ask the Secretary of State what are the chances of success of such a summit while a lot of crises are ongoing in the region. Thank you.

FOREIGN MINISTER AL THANI: (Via interpreter) Now for the Qatari diplomatic activity, it's continuous and it hasn't stopped. Be it through conferences or through the Qatari diplomacy endeavors on many issues, Qatar supports the efforts of reconciliation and mediation in many regions, mainly the Darfur

issue, which still continues under Qatari mediation, and we have called on other parties to join the Doha agreement. Furthermore, Qatar is actively partaking in the Afghanistan reconciliation process. We hosted the political bureau of Taliban, and we are working together with our partners, the United States, in order to establish peace in Afghanistan.

Furthermore, there are other files that we are working on and we are constantly consulting with the United States over with a number of other parties involved, be it the issue of Syria, the peace process in the Middle East. So we look – we always look for the diplomacy to be the solution for such crises and to end the humanitarian crisis and hardships of our peoples, and this is considered to be as a common denominator in the U.S. and Qatari policies.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Your question to me was about the ministerial that will be held in the middle of February in Warsaw. One of our objectives – they're manifold. One of the things I think the world will see as we come together is the enormous coalition that is prepared to assist in creating stability and peace here in the Middle East. And so we will gather around a number of different topics. Certainly, the coalition that continues to fight ISIS around the world will be part of that. We'll have conversations about counterterrorism and how the whole globe – there'll be countries at this from Asia, from Africa, from all across the world. It won't be confined to the United States and Europe and the Middle East. There'll be a broad coalition of countries present, and we'll work on many issues, including how it is we can get the Islamic Republic of Iran to behave more like a normal nation.

So there'll be many topics discussed by this broad coalition, and we hope to have a set of deliverables that come out of it that are important as we move forward in 2019.

MR PALLADINO: Francesco Fontemaggi from AFP.

QUESTION: Thank you. Mr. Secretary, how does that dispute between Qatar and Saudi undermines this effort to counter Iran? And also, can you tell us what you expect to ask to – in Riyadh to Mohammed bin Salman about the killing of Jamal Khashoggi?

And just a very last quick one: Can you confirm that the White House asked in September to provide military options to strike Iran? Thank you.

SECRETARY POMPEO: With respect to your third question, I don't have any comment.

With respect to your second question, we will continue to have conversation with the crown prince and the Saudis about ensuring that the accountability is full and complete with respect to the unacceptable murder of Jamal Khashoggi, so we'll continue to talk about that and make sure we have all the facts so that they are held accountable, certainly by the Saudis but by the United States as well where appropriate.

And as for the GCC, in my statement I made clear we're all more powerful when

we're working together, when disputes are limited, and when we have common challenges in the region and around the world, disputes between countries that have a shared objective are never helpful. They never permit you to have as robust a and powerful a response to common adversaries or common challenges as if – as you might when countries have a dispute between them. We see this all the time. We have lots of places where we're building out coalitions and there are challenges between different parts of the coalition. It's something we work through, work around, and we're hopeful that the unity of the GCC will increase in the days and weeks and months ahead.

MR PALLADINO: That concludes our press conference.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you.

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[Press Releases: Remarks at the Opening Ceremony of the U.S.-Qatar Strategic Dialogue](#)

Remarks

Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Salwa Room, Sheraton Doha

Doha, Qatar

January 13, 2019

FOREIGN MINISTER AL THANI: (Via interpreter, in progress) that link our two countries in order to reinforce a deep partnership and cooperation in all aspects economic and also military relations, which are the most important

pillars of such a relationship and that effectively contribute to the reinforcement of international and regional stability. We aspire that this dialogue is going to lead to the discussion of joint efforts with regard to the support of the situation in the Middle East and also mediation in Afghanistan and also dealing with the crisis in the region, particularly the crisis in Iraq, Syria, and Libya, and also combating terrorism.

I do reinforce the commitment of the state of Qatar, the strategic relationship with the United States of America, and also the continuation of dialogue in keeping with the interests of our two countries. And at the end, I would like to reiterate my welcome to you here in the state of Qatar. Thank you so much.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you. Thank you for welcoming me so kindly, Foreign Minister Al Thani, and thank you for welcoming me on what is my first trip to this country as Secretary of State. I've been here before but not in this current role, and I wanted you to know President Trump sends his best wishes to the – his highness the emir and all of the Qatari people, so thank you.

It's an honor for me to participate in the second U.S.-Qatar Strategic Dialogue, the first one to be hosted here in Doha. Our strategic partnership spans many areas and continues to grow, as demonstrated by the sheer number of topics we will discuss here today amongst our two teams. Defense and security, counterterrorism, labor, trade and investment, energy, education, and culture are all on the agenda and all important parts of our relationship.

The United States and Qatar are working together to address a number of regional security challenges, including in Afghanistan and Iraq. Our defense relationship is extensive, important, and growing. Qatar is host to 13,000 U.S. and coalition service members at Al Udeid Air Base, and has served as the primary staging area for our coalition to defeat ISIS. Thank you for the support you provide us with the airbase. You should know that I speak for the American people when I say we are grateful for your country's willingness to make sure that the airbase can meet the needs of the U.S. military for decades to come.

We look forward to signing these new agreements today greatly because your country has also moved decisively to implement critical enhancements to our bilateral counterterrorism cooperation. Our relationship with Qatari law enforcement has never been better, and we look forward to further engagement as Qatar prepares for the 2022 World Cup.

But military and security cooperation is not the only two – are not the only two ways our countries are growing closer. Our commercial relationship continues to thrive, with robust trade and expanding investments in both of our countries. The sheer number and diversity of U.S. companies that are here today for parallel discussions demonstrates the strength and potential of our commercial relationship. I'm excited to sign new agreements on education and cultural exchanges as well. The people-to-people ties between our two countries have played a key role in America's strong bilateral relationship with your country, and we look forward to growing our academic exchanges,

scholarships, language learning, and study abroad opportunities, among many others.

Let's make 2019 a year of advancements on security, commerce, energy, labor, reform, and other topics. Thank you again for hosting me here today and thanks for hosting our entire delegation as well.

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[Press Releases: Interview With Najwa Kassem of Al Arabiya](#)

Interview

Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

January 12, 2019

QUESTION: (In Arabic.) Good afternoon.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Good afternoon. It's great to be with you.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, it's our honor to be with us as you always were. Actually, it was a busy trip, very busy trip, and you still have more stops in it. But main thing we can understand from your speech in Cairo, from what you said about the Poland summit and meeting in Poland, that it's Iran. And this is the main goal, a very hard speech against Iran, and sort of alliance, something like this, to face the role of Iran in the region. What's the plan?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yeah, so it's been a fantastic trip, I – this swing through the Gulf states now following my initial visits. Really three things we're working on, different for each of our partners around the world, but

America's here, and this is important to us. Middle East stability, destroying ISIS, completing the destruction of the caliphate are very important missions for the United States – and countering Iran. The threat from the world's largest state sponsor of terror, the Islamic Republic of Iran, is something President Trump has identified as one of his top priorities. We're determined to do that, and we'll do it with our partners throughout the Middle East. This is a mission for the world. It's incredibly important, and we are determined to do it. I wanted to make sure that I got the chance to swing through the region one more time – I've been here a lot in my life –

QUESTION: Yes.

SECRETARY POMPEO: – to come back one more time and reassure them that America is committed to this and talk about how we're going to execute it.

QUESTION: But what can we understand about what's going to happen in Poland? Is it the MESA, what you're calling MESA? Is it another sort of alliance, or what? What kind of meetings it will be –

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yeah, so that's a great question. The ministerial in Warsaw will be much broader than that. We will have countries from Asia, Africa, Western Hemisphere, countries from South America – this will be a broad coalition aimed at Middle East stability. We'll talk about how we counter terror. There'll be a focus on Iran. There'll be conversations about financial systems, how is it we ensure the financial systems don't sponsor terror. There'll be a broad conversation from a large group – dozens and dozens of countries we expect to attend over the course of the ministerial. It's the first time we've put together a ministerial this way, and we think it will show the whole world that there's a broad determination to make life better here and take the terror regimes down in the region.

QUESTION: But with America withdrawing from Syria – at least for the time being of course; you still have a presence in Iraq but not compared to presence in the last decade. You are determined for this but you are withdrawing from Syria. This is something you consider not contradicted, and you didn't see it contradict also what the – Mr. Bolton's statement regarding Turkey, same issue. But how can we understand this?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yeah. No, there's no contradiction at all. America supports fights against terror all around the world. Sometimes we do it with U.S. soldiers, sometimes we do it with forces from partner countries. Sometimes we do it in other ways – diplomatic means, economic means, financial means, building out coalitions. There are many tools in the power projection arsenal. And so no terrorist, no Iranian should believe that the fact that a couple thousand U.S. soldiers are going to be redeployed out of Syria in any way diminishes our commitment.

QUESTION: It's said in the U.S., especially at the time at the turn of the former president, that our enemies don't hear us and our friends don't trust us. This is something I heard in previous interviews. So in that context, do you think Iran fears what's going on now?

SECRETARY POMPEO: I want the Iranian people to know that we want a better life for them. We want the Iranian people's voices to be heard. We want a real democracy in the Islamic Republic of Iran. And a real democracy doesn't support Hizballah. A real democracy doesn't support Shia militias in Iraq that are reducing Iraqi independence. A real democracy wouldn't be active in Yemen in the way that they are by underwriting the Houthis today. We want the Iranian people's voices to be heard, and so we don't want them to fear us. We want them to know that we're here, we hear them, and we want a better life for the people in Iran as well.

QUESTION: And last answer, you were talking about forces – you said our forces, or other partners' forces. This is something maybe (inaudible) now about maybe replacing the American forces but by forces from other countries as well. This is what the Turkish are saying at least in the analysis. Can you explain this? Which partners' forces?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yeah. Different countries will have to make their own decisions about how they're going to participate in this coalition. Some will make a decision to have their forces there. I don't want to get into where the discussions are sitting today. But know that we value each time a country makes a decision to put its young men and women in harm's way. It's a big decision for a sovereign state to make. And we're very hopeful that we will continue to find the right mix, the right set of power projection tools to achieve our ultimate objectives.

But at the end of the day, what we want in Syria is a political resolution. We're driving towards enforcing UN Security Council Resolution 2254 so that we can get a political resolution in Syria, one that allows now some 6 million people who've had to leave their homes that are displaced persons –

QUESTION: Six million outside the country? There is other six? Displaced in –

SECRETARY POMPEO: And more than that – inside – they're internally displaced, yeah. So we're talking about enormous numbers, millions and millions of people who have had to flee their homes because of the conflict in Syria. That's the mission set, is to create the political conditions so those people can return and they can once again restore power to the people in Syria as well.

QUESTION: That's what the MESA is about?

SECRETARY POMPEO: No, MESA is a broader effort than that. MESA's not specifically aimed at the Syria challenge. MESA is a –

QUESTION: Military aspect?

SECRETARY POMPEO: No, even the military aspect of MESA, it's broader than that. It's an attempt to build a coalition of Middle Eastern forces that can respond to many threats to the region, not just the one that's in Syria today.

QUESTION: And that – speaking about Syria and about the American presence there, American-Turkish relations have been really volatile, very volatile in

the last few months. Now how can we describe them? We've heard that they have been okay a few – couple of months ago, now it seems after what happened with Mr. Bolton's statement, more like tense?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yeah, I think that's all been misreported and overblown. The conversations that Ambassador Bolton had with his – in Turkey were very productive. We are trying to chart a path forward. As we withdraw our 2,000 uniformed military personnel from Syria – which we are going to do – as we do that, we want to make sure that we do – we do right by the Turks. That is, to the extent they have terrorist threats on their border, they're entitled to do what they need to do to protect the Turkish people, and we want to make sure at the same time that the forces that we fought with in the region, who aren't terrorists – those forces who aren't terrorists – are protected from threats from all the folks in the region. We were trying to create an orderly, successful, deliberate departure of our forces, and I'm confident that we can do that. And our conversations with the Turks in that respect have been very productive.

QUESTION: Uh-huh. Okay. Let me ask you, Mr. Secretary, about the relations with Saudi Arabia. This has been a very important headline in the American press, as well as in the American politics. How can you talk about it?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So I'll be heading to Saudi Arabia tomorrow. We'll have another set of constructive conversations, I'm very, very sure. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is an important partner of the United States. They've been very helpful to us on multiple things that matter to the American people, and I'm convinced that partnership will remain strong. We know there's been this
–

QUESTION: Partnership, not friendship?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Call it what you will. They've been great partners in the missions that we have asked them to assist us with. We understand that the murder of Jamal Khashoggi was a heinous, terrible act. We want to hold everyone responsible for that accountable. We intend to do so. We started that already. But this relationship, this mutually beneficial relationship to create stability in the Middle East and to assist the United States in executing things that keep the American people safe is very important. And I'm convinced the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia will be a great ally in doing so.

QUESTION: I'm sorry, I know it's almost over, but just because you mentioned Jamal Khashoggi, I want to – you to tell the Saudis, the Arab viewers – we felt for some time that the whole relation between U.S. and Saudi Arabia was only this mattered, the matter of Khashoggi. How can you respond to this?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yeah. President Trump's made it clear since the immediate aftermath of this murder that the relationship is broader and deeper and bigger than that. We absolutely have expectations when things go wrong, when heinous acts are – have occurred, people need to be held accountable for those. But this relationship predated that, and the relationship must go forward. We have to have a good relationship with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and this administration intends to do so.

QUESTION: Thank you so much, Mr. Secretary of the –

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you very much. It's great to be with you.

QUESTION: (Inaudible.) Thank you so much for this interview.

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[Press Releases: Secretary Pompeo's Meeting With Bahraini King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, Bahraini Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, and Foreign Minister Khalid bin Ahmed Al Khalifa](#)

Readout
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
January 11, 2019

The below is attributable to Deputy Spokesperson Robert Palladino:

Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo met today with Bahraini King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, Bahraini Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, and Foreign Minister Khalid bin Ahmed Al Khalifa in Manama. The Secretary thanked the King, the Crown Prince, and the Foreign Minister for Bahrain's continued friendship and strategic partnership with the United States. The leaders addressed critical priorities, including counterterrorism, Yemen, and countering the Iranian regime's dangerous activities. The leaders agreed on

the importance of all parties continuing to work with UN Special Envoy Martin Griffiths toward a comprehensive political solution to the conflict in Yemen.

The leaders discussed Bahrain's support for religious coexistence and freedom of religion, and the conclusion of parliamentary elections including the election of the first female Speaker of the Council of Representatives. The leaders discussed realizing the Middle East Strategic Alliance, anchored by a united Gulf Cooperation Council, to stand against the Iranian regime's malign influence and advance the prosperity, security, and stability of the region. The Secretary expressed his gratitude for the role Bahrain plays, particularly through hosting the United States Fifth Fleet, and in supporting a variety of regional priorities.

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[Press Releases: Appeal Hearing of Reuters Reporters Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo in Burma](#)

Press Statement
Robert Palladino

Deputy Spokesperson

Washington, DC
January 11, 2019

The United States is deeply disappointed that the Yangon High Court upheld the convictions of Reuters journalists Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo today. A free and independent press should be protected in any democracy. Today's ruling casts doubt not only on freedom of expression in Burma, but also raises questions about Burma's commitment to the rule of law. We will continue to

advocate at all levels for the just release of these brave journalists.

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