

Press Releases: Department Press Briefing – October 10, 2018

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TRANSCRIPT:

1:41 p.m. EDT

MR PALLADINO: Something for the top. Looking ahead to tomorrow, we are honored to have the Vice President here at the State Department tomorrow to open the second Conference on Prosperity and Security in Central America. Secretary Pompeo is co-hosting this two-day event with the Department of Homeland Security Secretary Nielsen and our Mexican partners, Foreign Secretary Videgaray, and the Secretary of Government Navarrete.

We also look forward to welcoming President Hernandez of Honduras, President Morales of Guatemala, and Vice President Ortiz of El Salvador. Together, we will be reviewing and strengthening our joint efforts to achieve prosperity, security, and governance in Central America.

At tomorrow's Prosperity Day, our discussion will focus on promoting

economic opportunity in the region. Our collective goal is to ensure that the people of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras are able to build futures for their families, communities, and countries.

And then on Friday, Security Day, which will be hosted by the Department of Homeland Security at the United States Institute of Peace with participation by the State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement as well as the United States Agency for International Development, we are going to discuss joint efforts to enhance regional security cooperation, reduce illegal immigration, combat organized crime and gangs, and improve citizen security.

Our cooperation is key to a strong, vibrant, prosperous, and secure Central America and Western Hemisphere. We look forward to productive discussions with our Mexican, Salvadoran, Guatemalan, and Honduran partners as we work together for the prosperity and security of our citizens.

And that's it. Why don't we open it up to questions.

QUESTION: Sir.

MR PALLADINO: Sure.

QUESTION: Thanks. Welcome.

MR PALLADINO: Thank you.

QUESTION: I hope this is the first of many occasions that we see you behind the podium, at least that's what I say now before any questions have been answered.

MR PALLADINO: All right.

QUESTION: Let's start with the whole situation in Turkey with Mr. Khashoggi and the Saudis. We've all seen, I think – at least most of us have seen the White House statement about the calls that went out, which you're more than welcome to repeat if you want, but I want to ask you about a specific line in one report about this that said that the U.S. had intelligence, overheard or intercepted communications, suggesting that there was a threat to Mr. Khashoggi should he go. Is that correct?

MR PALLADINO: I'll get to that question, and I'll answer it directly, Matt, thank you. I would just – I would start at the top by saying, as the President has conveyed, both the Vice President and the Secretary of State, we – the United States is concerned by Jamal Khashoggi's disappearance. And we can confirm that Ambassador Bolton and Jared Kushner have spoken to the crown prince yesterday, and we can confirm as well that the Secretary of State then had a follow-up call with the crown prince to reiterate our request for more information. We continue to call for a transparent investigation, and we're going to continue to monitor this situation.

As to your specific question regarding intelligence, I would say that although I cannot comment on intelligence matters, I can say definitively the United States had no advanced knowledge of Jamal Khashoggi's disappearance.

QUESTION: Well, okay, that's a bit different than – I mean, did you have any advance knowledge that there might be some kind of threat to him should he go into the consulate in Istanbul?

MR PALLADINO: We had no advanced knowledge.

QUESTION: Okay. If you had had – based on that report that you did have knowledge, there was a lot of talk about how the administration, if it did have such information, would have been required to have warned him – Mr. Khashoggi – about that. Is that your understanding of the “No Double Standard” rule or regulation?

MR PALLADINO: It's a hypothetical question and –

QUESTION: Well, in any case –

MR PALLADINO: Without going into – and we're not going to discuss –

QUESTION: Forget about this case. Let's just talk about if the United States Government has information about a threat to an American citizen or American resident, are you required to tell them about it?

MR PALLADINO: I would need to understand clearly before commenting upon the “No Double Standard”, what applies to us. And so I know it definitely applies to American citizens, but I don't want to go into any further speculation on what it stands for.

QUESTION: So you're not sure if it would apply – if it would have applied in this case?

MR PALLADINO: What I would say is we've seen the report; and although I can't go into intelligence matters, I can definitively say that we had no knowledge in advance of Mr. Khashoggi's disappearance.

QUESTION: Robert, can I just follow up?

MR PALLADINO: Yes. Okay, please, let's start over with Reuters. Yes.

QUESTION: Well, first of all, you said that Jared Kushner and Bolton spoke to the crown prince. Did they not speak to MBS?

MR PALLADINO: That's all I have. I would refer you to the White House for any further information on calls that may have taken place.

QUESTION: MBS (inaudible) prince.

QUESTION: Okay, but who did Pompeo speak to? The same person?

MR PALLADINO: Yes.

QUESTION: Oh, okay.

QUESTION: But the fact that it's been more than a week now, and obviously all of these high-level contacts have gone on, and there's still no indication of what happened to this guy inside the Saudi consulate, this must be frustrating for the State Department.

MR PALLADINO: I would say that we continue to see conflicting reports on what has transpired, and the United States – our position – it is absolutely essential that Turkish authorities, with full and transparent support from the Government of Saudi Arabia, that they are able to conduct a thorough investigation and officially release the results of that investigation once it's concluded.

QUESTION: Robert, can I ask a follow-up on this?

MR PALLADINO: Yes.

QUESTION: Thank you. After John Bolton and Jared Kushner spoke to MBS, why did the Secretary feel it was necessary to follow on with his own phone call? I mean, Jared has a close relationship with the crown prince, so what was conveyed in that phone call that hadn't been conveyed in the previous one? And was there any sense of a timeline or a threat put forward that if this investigation isn't concluded by a certain time then there will be action taken, or a sense of urgency or sort of deeper concern expressed if this investigation goes on, drags on?

MR PALLADINO: I'm not going to be able to provide anything beyond the readouts that the White House provided on the underlying content. Those are private diplomatic conversations. I would say that the United States Government wants to understand what's going on and to express the importance of receiving a full accounting, and understanding in a very transparent and conclusive way what has transpired, that we'd like to get to the bottom of this, and we will continue to call for that.

QUESTION: Robert, can I ask a follow-up question?

MR PALLADINO: Yes, Carol.

QUESTION: There have been reports that the Turks have either an audio or a video purportedly showing the exact moment of his killing. Have they shared those, any sort of audio or video with the United States?

And if you could also address – this morning there was a statement condemning Venezuela in the death of a council member who apparently fell, pushed, or was – somehow fell from a building, and it was a very strong condemnation. Do you have some sort of metric that you use? Why not use similarly strong language in publicly demanding that the Saudis prove that he left the consulate?

MR PALLADINO: State Department senior officials and diplomats have spoken with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Government of Turkey

through diplomatic channels about this matter. And from the Secretary of State on down, we have been engaged. I am not going to be able to go any further into the underlying content of those private conversations.

As to the case you raise in Venezuela, that – I saw that statement that the White House issued this morning. I mean, that's a very – the facts on that case are such that the Venezuelan Government seized him upon his return from the United Nations General Assembly. Let me take a look at the actual content of that first.

That's right. So Venezuelan authorities took Alban into custody, and that was from – upon his return from the United Nations General Assembly, where he was speaking about the importance of returning democracy to the people of Venezuela. And then, as you point out, he was pushed from a balcony or something happened. And so we, the United States – there is calling for increased pressure and we'd like to know – we would like more information. And I would also say that we extend our condolences and our sympathies to the family of Mr. Alban. That alarming detention does call for a thoroughly independent investigation free of the regime's interference. And that tragedy highlights a continuing pattern of human rights abuses in that country, repression, and excessive use of force.

QUESTION: How is the –

MR PALLADINO: In the case of what we're talking about in Turkey, we're calling for a full and transparent investigation to understand what's transpired. We are – we are trying to get to the bottom of it and we're looking for answers.

QUESTION: Can I go on –

MR PALLADINO: Yes, please.

QUESTION: Thanks, Robert. Sorry if you already went into this. I was a minute or two late. But isn't this kind of the second round of inquiries that the U.S. has made to the Saudis? Didn't last week Deputy Secretary Sullivan and Secretary Pompeo raise this with the Saudi ambassador? And I'm just curious – if so, is this kind of follow-up because of more things that you're hearing from the Turks in terms of their investigation, or is it because you haven't gotten answers to your initial inquiries?

MR PALLADINO: We are – we – the President, the Vice President, and the Secretary of State have all spoken publicly on this now and expressed our concern. This is a journalist we're talking about, one that is known to many of us. And so we want – we want to see a transparent investigation and we would like to see official results of that investigation, and we're calling for cooperation in that matter.

QUESTION: How closely – I'm sorry – again, sorry if you addressed this, but how closely are you working with the Turks? And obviously they're

investigating; are they sharing the results of their investigation with you?

MR PALLADINO: I'm not going to – we are working – from the Secretary on down, we are very engaged on this issue. Senior officials, diplomats are speaking to both the kingdom of Saudi Arabia as well as the Government of Turkey, and we're using diplomatic channels. We're going to continue to do so. The Vice President earlier today made comments that the United States stands ready to assist in any way, and I'll stop with that.

QUESTION: When he says – just one more, please. When he says that the U.S. stands ready to assist, obviously because Mr. Khashoggi is not a U.S. citizen or, I think at this point, even a legal permanent resident, there's no jurisdiction. But have you expressed to the Saudis that you would appreciate an invitation to assist in the investigation or are you just kind of standing by and waiting for them to act?

MR PALLADINO: I'm not going to go and characterize the underlying nature of our diplomatic conversations at this time.

QUESTION: Well, no, but it's a question about whether the U.S. is interested, and I know that you have to legally, according to international law, you would have to get an official invitation from the Turks. Is it your desire to join the investigation, or it's really just you're here to assist if they need it?

MR PALLADINO: I mean, that really is more of a question for the Vice President's office and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, not from the State Department.

QUESTION: Can you – all right. Because Heather mentioned the FBI yesterday very briefly and I just want to – have the Turks made a request for FBI assistance?

MR PALLADINO: I'm not going to be able to go into the details on private conversations.

QUESTION: And then in terms of your high-level diplomatic talks, other than the calls you – other than the calls that you've read out here, presumably you have people on the ground in both Ankara, Istanbul – in Ankara, Istanbul, and Riyadh all pushing this, right?

MR PALLADINO: Our embassies overseas, absolutely.

QUESTION: Okay.

MR PALLADINO: Our diplomatic mission overseas.

QUESTION: Who again – what's the name of the ambassador in Turkey right now?

MR PALLADINO: I don't have that in front of me right now and I – Matt –

QUESTION: What's the name of the ambassador in Saudi Arabia right now?

MR PALLADINO: I see what you're getting at. Okay. We are confident in our diplomatic –

QUESTION: The answer is that you don't have an ambassador in either place, right?

MR PALLADINO: We –

QUESTION: And in fact, the charge in Riyadh has now been nominated to be the ambassador to Yemen. So just is it correct that you do not have ambassadors in place in either Ankara or Riyadh?

MR PALLADINO: But we have diplomatic staff, senior diplomatic officials –

QUESTION: I'm sure you do.

MR PALLADINO: – very much – very much in charge. And yesterday Heather spoke at the top as well about the need for the State Department to get its full team on the field, and we definitely would reiterate our request for our colleagues in the Senate and their assistance in fielding our full camp.

QUESTION: Understood. Who has been nominated to be the new ambassador to Turkey, and who has been nominated to be the new ambassador to Saudi Arabia? Who are the nominees who are awaiting Senate movement?

MR PALLADINO: Matt, I don't have that in front of me right now. And – but let me just say these are senior Foreign Service officers that have had full careers and we're confident in our team's ability.

QUESTION: You're sure someone's been nominated for both positions?

MR PALLADINO: I would have to take the question, Matt.

QUESTION: Robert. Robert, really quickly, just –

MR PALLADINO: All right, one more. Let's go to Fox.

QUESTION: Significant reporting out there that Turkish officials believe that this is the responsibility of the Saudi Government, and the UK foreign secretary yesterday said if these reports are true, it would change the relationship with Saudi Arabia. Does the U.S. share that view with the UK Government?

MR PALLADINO: I'll restate that – first of all, we're not going to engage in hypothetical questions. What the United States is calling for – we don't want to prejudge anything here, frankly. We want the official investigation to take place and we want to see the results of that investigation. So we are going to wait until the facts come out, and reiterate our call. We would like a thorough and a transparent

investigation.

Guys, I don't have too much more on this subject, but let's go to AFP.

QUESTION: When you ask for an investigation and transparency on the result of these investigations, do you have the feeling that the response is positive from Saudi and the Turks, or is it too early to have that answer? Do you not know yet if they will do so?

MR PALLADINO: I'm not going to characterize private diplomatic conversations that we're having right now.

Let's go to Said, sure.

QUESTION: Thank you. Thank you for doing this. Good to see you behind the podium. I want to go the Palestinian issue very quickly. Today marked – today is the last day for the PLO office. They close at 4 o'clock this afternoon. Would you like to see them – to see this office reopened? Are you doing anything to have the office reopened? I mean, according to your letter, they have to shut down by today, October 10th.

MR PALLADINO: Correct.

QUESTION: That letter was sent out on September 10th.

MR PALLADINO: Yes.

QUESTION: Now, they shut down at 4 o'clock this afternoon.

MR PALLADINO: Right.

QUESTION: Would you like to see the office reopen and relations resumed?

MR PALLADINO: I'm not going to be able to answer that from the podium. I would take that question.

QUESTION: And one last question on the Palestinian issue. Yesterday I asked Heather about the young American student, Lara Alqasem. Have you spoken to the Israelis since then? She seems to be – apparently she's free to come back, but she doesn't want to do that. She wants to enter the country and resume her studies. Have you spoken to her, or have you spoken to the Israelis? And can you give us an update on this?

MR PALLADINO: I have no updates on dialogue between the United States and Israel since Heather's briefing yesterday. But I can reiterate what was said from the podium yesterday, that out of respect for Ms. Alqasem's privacy, there frankly – there's not much we're able to say. But we can say that we're very much aware of her case and that our embassy is providing consular assistance to her.

QUESTION: Just one quick –

QUESTION: Like, when you say – what does that mean, exactly? Have they

visited her? Have they set her up with a lawyer or whatever? And when you say “the embassy,” is it actually the embassy? Because remember, you moved the embassy to Jerusalem, you still have a big building in Tel Aviv, but Tel Aviv is immeasurably closer to the airport than – or to wherever she’s being held than Jerusalem is. So is it –

MR PALLADINO: It is the embassy.

QUESTION: So it is the embassy.

MR PALLADINO: It is the embassy.

QUESTION: It’s the consular people from Jerusalem or the –

MR PALLADINO: It’s the embassy.

QUESTION: From Jerusalem?

MR PALLADINO: Correct.

QUESTION: Okay. And have they seen her?

MR PALLADINO: Out of respect for Ms. Alqasem’s privacy, we’re not able to talk about particulars of her case, but we are providing consular assistance to her.

QUESTION: What does that mean?

MR PALLADINO: Consular assistance – I’ve seen media reports with statements from her attorney on this matter, and so that also goes to your question on whether or not she’s represented by counsel.

QUESTION: Are you concerned about her detention?

MR PALLADINO: As a general principle, we value freedom of expression, even in cases where we don’t agree with the political views expressed, and this is such a case. Our strong opposition to boycotts and sanctions of the state of Israel is well known and, as Heather said yesterday, Israel is a sovereign nation that can determine who enters.

QUESTION: Robert, sorry, that doesn’t answer the question if you’re concerned about her situation.

MR PALLADINO: I have nothing further on this at this point.

Yeah, please. Hi.

QUESTION: I’m sorry to go backward. Just one point of clarification: Can you say whether or not the Secretary also spoke with the crown prince yesterday, or was that today? You said it was a follow-up call.

MR PALLADINO: That –

QUESTION: And also was the conversation between Kushner and Bolton a

joint conversation with the crown prince?

MR PALLADINO: I don't have the full details on the White House call other than what I provided. I'd have to refer you to the White House for clarification there. As far as at what time that call took place, I don't have that detail and I wouldn't want to misspeak, but I can say that it took place after the ambassador and the national security advisor and Mr. Kushner's call.

QUESTION: And just one follow-up, if I may.

MR PALLADINO: Yeah.

QUESTION: My colleague had asked this and I wasn't sure if you had answered: Has the U.S. seen any of the audio or video that the Turkish Government claims to have regarding the killing of –

MR PALLADINO: We are waiting for the results of the official investigation, and that's what we have at this point.

QUESTION: Robert –

MR PALLADINO: We would like to see a full and transparent and forthright resolution of this.

Yeah.

QUESTION: Just one quick one, Rob. I notice that Zal Khalilzad, the envoy for Afghanistan, is going to be making a trip to Saudi this week, or maybe even today, I'm not sure, but – I know this isn't necessarily in his official lane, but will he be meeting with any Saudi officials on this particular instance or will he be raising it in his meetings on –

MR PALLADINO: The purpose of Ambassador Khalilzad –

QUESTION: I know what the purpose is.

MR PALLADINO: You know what the purpose is.

QUESTION: I know what the purpose is, but –

MR PALLADINO: And that's the purpose for his meetings as well, okay? So that's – it would be limited to his mandate.

QUESTION: So that means no?

MR PALLADINO: It means no. Okay, thank you. Yes, please.

QUESTION: Thank you, quick questions. Do you know why the Ambassador Nikki Haley resigned? Do you have any idea why she –

QUESTION: Yes. (Laughter.)

MR PALLADINO: She spoke about this yesterday from the White House. I am

– I would refer you to Ambassador Haley’s remarks, and I – yeah.

QUESTION: I know, but what is the reason why she resigned so quickly, though?

MR PALLADINO: I would have to refer you to the U.S. mission at the United Nations.

QUESTION: Does she have a new job somewhere?

MR PALLADINO: Of course she has a very good job, all right?

QUESTION: Oh.

MR PALLADINO: And – no, we wish her well. We’ve – the Secretary since his arrival has worked closely with Ambassador Haley, and Heather spoke a little bit about that yesterday. We were – we will miss her and we will – we work very closely with her staff, I would say.

QUESTION: Yeah.

MR PALLADINO: Yeah.

QUESTION: North Korea?

MR PALLADINO: Sure.

QUESTION: On climate change?

QUESTION: North Korea.

MR PALLADINO: Let’s go to North Korea, okay?

QUESTION: Yeah. (Laughter.)

QUESTION: Yeah.

QUESTION: So –

QUESTION: You guys are so quick to follow up.

MR PALLADINO: Sure, North Korea.

QUESTION: All right.

MR PALLADINO: I’ve heard of this –

QUESTION: It’s a much easier subject.

MR PALLADINO: Okay. (Laughter.)

QUESTION: So Heather talked a little bit about Secretary Pompeo. He met with the North Koreans to plan the next summit and there was also talk of working-level talks with Steve Biegun. Do we have any idea of a timeline for when Steve Biegun is going to meet for more working-level

talks with him?

MR PALLADINO: No trip announcements to make at this time, but that's something that we're looking at right now, yeah.

QUESTION: Do we have any, like, soon, farther?

MR PALLADINO: Hopefully soon. Hopefully soon. We'd like to – yeah, we'd like to continue progress moving forward. Any more on North Korea?

QUESTION: Yeah.

MR PALLADINO: Okay. Let's go –

QUESTION: Soon? Soon means – soon means how soon? Before the election or after the election? That's what we want to know, timeline.

MR PALLADINO: Yeah. We have no trip announcements at this time to make, really, and so we'll keep working at that.

QUESTION: For Washington or Pyongyang?

MR PALLADINO: For the special representative, Steve Biegun are we talking now? We –

QUESTION: I mean –

MR PALLADINO: Yesterday the President spoke about this subject and he said –

QUESTION: Mar-a-Lago?

MR PALLADINO: He said specifically that after – after the midterm elections, so we'll continue working towards that. Part of the most recent trip to was basically to come up with working level teams for both sides that could continue to work together and push this forward. That's what Special Representative Biegun is leading, and part of that focus definitely will be on a second summit between the two leaders.

QUESTION: All right, thank you.

QUESTION: North Korea?

MR PALLADINO: All right. North Korea, please.

QUESTION: Thank you. Yesterday, Russian foreign ministry said that they actually proposed five-way talks, including Russia and China, United States, South Korea, and North Korea. Is that a formula you would support to ease the tension in North Korea?

MR PALLADINO: Well, we noted the statement out of Moscow, and I would just say that we look forward to working with Russia, China, and North Korea to achieve, as quickly as possible, the final, fully verified denuclearization of North Korea. The most recent trip to Pyongyang, we

really – there was forward progress and we'd like to continue to see that move forward. We welcome the steps that North Korea's taken, and I would just add that the – President Trump has been very clear from the beginning that sanctions relief will follow denuclearization. And sooner we get to that point, the sooner the United States will think about lifting sanctions.

QUESTION: So you are rejecting their proposal? They called for adjusted UN sanctions ahead of denuclearization, so I guess you are saying no?

MR PALLADINO: Well, I mean, Secretary Pompeo's spoken about this before. The Russian and Chinese – for example, up at – during the general assembly, had some ideas about how we might begin to think about reducing sanctions. But in general, got to point out that they were all supportive of maintaining the United Nations Security Council resolutions and sanctions that underlay them.

The United States position continues that – it's the pressure campaign and the underlying sanctions that the world came together to impose that has gotten us to this point and will continue to be the foundation for what we earnestly hope is a brighter future for North Korea. And we are going to – the Singapore summit was such a strong first start. We're making progress and we look forward to taking further steps in that regard.

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

QUESTION: Two quick ones that we didn't get to before. Have the Saudis been helpful or unhelpful thus far in the investigation, given the difficulty that the Turks have had getting in there and searching?

MR PALLADINO: I'm not going to characterize private diplomatic conversations other than to reiterate what the – than what we've said. We continue to call for a transparent and conclusive investigation. We'd like to see how the results of this –

QUESTION: But have they given – there have been so many conversations at this point. Have the Saudis given you any indication that they will conduct a transparent investigation and be forthcoming?

MR PALLADINO: We're having – we continue to speak with both Saudi Arabia and Turkey at the highest levels, and we're going to continue to call for that. All right, let's go over here, and we're –

QUESTION: Thank you.

QUESTION: State Department characterizes that we are – U.S. is with lockstep with South Korea and Japan. But the South Korean foreign minister confirmed that Pompeo was discontent and complained about the inter-Korean military pact in his last inter-Korean summit. What is your reaction to that? Was he discontent and complained about it, or does that mean South Korea's going ahead of –

MR PALLADINO: We talk to the South Koreans I would say almost every day, and we are closely coordinated – coordinating with our Republic of Korea ally. I – we’re able to speak about a lot of things together and that’s because we really share the same objective here. And I haven’t seen that report, but all I would say is please, we are – we’re really working closely with the Republic of Korea.

QUESTION: No, but I mean, it doesn’t really answer the question of – as to whether the U.S. feels that the South Koreans are not necessarily in lockstep, that there is a perception, isn’t there, on the administration that the South Koreans are leaning too forward with the North Koreans right now as you’re moving in this process?

MR PALLADINO: We’re really closely coordinating with them. We are – we’re quite –

QUESTION: That doesn’t mean you agree on everything.

MR PALLADINO: We’re – many times across the spectrum, our closest friends, we’re able to work through these things because we’re able to speak frankly with one another. I would say that the conversations that are going on not only with Japan and South Korea, these are closely coordinated regularly at all levels of our government. They’re happening constantly.

All right. Last question. I thank –

QUESTION: Can I have a (inaudible).

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

QUESTION: Wait a second. How are you going to – are you going to answer the –

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

MR PALLADINO: We got Conor – all right, we’re going to – Conor.

QUESTION: – answer Conor’s climate change question?

QUESTION: Thank you, Matt.

MR PALLADINO: Conor, climate change.

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

QUESTION: Apparently this is the only building in town –

MR PALLADINO: Conor.

QUESTION: – where climate change will be raised. (Laughter.)

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

MR PALLADINO: Conor, what is – what is – tell me about this question, Conor.

QUESTION: Thank you. I was interrupted.

QUESTION: On the IPCC's report that was released on Monday –

MR PALLADINO: Yes.

QUESTION: – obviously a very dire warning that there needs to be urgent action before there is irreversible changes to the climate. Do you, does the United States Government agree with that finding, and if so, what are you doing about it?

MR PALLADINO: I would say that we appreciate the hard work that the scientists and experts, many of whom were Americans, put into developing that report. And I would also say – point out – point out what it is for what it is: the Intergovernment Panel on Climate Change under their own procedures, that – that report that they produced and its contents – that remains the responsibility of its authors. Governments do not formally endorse specific findings presented by the authors.

But as to your underlying question, as we noted in the statement – the United States Government's statement about that, there are inherent limitations of trying to assess projected impacts and costs of warming at a specific temperature and time period.

QUESTION: It's what? You know that there's a hurricane that is smashing into the Florida panhandle right now that a lot of people say were – was exacerbated by climate change? The ice is – Arctic ice is melting, Antarctic ice is melting at record paces and you're not sure?

MR PALLADINO: There are –

QUESTION: If this was two years ago, I think we would have had a vastly different answer. How is this not denial of climate change if you can't accept the report that – like this?

MR PALLADINO: Our policy –

QUESTION: Do you think it's not true?

MR PALLADINO: We are leading the world in affordable, abundant and secure energy, while at the same time we protect the environment and are reducing emissions through job-creating innovations. This is the U.S. policy. And we're doing good on this regard. Carbon emissions have fallen. From 2005 to 2017, they declined by 14 percent, while global energy-related carbon emissions rose during that time. And this has been possible because of American innovation and through the development and large-scale deployment of new, affordable and cleaner technologies to capitalize on America's –

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

MR PALLADINO: – energy abundance. Yes.

QUESTION: It's also been possible because of the previous administration's policies, many of which are now being rolled back by this administration: the Clean Power Plant, limitations on methane, waste, things that you are now actively redoing and getting rid of. Doesn't that then hurt those same standards that you're now praising?

MR PALLADINO: We are a leader, the United States is a leader in energy technology and innovation, and because of that we have seen drastic reductions in carbon emissions so they're now at their lowest level since – they've been since 1992. Our policy is such that we are unleashing the capabilities through this innovation and we believe that that's the way that the United States can help contribute to this problem.

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

QUESTION: Part of the report is that even if the policies of this administration are undertaken don't exacerbate the problem or don't take away from the progress that has already been made, that whatever is being done isn't enough and that there has to be radical change now, or in 20 to 40 years, it's too late. So do you – does the administration accept or not accept that?

MR PALLADINO: The United States is at the forefront of reducing its carbon emissions and we're doing – been able to do that thanks to these new, affordable, cleaner technologies that are capitalizing on our energy abundance. That's – and that's the direction that we're moving in.

QUESTION: Venezuela?

QUESTION: I want to go Venezuela. Senator –

MR PALLADINO: The last one, let's – we'll stop at Venezuela, please.

QUESTION: Senator Corker went to Caracas to talk to Maduro. Was that trip taken – was – did it come with the blessing of the Secretary? And Corker's also said he's going to talk to the Secretary about that trip. Has he spoken to him?

MR PALLADINO: I don't have any information on that. I would have to take that question and get back to you, Lesley, and I'm sorry.

QUESTION: Okay.

MR PALLADINO: Guys, thank you for my first day. (Applause.) There shall be more.

(The briefing was concluded at 2:19 p.m.)

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