

Press Releases: Department Press Briefing – October 31, 2018

Robert Palladino
Deputy Spokesperson

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TRANSCRIPT:

Today's briefing was held off-camera, so no video is available.

2:22 p.m. EDT

MR PALLADINO: A couple things for the top. Pleased to announce that Ambassador John Cotton Richmond, the department's new Ambassador-at-Large to Monitor – to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, started on Monday. Ambassador Richmond previously served as a federal prosecutor in the United States Department of Justice's Human Trafficking Prosecution Unit; as an expert on human trafficking for the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; and as a field office director at the International Justice Mission in Chennai, India. Most recently, Ambassador Richmond was co-founding director of the Human Trafficking

institute, a non-governmental organization that works to improve criminal justice systems around the world and empower police and prosecutors to combat human trafficking.

The United States Department of State leads the United States global engagement to combat human trafficking and supports the coordination of anti-trafficking efforts across the United States Government. And just two weeks ago, Secretary Pompeo chaired the President's Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons at the White House. At that meeting, Secretary Pompeo announced the creation of the Human Trafficking Expert Consultant Network, which will allow us to meaningfully incorporate survivor input into the department's anti-trafficking work. He also announced a second 25 million award under the program to end modern slavery, which seeks to achieve a measurable reduction of modern slavery in specific countries or regions. This funding will continue this important work. And so we welcome Ambassador Richmond to the Department of State.

Secondly, The United States confirms the death of an American citizen near the town of Bambui, in the Mezam Division of Cameroon's Northwest Region, on October 30th. We extend our deepest condolences to the family and friends of the deceased, and the department is providing all possible consular services. This tragedy occurred in the midst of the Anglophone crisis that affects the Northwest and Southwest Regions of Cameroon. Both the separatist fighters and government security forces have used violence against innocent civilians. We call on both sides to view the tragic death of this American citizen as an opportunity to put an immediate stop to violence and to allow unhindered access for humanitarian aid workers and healthcare providers in the Northwest and Southwest Regions. We urge all sides to undertake an immediate and broad-based dialogue without preconditions to restore peace and resolve grievances.

With that, I'd be happy to take some questions.

QUESTION: Just on that to start with briefly. Do you have any indication that the – there are some reports indicating the family believes that he was – this person was targeted intentionally, and there are other reports that it may have been the government that was responsible for – government forces that were responsible for killing him. Can you shed any light on either of those two?

MR PALLADINO: We've – sure. Thanks, Matt. We've been in touch with senior Cameroonian officials, government security officials, and we believe the victim was caught in crossfire.

QUESTION: So not intentionally?

MR PALLADINO: Correct, correct. And Cameroonian officials have assured us that a full investigation has been opened and that the results would be shared with us.

QUESTION: Okay. If no one has anything else –

MR PALLADINO: Any other?

QUESTION: – I want to ask about yesterday's statements on Yemen, and then to – from both Secretary Pompeo and Secretary Mattis. And then I'm a little bit curious why he did two interviews this morning and he didn't mention Yemen at all, after what appeared to be such a concerted combination one-two punch, shall we say, delivered by the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of State yesterday. Why? What's going on here?

MR PALLADINO: Well, as you point out, the Secretary did issue a statement last night about ending the conflict in Yemen. And the statement goes through in detail some of the sequencing that we expect, and we're calling for an immediate cessation of hostilities. We're calling that the Houthis must cease missile and UAV strikes into Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates immediately. And as soon as this happens, the Saudi-led coalition must cease airstrikes in all populated areas.

As far as the political process goes, we are calling on all parties to support the United Nations Special Envoy Martin Griffiths in finding a peaceful solution to the conflict based upon the agreed references, and that's the national dialogue, the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2216, and the Gulf and the GCC initiative as well.

Now, as far as the Secretary's interviews this morning, I listened to them and he was responding to questions asked by the interviewers, so I would say –

QUESTION: Well, it was a function of the questions he was asked not the function of this having dropped off or dropped lower down on his radar screen in the past 12 hours.

MR PALLADINO: This is incredibly important to the United States Government and to the Secretary of State, absolutely.

QUESTION: And then just one more thing and I'll stop. When you say that as soon as the Houthis stop their missile strikes then the coalition should stop its airstrikes in populated areas, does that mean, one, that while airstrikes continue you're okay with them continuing to bomb populated areas in which there have been – it's been well documented that these have caused major numbers of civilian casualties? And then two, even if that's not the case, does it mean then that after the – if and when the Houthis stop, that you're okay with the coalition bombing quote/unquote "unpopulated areas" and continuing this, because – and how do you define a populated area? Is that just places where – a place where people have a residence?

MR PALLADINO: What we're calling for is an immediate cessation of hostilities. We want to see the parties engaging in the United Nations special envoy's consultations in good faith, and we believe that the

cessation of hostilities will provide the best basis for that. And as far as the specific conditions go, the – that's something for the United Nations special envoy to speak to and I don't want to get ahead of what he's able to do during his November consultations.

QUESTION: Well, fair enough. But you didn't answer either of my questions. Are you okay with the Saudis continuing to bomb populated areas of Yemen if the Houthis have not stopped all their missile strikes?

MR PALLADINO: We are – our goal here has been consistent for some time, and that is specifically to work with international partners, our international partners, to bring peace, prosperity, and security to Yemen. And we have been consistently and continuously urging all sides to work towards a political settlement that ends the conflict in this dire humanitarian situation. We've always said that an enduring solution will only come through a comprehensive political agreement, and that's going to require compromise. We've also always supported comprehensive peace negotiations under the auspices of the United Nations, and we've supported the United Nations special envoy's efforts to restart talks of those parties.

Now, as far as the timing goes, the United Nations special envoy has continued to make progress in laying the groundwork for these peace negotiations, and I would point to last week. Based upon our meetings here at the State Department – well, with the Deputy Secretary of State, his meeting with him last week, we believe that the climate is right for both sides to come to the table. And what the United States is reiterating and trying to state clearly at this time is our support for a cessation of hostilities and the UN special envoy is important, and this cessation and a vigorous resumption of political talks, that's what's going to help us end this humanitarian crisis.

So our message is end the conflict, replace the conflict with compromise, and allow the Yemeni people to heal through peace and reconstruction.

QUESTION: I'll let it go, but can you just acknowledge that you're not answering my question? (Laughter.)

MR PALLADINO: We've been – we have called for cessation of hostilities –

QUESTION: (Inaudible) yes or no.

MR PALLADINO: – for a long time now.

QUESTION: (Inaudible.) Move on.

MR PALLADINO: Excellent.

QUESTION: Can I just follow up on this very point?

MR PALLADINO: Yes, Said.

QUESTION: You're saying that, first of all, cessation of bombing in populated areas which you allude to, which means that they will continue selective bombing. But second, forces on the ground can't remain exactly where they are? Is that what you're saying?

MR PALLADINO: What I would say is we continue to support the right of Saudi Arabia and our Emirati partners to defend their borders. And as far as – I don't want to get ahead of consultations that are led by the UN special envoy's agenda. But I would understand that his consultations would include topics such as implementing confidence-building measures to address the underlying issues of the conflict, demilitarization of the borders, and concentration of all large weapons under international observation.

QUESTION: Can I follow up on that (inaudible)?

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

MR PALLADINO: Okay, let's try – let's go right here. Sure, go ahead.

QUESTION: Your critics would say that the U.S. could stop this war almost immediately by pulling support, military support for the coalition. If you are interested in ending the war, why not do that?

MR PALLADINO: The timing right now, we've come – we've seen progress being made on the ground, and we continue to make progress on laying the groundwork for peace negotiations. We – the deputy secretary of state's meeting last week has brought this fresh to the fore, and the climate is right. We've come to the assessment that the climate is right at this time to move forward.

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

QUESTION: (Inaudible) right now versus –

MR PALLADINO: I'm not going to be able to go into detail on the – on private conversations. This – let's go right over here, please.

QUESTION: Thank you very much.

MR PALLADINO: Go ahead.

QUESTION: On North Korea.

QUESTION: Can you stay on Yemen?

QUESTION: Oh, okay.

MR PALLADINO: All right. One more. One more. Let's go on Yemen. All right. All right.

QUESTION: To what extent do you think that the Khashoggi matter gives the U.S. more leverage in solving problems like this one?

MR PALLADINO: The two are unrelated. Over here, Michelle. Go ahead.

QUESTION: Wait a minute, wait a minute. Can I follow up on that, please?

QUESTION: Can you say what the consequences there will be? You're calling for a 30-day ceasefire, but if that doesn't come through, if the Saudis don't support that, what are the consequences? What does the U.S. plan to do? Has there been any threat given?

MR PALLADINO: We're going to focus on what's right immediately in front of us. We're not going to get into hypotheticals. We've made our call clear. We've made clear what we're urging all sides to do and we're going to support the United Nations.

Last one on Yemen. Right there. Go.

QUESTION: Can I just follow up on that, the question about Khashoggi? I understand you said that they're unrelated, but this is not the first concern you've had about Saudi Arabia and this government. And so to what extent is this incident, the coverup, the way the Saudis have dealt with it, part of a larger conversation going forward about the actions of this government and the need for the U.S. and Saudi Arabia to move forward working collaboratively in a new spirit?

MR PALLADINO: We've – the Secretary spoke about what we expect related to the Khashoggi investigation this morning again, and we – and that hasn't changed. We will hold those responsible for the killing of Jamal Khashoggi. We'll hold them responsible, and we want all the evidence, we want to get all the facts first, before we make a determination on what our response to that is going to be.

QUESTION: It's not in a vacuum, though, in terms of some of the larger concerns that you've had about the adventurism, some might say, of the government, of their actions in Yemen, of their actions vis-a-vis Qatar. I mean, this is part of a larger concern, isn't it, that you've had with this government?

MR PALLADINO: I would say that our call for a cessation of hostilities is something that we've been doing for some time right now in Yemen. This is consistent, and we are raising it again now at this time because the time is right. We've been calling for this throughout the conflict, the cessation of hostilities, and now is the time for both sides to come to the table.

QUESTION: And you don't feel like – just one more on this – and you don't feel right now that the kind of Saudi desire to not placate, but smooth over relations with the United States in the wake of this incident gives you a little bit more of an opportunity, a open door, an open ear if you will for them to hear these concerns about Yemen, Qatar, or other things?

MR PALLADINO: They're unrelated. Let's go to North Korea. Right here, please.

QUESTION: Thank you very much. On North Korean human rights issues, there is 120,000 North Korean religious peoples and the people of North Korea are now in political prison camp in North Korea. How will the United States resolve the North Korean human right abuse? Do you have any agenda for further religious freedoms from North Korea?

MR PALLADINO: Look, the United States has been pretty forthright on North Korea's human rights record. It's something that we document annually, it's something that we have raised consistently. The President has highlighted it repeatedly both from the Oval Office to the State of the Union address. We have been consistent on the human rights situation in North Korea. Right now, we're very focused on achieving the final, fully verified denuclearization of North Korea, and that is something that the United States Government hopes to push forward and to satisfy the agreement that was made at the Singapore summit between Chairman Kim and President Trump. And so we're going to continue pushing forward on that, and that will allow further vehicles for the United States to engage on all kinds of issues as we're able to go forward.

QUESTION: North Korea?

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

MR PALLADINO: More on North Korea?

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

MR PALLADINO: Let's go to North Korea. One more on North Korea right there, sure.

QUESTION: Just – it's been brought up before and it's brought up to the Secretary. You said the final verified denuclearization, but you dropped the "irreversible." Is that intentional?

MR PALLADINO: Final, fully verified. That's about – that's everything as far as I can –

QUESTION: Because before, the State Department was saying "irreversible," and recently the "irreversible" has been dropped. Is it –

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

MR PALLADINO: I really don't have the order of adjectives. I've got nothing further on our order of adjectives right now.

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

MR PALLADINO: We got a little more on North Korea?

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

MR PALLADINO: Let's stick right here in the front. North Korea.

QUESTION: The Secretary mentioned that he's meeting with his North Korean counterpart again in an interview today. Do you have any more details on that? That's the second time I believe he's been on the record mentioning this.

MR PALLADINO: I think what the Secretary said, he would be speaking to his North Korean counterpart.

QUESTION: So there is no meeting?

MR PALLADINO: I have nothing – no further details to provide about how that speaking to his counterpart will take place, where, when, et cetera. I have nothing further at this time.

QUESTION: (Inaudible) smoke signals?

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

MR PALLADINO: I will support smoke signals, Matt. Okay?

QUESTION: What is the Secretary – what's the Secretary doing today? Where is he? Is he in town?

MR PALLADINO: I would refer you to his public schedule. I have nothing further beyond his public schedule, right –

QUESTION: Robert, in the interview, in the – I think the same interview you were just mentioning, he said something about the North Koreans having agreed to inspections at two separate sites. One of those is the nuclear site. Do you happen to know what the other one is?

MR PALLADINO: I don't. I don't have that in front of me. But that – but I mean, inspections for final, fully verified denuclearization, "verified" and "inspections" go hand in hand. This was something that was raised on the Secretary of State's trip to Pyongyang recently and the modalities and the composition of these inspections is something that they'll be discussing going forward. Yeah.

QUESTION: Okay. The other thing is that in response to the question on human rights, you said the administration's focus now is on the denuclearization, whatever words you want to put in front of "denuclearization," and that once that – you get that, that will allow further vehicles to engage the North Koreans on other subjects. How is that any different than what the Obama administration said it did with Iran? I mean, it seems to me that that was exactly their argument for why they were only focused on the nuclear question in the negotiations with Iran because once they got that, that would open up, to use your words, other vehicles so they could address human rights, they could address missiles, they could address the malign activity. Now, this administration, after criticizing the previous one for doing that, you're adopting – you seem to be adopting the exact same approach with North Korea. So how is it different?

MR PALLADINO: Iran's malign influence has expanded credibly since that deal was enacted under the previous administration

QUESTION: Well, how do you know that the North Koreans won't do the same thing?

MR PALLADINO: We have an opportunity with North Korea to – we've made more progress in this administration on moving towards peace than previously has been made. This is really a new opportunity. Nuclear testing has stopped, the ballistic missile tests have stopped. We are – our Americans have been returned home, and we are making progress on this front. We believe that there is a brighter future for the North Korean people and we're going to continue pushing forward on this. Anything more on North Korea?

QUESTION: Do you have anything to say about the no-fly zone over the DMZ agreed to between North and South Korea going into effect?

MR PALLADINO: I – we're in close coordination with our Republic of Korea ally.

QUESTION: Well, yeah, but –

MR PALLADINO: We continue this coordination –

QUESTION: But the U.S. was opposed to the no-fly zone in the past. Do you have anything to say now that it's going into effect?

MR PALLADINO: We are maintaining very close coordination with our Republic of Korea ally as well as our Japanese ally. We are coordinating on a daily basis. Our special representative, Steve Biegun, was just in Seoul over the last week and as I mentioned yesterday, we're going to be further strengthening the coordination that's happening between our two governments as we move forward. Change the subject. All right, Said. Go ahead.

QUESTION: Yeah, very quickly. Yesterday the secretary general of the PLO, Saeb Erekat, accused Israel of plotting to separate Gaza from the whole Palestinian issue with your help. Are you committed to the unity of the Palestinian issue, Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem, as you were in the past?

MR PALLADINO: I would quote our Special Representative for International Negotiations Jason Greenblatt on this subject. He's been quite clear, and what he's said is that Gaza and the West Bank have been separated for 10 years, not only physically but politically, between the Palestinian Authority and Hamas, and it's absurd to deny that reality. In contrast, our peace plan intends to bring them together. Make no mistake, we are in this to help all Palestinians in both the West Bank and Gaza. The type of disinformation being spread by some parties who have not even seen the plan yet wish to be spoilers and does nothing to benefit ordinary Palestinian lives.

QUESTION: So independent of, let's say, the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and Hamas in Gaza, you believe that the Palestinian issue ought to be resolved as one issue?

MR PALLADINO: We have made it clear that the final boundaries of Israeli sovereignty and Jerusalem remains to be decided through negotiations.

QUESTION: Robert, no one's seen the plan. Have you? No one's seen it, so in the absence of people not seeing something that the administration keeps saying is wonderful and great and is going to be the deal of the century, but there is no there there, I mean, how do – what are people supposed to – how are people supposed to understand or accept your explanation that these – this misinformation is not true if there's no way to prove that it's misinformation?

MR PALLADINO: Well, decrying a peace plan that has not yet been seen does nothing to advance the cause of peace or to lead the Palestinian people to a better future.

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

MR PALLADINO: And when – we will – what we will – we will release the plan at the appropriate time and we hope that people will judge it on its merits.

QUESTION: So promoting a plan that no one has seen before doesn't do the same thing?

MR PALLADINO: We – let's, at the appropriate time, let the people judge it on its merits.

QUESTION: Different topic?

QUESTION: Russia?

QUESTION: North Korea.

MR PALLADINO: Different – okay, let's go to Shaun. I'm going to go to Shaun in the front, AFP.

QUESTION: Pakistan. Pakistan.

MR PALLADINO: Pakistan. Okay.

QUESTION: A Pakistani – the supreme court rescinded the blasphemy verdict against Asia Bibi. I know that's been something that in the past has concerned the United States. Do you have any reaction to this decision? To what extent was the U.S. in contact in – ahead of this decision?

MR PALLADINO: We're aware of the decision and we've been following the case closely, as you point out and say.

QUESTION: Do you have any comment on the decision itself?

MR PALLADINO: I would just say as a general principle – I mean, we’ve spoken about the case previously in our International Religious Freedom Report, and so we – the United States Government has spoken about the case previously. As a general principle, we’ve been clear that religious freedom is a universal, God-given right to which all people are entitled. Secretary Pompeo has said as much many times.

Please.

QUESTION: Iran. Iran.

MR PALLADINO: Same – we off of Pakistan?

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

QUESTION: Khashoggi.

QUESTION: Russia.

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

MR PALLADINO: Russia. Let’s go to Russia. Russia.

QUESTION: Well, the U.S. is now quitting the treaty, and Russia is asking question: When will U.S. agree to revive the strategic dialogue? So as far as we know, such questions were asked since June, when Andrea Thompson came to the office. So – and since that, Russia has not any reply. So when do you think will it be – it will be possible to come back to the dialogue?

MR PALLADINO: Yeah, I don’t have anything for you on that today from the podium.

Let’s go – Laurie. Let’s go to Laurie.

QUESTION: Yesterday, Turkey’s president again threatened Syria’s Kurds, and it has begun shelling Kurdish cities. In turn, the Syrian Democratic Forces led by the Kurds have announced today a temporary halt in their offensive against ISIS. What is your comment on this situation?

MR PALLADINO: Unilateral military strikes into northwest Syria by any party, particularly as American personnel may be present or in the vicinity, are of great concern to us. Coordination and consultation between the United States and Turkey on issues of security concern is a better approach. We have been in touch with Turkey and the Syria defense forces to emphasize the need to de-escalate the situation. Turkey is a NATO ally and a key partner in the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, and we are fully committed to our ally’s border security.

QUESTION: And Erdogan also accused you of supporting, quote, “all terrorist organizations indiscriminately,” end quote, including ISIS.

What's your response to that?

MR PALLADINO: We – coordination and consultation with our Turkish ally on issues of security is the better approach. We have seen such cooperation with our – with Turkey in – with our Manbij roadmap, for example, and that's an example of our full commitment. It's on schedule. It's something that Secretary Pompeo and the foreign minister of Turkey agreed to. You can see American and Turkish forces actively training side by side. That's a critical mission, and we're confident that that kind of cooperation is what is needed here.

Now, ISIS – that campaign is not over and that fight remains difficult. And our Department of Defense colleagues are working closely with the Syrian defense forces who are in the midst of an offensive operations against ISIS and we're still committed to the Syria defense forces.

QUESTION: Robert, the Russian military said that the coalition – as a result of the coalition airstrikes in eastern Syria, 120 civilians were killed last month alone. Are you keeping – how do you track casualties and so on on the ground in the areas where the coalition is targeting ISIS?

MR PALLADINO: I saw that report in RT, I believe, right?

QUESTION: Yes.

MR PALLADINO: Okay. We – I would say first off, of course we deeply regret any civilian casualties that are a consequence of coalition operations in Syria. Secondly, I would say we defer to the Department of Defense on the matter of the airstrikes that you mentioned. And I would finally say that we have not seen any information to suggest that such claims are accurate and anything more than additional Russian propaganda.

QUESTION: On the (inaudible) in Syria –

QUESTION: Speaking of Russian propaganda –

MR PALLADINO: Let's go over here. Michelle, fine, go.

QUESTION: So you opened yesterday talking about the Global Engagement Center and a move of putting \$40 million in towards countering disinformation from Russia, Iran. I wonder, given that, if you had any comment from this building on the segment put out by Radio Marti, the U.S. taxpayer-funded station, which appeared to involve some disinformation about George Soros.

MR PALLADINO: Give me a second here. I would refer to the CEO's statement on that, CEO's statement from the Office on Cuba Broadcasting, and I would refer to them. But I would point out that the CEO said that those deemed responsible for this production will be immediately placed on administrative leave pending an investigation into their apparent misconduct and that TV Marti has directed an immediate, full-content

audit to identify any patterns of unethical reporting at the network. And anything further than that, I would refer you to the United States Agency for Global Media.

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

QUESTION: Two Saudi questions?

MR PALLADINO: Let's go right here. Nike, go.

QUESTION: Thank you. Can we stay in Asia? In Tibet, do you have anything on this sad news about the pass away of Lodi Gyari Rinpoche, who used to be the special envoy of His Holiness Dalai Lama in Washington, D.C., and he pass away on Monday.

MR PALLADINO: I'm sorry. I just don't have anything on that today, but we could take that question and we could get back to you. I'm sorry, I haven't seen that report.

QUESTION: What is the message we should be reading given there has not been a special – has not been a Tibet special coordinator at State Department under this administration?

MR PALLADINO: The – we are well served by our Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, as well as our International Freedom Office here at the State Department. That's not to say that this position is not something that we want to see supported as soon as possible as well.

QUESTION: There has not been a dialogue between the Chinese Government and the Tibetan exile government. Would the United States support the resumption of a dialogue? You can answer in Mandarin if you wish.

MR PALLADINO: (Speaks in Mandarin.) I'll take your question, though, and we'll get you a proper answer, okay, Nike? Thanks. Let's go.

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

QUESTION: On Iran.

MR PALLADINO: Iran, back to Iran, all right. Who's got Iran? Who's – where's Iran?

QUESTION: It's next to –

MR PALLADINO: Yeah, help me out, Matt, good.

QUESTION: It's between Iraq and Afghanistan.

MR PALLADINO: Excellent, excellent.

QUESTION: He had to think about it for a second.

QUESTION: Well, I was – yeah.

MR PALLADINO: Do we have a question on Iran?

QUESTION: Saudi?

QUESTION: Robert –

MR PALLADINO: A question on Iran?

QUESTION: We have some Saudi questions.

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

MR PALLADINO: Let's stick with Iran. Let's go with Iran. Go ahead. Go ahead with Iran, please.

QUESTION: Thank you. The second round of sanctions are going into effect on Sunday. Which sanctions will be going into effect and which specific industries will they target? And then second, has Secretary Pompeo discussed with Secretary Mnuchin sanctioning Iran's access to SWIFT?

MR PALLADINO: Okay, I'll start with the second question, and the questions on SWIFT I would refer to the Department of Treasury and I'm not going to be able to go into dialogue between the two secretaries at this point. But on November 5th, 12:01, as you point out, sanctions that were lifted under the Iran nuclear deal will come back into full effect. And the sanctions that are reimposed on November 5th will target critical sectors of Iran's economy, such as energy, shipping and the ship-building sectors, as well as the provision of insurance and transactions involving the Central Bank of Iran and designated Iranian financial institutions.

Now, the Iranian regime is the world's leading state sponsor of terror, and these sanctions are meant to cut off revenues that the Iranian regime uses to conduct terrorism and fund terrorist groups around the world, and that includes Lebanese Hizballah, Hamas, Kata'ib Hizballah and the Taliban. These groups foment global instability, they use these funds to support their nuclear and ballistic missile programs, and these funds are used to line corrupt Iranian leaders' pockets rather than help the Iranian people, who are the longest-suffering victims. I'll stop there.

QUESTION: And just a quick follow-up. Will there be a third round of U.S. sanctions on – or will all sanctions that have been lifted under the JCPOA have been reimposed by November 5th?

MR PALLADINO: I have nothing – I can't forecast anything beyond that at this time.

QUESTION: Are you – are you going to do more sanctions on Russia in November or not?

MR PALLADINO: On Russia sanctions – I have this – the Chemical and Biological Weapons Act mandates that the State Department certify to the

Congress whether Russia has met conditions required by the law three months after the initial determination of the Skripal case. Now, that initial determination was made August 6th, and that takes us to November 6th, which is the certification deadline. So November 6th, that's the deadline by which the Department of State must certify to the Congress that Russia has met the conditions in the Chemical and Biological Weapons Act. The conditions that we would have to certify are that Russia has ceased and assured that it will not use chemical weapons again, and that it has allowed international inspectors to verify those assurances. So have they taken the steps to get back into compliance is the issue. And if we can't make such a certification, the State Department is required to impose a second round of sanctions after consultations with the Congress.

QUESTION: And what kind of sanctions it should be? Can you say this now or it's undecided?

MR PALLADINO: I can't – I cannot preview that today, no.

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

MR PALLADINO: Matt's got a Russia follow-up.

QUESTION: No, I just – you said November 6th and I just want to make sure that that's the – is that the correct day? Because the way I had calculated it, and maybe I'm wrong – fully willing to admit that – was November 8th. But –

MR PALLADINO: The 6th.

QUESTION: Okay.

MR PALLADINO: The 6th.

QUESTION: China?

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

QUESTION: Any sign of them meeting those conditions? Any sign of them allowing inspectors in?

MR PALLADINO: I'm not going to get ahead of that, (inaudible), get ahead of that at this time.

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

MR PALLADINO: Any Russia?

QUESTION: Khashoggi.

QUESTION: Iran.

MR PALLADINO: Khashoggi? Let's go to Turkey.

QUESTION: Russia, Russia.

MR PALLADINO: I'm sorry, to – Saudi Arabia. Go ahead. And Turkey. There we go.

QUESTION: Secretary Mattis said last night that so far, everything that the Turks have said about the case has turned out to be true. This morning, the Turkish prosecutor said that Mr. Khashoggi was brought to the consulate, strangled, his body was dismembered, and that the Saudis haven't been able to produce a body so far. Is that true? Is that your understanding?

MR PALLADINO: We've got to see where the facts ultimately fall. We're still in that. We are still calling for a full accounting of what's transpired. There's more that we want to learn first. And what we acquire will come from both the Turkish and Saudi investigations as well as what we are able to gather on our own.

QUESTION: So –

MR PALLADINO: And we will form – we will form an assessment and make determinations about future actions based upon this full accounting. We have – I'll stop there.

QUESTION: Do you see it as a problem that the Saudis won't extradite these people that they've already identified as being responsible or involved to Turkey?

MR PALLADINO: We are – we want all the facts first, and we are going to remain focused on getting a full accounting of what's transpired. The Secretary of State has spoken repeatedly to Saudi leadership – to the king –

QUESTION: Right, so –

MR PALLADINO: – to the crown prince, to the foreign minister. We have made clear the seriousness to which the United States attaches to what's transpired, the unacceptability of what's taken place, and at the same time we recognize the importance of protecting American interests as well.

This is the last question. Right there, please. Go.

QUESTION: About Brazil. Secretary Pompeo talked on Monday with the new president-elect in Brazil, Bolsonaro. They mentioned Venezuela, so I was curious if you could provide us some more detail about specifically what they talk about Venezuela, and what kind of partnership – could, like, the U.S. help with Brazil regarding this topic, Venezuela.

MR PALLADINO: I'm sorry, I don't have anything additional beyond the readout regarding the content of their discussion, but our policy on Venezuela has been pretty forthright, pretty clear, and a clear majority of countries in our hemisphere, we are united in support of the

Venezuelan people and their right to live in a democracy. And as far as Brazil goes, the President has called the president-elect, the Secretary of State has called him as well. And of course, the inauguration won't take place for a little bit, but we look forward to working with the new Brazilian Government. We've got a lot of common interests and shared things that we hope to accomplish together and with –

QUESTION: May I follow up on that?

QUESTION: A question on –

MR PALLADINO: Last one.

QUESTION: A follow-up on that.

MR PALLADINO: Go – just follow – go.

QUESTION: Would like the – would the U.S. like Brazil to have a more active role in Venezuela?

MR PALLADINO: I don't have anything further. Of course, we are looking for the – there's a lot of countries that are active with us, and it's a clear majority, and there's always more that we can do. We need to apply sustained pressure on the Maduro regime until it takes the actions that are necessary to return to democracy. The Venezuelan people are the ones that are suffering under what's transpired in Venezuela, and they desperately need access to humanitarian aid, and we call upon the Maduro regime to return to the 1999 constitution, to respect human rights and the authority of the democratically elected national assembly. We call on the Maduro regime to release all political prisoners and to permit entry of international assistance to provide for the urgent humanitarian needs of the long-suffering Venezuelan people.

Thank you all. Have a good night.

QUESTION: Can you take the – Robert, can you take the Sri Lanka question?

MR PALLADINO: Take the – okay, the –

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

MR PALLADINO: Okay, Sri Lanka. All right.

QUESTION: (Inaudible) update on the crisis in Sri Lanka.

MR PALLADINO: Okay.

QUESTION: There's no end to crisis, and they haven't listened to your calls on – immediately calling on the parliament to elect a –

MR PALLADINO: Okay, so thank you for the question. It is an important question, and I am happy to take a second day of Sri Lanka questions. As

you point out, this is an important issue. The United States for now, we're focused on the need for Sri Lanka to follow the necessary constitutional process to determine its leadership. So we – again, we call on the president in consultation with the speaker to reconvene parliament immediately and to allow the democratically elected representatives of the Sri Lankan people to fulfill their responsibility to affirm who will lead their government. And we urge all sides to uphold the law and to respect due process.

QUESTION: Has the new ambassador taken over there?

MR PALLADINO: The new ambassador arrived today and presents her credentials tomorrow. So yes, she's there.

QUESTION: So as of today, who do you recognize as the prime minister of Sri Lanka?

MR PALLADINO: The Sri Lankan constitution includes provisions on changes in the government and related authorities, and the implementation of those provisions is a matter for the elected representatives of the Sri Lankan people. It's up to the parliament to decide who the prime minister is. And that's it. Thank you.

QUESTION: Final question –

QUESTION: Thanks.

QUESTION: Thank you.

(The briefing was concluded at 3:08 p.m.)

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