

Press Releases: Press Availability at the United Nations

Press Availability
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Secretary of State

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SECRETARY POMPEO: Good afternoon, everyone. We had a productive Security Council meeting where the United States made clear that Iran's ballistic missile activity is out of control and that they are defying the UN Security Council 2231 in numerous ways.

Iran has been testing – on a testing spree and a proliferation spree and this must come to an end. We want to work with all members of the Security Council to reimpose tougher restrictions on the Iranian ballistic missiles. The restrictions that were in place under UNSCR 1929 are the place that the world needs to be today. This threat is real and upon us. We clearly see that the

JCPOA didn't succeed in stopping this malign activity. This Security Council has a responsibility to protect citizens in the Middle East, Americans traveling through the Middle East, Europeans who are now at risk from Iranian missiles, and we called upon every member of the Security Council to undertake actions that would achieve that.

With that, I'm happy to take a couple of questions.

MR PALLADINO: Let's start with CBS, Pam Falk.

QUESTION: Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary. It's Pamela Falk from CBS. Do you envision any additional sanctions on either Iran or on the European Union given the fact that the SPV, according to Iran's chief of staff of the president, is about to go into effect in two or three weeks, meaning avoiding U.S. sanctions given what you said today about the proliferation?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Sure. So I never get out in front of decisions that we make about sanctions. We have to evaluate the facts as they present themselves. But we've been unambiguous with respect to those things that are permissible and those that are not. Should it be the case that the Europeans develop an SPV, we'll look at it. There are humanitarian exemptions in the sanctions that have been put in place for foodstuffs and medicine. If the activity that is undertaken is consistent with that, we obviously won't emplace sanctions. But to the extent that there are violations of our sanctions, we intend to enforce them with great rigor against any party who is a participant in those violations.

MR PALLADINO: (Inaudible) BBC.

QUESTION: Right here. Right here. Thank you, Secretary. BBC. Good afternoon.

SECRETARY POMPEO: (Off-mike.)

QUESTION: Secretary, you heard your European allies expressing their continued support for JCPOA. You also – even the French ambassador talking about how pressure and sanctions might not change a dynamic much alone. If you're here exactly where we are one year from now, another 2231 meeting where your sanctions haven't changed the behavior of the Iranian regime, they are still adhering to the deal, and their missile activity or regional activity is (inaudible) less as where we are, what is next? I ask that because Mr. Hook standing here just two weeks ago talked about military option, and many of your critics are saying you're basically repeating the Iraq playbook and that this is all a pretense for war. What is the next step if your sanctions do not work a year from now?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So back to first principles. The first thing that didn't work was the JCPOA. All the ballistic missile activity, save for the last two that I spoke about today, occurred during the JCPOA. So if you're looking for an agreement that was unable to contain assassination efforts in Europe, the establishment of an equivalent of Lebanese Hizballah on the cusp of being achieved in Yemen, malign activity in Iraq by the Iranians, the missile

activity to which we were debating today – if you're looking for bad activity, this all occurred during the JCPOA. So if you're looking for a failed agreement, I got a good one for you.

Now it's time for this Security Council to get serious about this real risk from proliferation from the Iranian regime. And it is our determination to do everything we can, everything within – as the President says, everything we can to make sure that we do the right thing. We're going to exert American leadership to build a coalition – and you heard today, you heard 11 members of the Security Council join the United States in expressing their concerns about the Iranian missile proliferation. We're going to work with a coalition to build out a set of responses that deliver deterrence against Iran and its continued proliferation of ballistic missiles and ballistic missile systems that have the potential to carry nuclear warheads.

MR PALLADINO: Fox News, Adam Shaw, please.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, Adam Shaw, Fox News. We saw a lot of support for the JCPOA from the European countries today. We also saw a lot of criticism of Iran's destabilizing activities. Are you getting any sense that European countries are beginning to come around to your way of thinking on Iran?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So I'll let the European countries speak for themselves with respect to where they are, but this much is clear: We have a different view on the JCPOA, as we should – or we're not ambiguous when I speak with my European counterparts. We're very clear about that. They view it as the linchpin. I view it as a disaster and I think President Trump does as well.

Now the challenge is this: We continue to see the Islamic Republic of Iran behaving in ways that are inconsistent with keeping people safe all around the world, and we need to figure out how together we can build out a coalition to push back against that. There are lots of places that can occur. It can occur while the JCPOA is still in effect, that is, while they're still inside of it. But make no mistake, American leadership is determined to work not only with the Europeans – we think of Germany, France, and Britain, but many other European countries who share our concerns as well, countries throughout the Middle East, Asia, Africa all joining with the United States under our leadership to – first, as a first step, acknowledge the risk that Iran presents and then set up a response that will ultimately deter them.

MR PALLADINO: Last question. Al Jazeera, James Bays.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, James Bays from Al Jazeera.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yes, sir.

QUESTION: You were today in the chair that's normally occupied by Ambassador Haley. She said in an interview the – about responsibility for the death of Jamal Khashoggi, she said, "It was the Saudi Government, and MBS is the head of the Saudi Government. So they are all responsible and they don't get a pass." Do you agree that Mohammed bin Salman is responsible?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So I think Ambassador Haley said something that's very

consistent with what President Trump and I have both said, which is that we have already held accountable a large number of persons who were responsible for the heinous murder of Jamal Khashoggi, that we will continue to investigate and take the facts where they lead, and get to a place where we hold those responsible accountable. We'll do that.

At the same time, and I didn't hear these remarks by Ambassador Haley, but I'm confident that she would share my view that America's interests in the region are important. And our partnership with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is an important one. It has delivered American security in important ways in President Trump's first two years in office, and we intend to continue to work with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to keep America safe.

QUESTION: (Inaudible.)

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you all.

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