

Press Releases: Remarks to the Press

Remarks

Mike Pompeo

Secretary of State

En Route to Tel Aviv, Israel

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MS NAUERT: And I told them, sir, on the record, we only have five minutes, and we're talking about Saudi portion of the trip. We don't want to get ahead of Israel.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Sounds great. Who's got something (Inaudible.)

QUESTION: How'd it go? (Laughter.)

SECRETARY POMPEO: It went great. The folks I was meeting were old friends, people I've known for quite some time, and they are fantastic partners and we share an enormous amount of interests (inaudible) Saudis (inaudible) national security meetings were cordial. We had some good discussions, and we wanted to make sure we were completely in sync. For the most part I think we share a great deal (inaudible) in terms of how we think about keeping stability.

QUESTION: Did you convince them to sort of settle the dispute with Qatar?

SECRETARY POMPEO: They'll all figure it out.

QUESTION: That's a no, then.

QUESTION: Is there any indication –

SECRETARY POMPEO: They're going to figure out how to resolve this. I think they would all agree that it's in everyone's best interest if the Gulf states all figure out how to be together to meet the common challenge in Iran. They all recognize that. We're hopeful that they will either (inaudible) figure out how to resolve the disputes between them.

QUESTION: (Inaudible) help you out more in northeast Syria?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yeah, I think we had good conversations about that. It's a complicated problem in Syria, as I think everyone would acknowledge, they would too, but my sense is that as we develop our plan forward, State Department will have its political component, right, in Geneva and the work

that Secretary Mattis and his team have been doing on ground to build a coalition to help achieve our objectives, and I'm confident that the Saudis will work alongside us to help get there.

QUESTION: The Saudis have said that – al-Jubeir has said – has told my colleague –

SECRETARY POMPEO: Sorry?

QUESTION: The foreign ministry has told our colleagues that they are ready to move on troops on the ground if needed, but they're waiting for the U.S.

SECRETARY POMPEO: We need to make sure we get it right. This is literally a situation so complex you want to measure twice and cut once, right? So I want to make sure we have our policies completely aligned, and at that time we'll sit down and talk about how it's the case that we can best make sure, as I think I mentioned in my remarks, that this is not America alone working on this, it is the Gulf states working alongside us to take care of their own region.

QUESTION: You spoke about the Iran nuclear deal. What was their – what was your take away from that? And can you rip up one nuclear deal while trying to forge a second one with North Korea? Doesn't – isn't that a contradiction?

SECRETARY POMPEO: No, no contradiction at all in my view. With – the first question was about their view. I think their view is similar to ours, which is the deal was inadequate. We need to try and fix it. They were hopeful. I gave them an update on our progress from my trip to Brussels, about the progress we've made with the Europeans. We've certainly made some, there's still work to do. And they said great, we'll support you if you get the fixes that are very much in line with our policy there.

With respect to the differences in the deal, I am confident that Kim Jong-un is looking for more than a piece of paper, right? He's not just staring at this North Korean deal and saying, "Oh goodness, there was this Iran agreement between President Obama and the Iranians, and I'm going to rely on the fact that the Americans stayed in that to have confidence that the Americans will do the right thing if I give up my nuclear weapons." He's going to look for aligning our interests, right, setting up – what we talked about is concrete, irreversible actions, assurances, that provided him with assurance that if we are able to be successful in changing this it will be lasting. So I don't think Kim Jong-un is staring at the Iran deal and saying, "Oh goodness, if they get out of that deal, I won't talk to the Americans anymore." There are higher priorities that he is more concerned about than whether or not the Americans stay in the JCPOA.

QUESTION: What are you expecting on the missile issue? I mean, is it just more sanctions, is it intercepting shipments from Iran –

SECRETARY POMPEO: I don't want to talk about the status of negotiations. It's a live issue and we're making progress, and we've got to make sure everybody's in the same place. So I'm going to save that until it's complete.

QUESTION: Was there any discussion about the potential for a larger deal involving Syria and things with the Iran deal the way Macron had thrown forward?

SECRETARY POMPEO: You mean with respect to the JCPOA? So it's certainly the case that what the President's asked for in terms of a fix is a more comprehensive solution – that is, it won't be just about the nuclear file. One of the core fixes is to make sure we're addressing those other risks, that Iranian malign behavior and missiles. So if we're successful in getting the fixes, it will certainly be broader than the JCPOA.

QUESTION: Would it involve actors like Russia or Turkey the way that Macron had thrown out?

SECRETARY POMPEO: I'm sorry, one more time?

QUESTION: Would it involve actors like Russia and Turkey? This is one of the things that had been discussed.

SECRETARY POMPEO: I don't know. I don't know. See how far we can get.

MS NAUERT: He's got to go.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you all.

MS NAUERT: Thanks, guys.

QUESTION: Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you.

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