

Press Releases: Secretary Pompeo's Visit to Kuwait, Israel, and Lebanon: Reinvigorating Partnerships, Enhancing Bilateral Ties, and Countering Iran

Readout
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
March 18, 2019

Secretary Pompeo will travel to Kuwait, Israel, and Lebanon March 19–23. The Secretary will participate in a series of bilateral meetings with high-level officials, attend the U.S.-Kuwait Strategic Dialogue and the recurring trilateral Head of State meeting with Israel, Greece, and the Republic of Cyprus, and engage in public events, including visits to religious sites and interactions with business leaders. The Secretary will reinforce the value of our partnerships, as well as the importance of security and economic cooperation in achieving regional stability and countering the Iranian regime's malign activities.

Reinvigorating Relationships with Key Allies and Partners

- The United States is committed to strengthening its relations with Kuwait, Israel, and Lebanon; all critical to regional security, stability, and economic prosperity.
- These partnerships enable the achievement of shared objectives, including countering terrorism, expanding trade and investment, protecting global energy supplies, and fostering religious tolerance and freedom in the region.
- In Kuwait, the Secretary will laud the Amir's role in seeking a resolution to the Gulf dispute and highlight the importance of a united GCC in ensuring the success of the Middle East Strategic Alliance.
 - While still in its formative stage, the United States has continued to advance discussions with our partners on the alliance, which includes the GCC member states, Egypt, and Jordan.
 - Since the September 28 GCC+2 meeting at the UN General Assembly, members have met on January 9 in Oman to discuss the economic and energy pillars and on February 21 in Washington to discuss the political and security pillars.
- In Israel, the Secretary will engage with officials from Cyprus, Greece,

and Israel to promote cooperation on energy and security issues, and discuss the Syrian conflict with Israeli leaders.

- In Lebanon, the Secretary will discuss regional issues with Lebanese officials, including Hizballah's role in the Syrian conflict.
- Since the beginning of the crisis in Syria, the United States has provided nearly \$2.1 billion in humanitarian aid to assist with the needs of Syrian refugees in Lebanon and the Lebanese communities who host them.
- U.S. humanitarian assistance also supports Lebanese schools, community development centers, water infrastructure, health centers and other host community institutions.

Reaffirming and Expanding Bilateral Ties

- Kuwait is a longtime friend and vital partner that helps advance key U.S. interests in the region, including defense and counterterrorism.
 - The U.S.-Kuwait relationship generates U.S. jobs through hundreds of millions of dollars of direct investment in the United States.
 - At this year's strategic dialogue, the Secretary and other U.S. officials will expand the bilateral relationship on innovation, entrepreneurship, and small business development.
 - They will also work to boost counter-narcotics efforts, deter illicit passenger and cargo flows, improve airport security and consular cooperation, and grow academic exchanges.
- The Secretary will meet with members of the newly created U.S.-Kuwait Business Council and local business leaders to build stronger relationships and enhance economic ties.
- In Jerusalem, the Secretary will reinforce U.S. support for Israel's security, as one of America's closest regional allies and partners. The Secretary will also reaffirm the Administration's commitment to pursuing a comprehensive and lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinians that offers a brighter future for all.
 - The Secretary's visits to the Western Wall and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre will reaffirm the Administration's commitments to bolstering religious tolerance and battling anti-Semitism.
- In Lebanon, the Secretary will articulate U.S. support for the Lebanese peoples they confront a multitude of economic and regional security challenges.
- The United States provides more support to Lebanon than any other country in the world – more than \$800 million in security, development, and humanitarian assistance in 2018.
- Since 2007, the United States has provided more than \$1.2 billion in economic and development assistance to advance Lebanese stability through programs that promote democracy and the rule of law, improve provision of basic services, and expand access to education.
- The United States is Lebanon's top security partner. Since 2005, the U.S. has invested more than \$2.2 billion in the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) which has paid significant dividends for U.S. interests in the Middle East.
- The Secretary will underscore the importance of working with Lebanese financial institutions to preserve the integrity of the Lebanese banking

system.

Countering Iran's Malign Influence

- The Iranian regime is the single greatest threat to stability in the Middle East.
- On each stop of his trip, the Secretary will encourage leaders to expose Iran's activities and stop the regime's corrupt and destabilizing actions.
- In Kuwait, the Secretary will thank Kuwaiti leaders for their help in monitoring sanctions compliance and work to combat sanctions evasion.
- In Israel, the Secretary will emphasize the U.S. commitment to combat Iranian aggression, including illicit tunneling by Hizballah and Hamas' indiscriminate firing of hundreds of rockets and missiles into Israel.
- In Lebanon, the Secretary will reaffirm U.S. support for legitimate government institutions, including the Internal Security Forces and the Lebanese Armed Forces, and reiterate our concern over the influence and actions of Hizballah and its supporters, which put Lebanon's sovereignty, the Lebanese people, and the region at risk.
- The United States designated 40 targets linked to Hizballah in 2018, our highest single-year number of designations to date, and will aggressively continue to expose and disrupt networks that Hizballah uses to fund terror and destabilizing activities worldwide, including inside Lebanon.

The Office of Website Management, Bureau of Public Affairs, manages this site as a portal for information from the U.S. State Department. External links to other Internet sites should not be construed as an endorsement of the views or privacy policies contained therein.