Press Releases: Secretary Pompeo's Call With Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman

Readout
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
November 11, 2018

The below is attributable to Spokesperson Heather Nauert:

Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo spoke today with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. The Secretary emphasized that the United States will hold all of those involved in the killing of Jamal Khashoggi accountable, and that Saudi Arabia must do the same. On Yemen, the Secretary reiterated the United States' calls for a cessation of hostilities and for all parties to come to the table to negotiate a peaceful solution to the conflict under the UN Special Envoy.

Press Releases: Secretary Pompeo's Meeting With French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian

Readout
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
November 10, 2018

The below is attributable to Spokesperson Heather Nauert:

Secretary Michael R. Pompeo met today with French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian while accompanying President Trump on his trip to Paris to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the end of World War I. They discussed U.S.-French cooperation on resolving global security challenges, including how to strengthen NATO. They also reviewed ways the United States and France can work together to counter Iran's malign behavior, denuclearize the DPRK, and push for a political solution to the crisis in Syria.

Press Releases: Department Press Briefing – November 7, 2018

Robert Palladino
Deputy Spokesperson

Department Press Briefing
Washington, DC
November 7, 2018

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TRANSCRIPT:

2:37 p.m. EDT

MR PALLADINO: Welcome, everyone. Thanks for coming. We're going to start at the top today with our Special Representative for Iran Brian Hook. He has some opening remarks, then he'd be happy to take a few questions from you all. Please, Brian, come on up.

MR HOOK: Hello. Good to see you.

QUESTION: Wonderful to see you.

MR HOOK: Thank you, Matt.

QUESTION: As usual.

MR HOOK: Now that our sanctions on the Iranian regime have been reimposed, we want to alert nations of the risk of doing business with Iran's shipping sector. If Iranian tankers make calls to your ports or transit through your waterways, this comes at great risk. The United States urges you to consider the advisory we are issuing today.

The sanctions that were reimposed on Monday include sanctions on Iran's port operators as well as its energy shipping and shipbuilding sectors.

We placed on our sanctions list Iran's national maritime carrier, the Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines, and its oil transport giant, the National Iranian Tanker Company. These sanctions are critical to our maximum pressure campaign. Iran's energy sector accounts for up to 80 percent of the country's income from exports. The regime uses this revenue to support its terrorist militias, fund missile proliferation, and sustain its revolutionary exploits that destabilize the Middle East.

We have also reimposed sanctions on the provision of underwriting services, insurance, and re-insurance. Knowingly providing these services to sanctioned Iranian shipping companies will result in the imposition of U.S. sanctions. As Iran's maritime carriers and vessels are redesignated and lose access to insurance on the international market, they are likely to turn to self-insurance. We suspect they will use Iranian insurance providers such as Kish P&I. Should there be an accident involving an Iranian tanker, there is simply no way these Iranian insurance companies can cover the loss.

This is especially important for Iran's crude oil tankers, which are usually insured for amounts of $1 billion or more. Oil spills and accidents involving tankers are extremely costly. The immediate costs associated with response and cleanup can range from hundreds of millions of dollars to billions of dollars. When litigation costs and penalties are added, the total liability is even greater. But the costs of these accidents extend well beyond the initial response and cleanup. Tanker spills can imperil fishing and maritime industries for generations, harm tourism, and create irreversible economic and environmental costs on communities and ecosystems.

From the Suez Canal to the Strait of Malacca and all chokepoints in between, Iranian tankers are now a floating liability. Countries, ports, and canal operators, and private firms should know they will be likely responsible for the costs of an accident involving a self-insured Iranian tanker.

We sincerely hope there will be no accidents, but accidents are a very real possibility given Iran's record. Only 10 months ago in January, an oil tanker managed by the National Iranian Tanker Company collided with a vessel in the East China Sea. The tanker was carrying one million barrels of condensate. The tanker burned for one week and then sank. The collision led to the largest release of condensate ever and caused an oil spill the size of the city of Paris. As the cleanup continues, the liability for this will be in the hundreds of millions of dollars. Iranian insurance companies only covered a small portion of that vessel's liability. The majority of the tanker's value is covered by international insurers.

Now that our sanctions are back in place, these international insurers will no longer be in the risky business of covering Iran's tankers. Self-insured Iranian tankers are a risk to the ports that permit them to dock, the canals that allow them to transit, and the boats that cross their path. This exposes the entire maritime shipping network to immense

liability.

If entities continue to do business with Iran's tankers, they may assume that Iranian insurers can and will absorb the full liability associated with the accident. This is a fantasy. There is little to gain by taking on so much risk for so little return. Just as concerning, entities who allow self-insured Iranian tankers to transit through their canals or dock in their ports may be facilitating Iran's illicit activity.

Iran has supported the Assad regime in Syria by regularly shipping millions of barrels of Iranian crude to the country. Those entities who permit the transit of Iranian tankers may very well be enabling this activity. I have described very serious liability concerns, but all nations should also be aware of the safety standards and practices of Iran's oil tankers.

There are increasing reports that Iranian tankers are switching off their AIS transponders at sea. These transponders are safety devices used for collision avoidance and navigation. They enable ships to see other ships and to communicate with coastal authorities. Under international maritime law, vessels have been required since 2004 to use them to broadcast their identity and location. Based on credible data, we now know that up to a dozen Iranian tankers have recently disabled their maritime transponders and have effectively gone dark. We should not be surprised that an outlaw regime also violates basic maritime law.

Turning off these transponders makes tankers harder to track and is a tactic that Iran has used in the past to evade sanctions. In 2012, a majority of vessels in the National Iranian Tanker Company's fleet turned off their transponders in the run-up to the imposition of U.S. oil-related sanctions. This tactic is a maritime security threat. These transponders are designed to maximize visibility at sea and turning them off only increases risk of accidents and injuries.

Self-insured Iranian tankers engaging in unsafe behavior with many tons of crude oil onboard is courting environmental and financial disaster. Our strong message to any entity considering doing business with these Iranian tankers is to rethink your decision. Protect your port, protect your business, and promote maritime safety.

Happy to take any questions. Matt.

QUESTION: Just on this whole shipping thing, just to be devil's advocate here for a second, why should people not look at this and say that this is an admission or an acknowledgment that the sanctions are going to make international maritime – international shipping more dangerous?

MR HOOK: Well, the burden is on Iran to make it safe. We're not the one turning off the – the transponders.

QUESTION: No, but you're the one sanctioning – you're the one making it impossible or difficult for them to get insurance, aren't you?

MR HOOK: I think you're misplacing the burden of compliance on the United States.

QUESTION: Well, but –

MR HOOK: Iran has tankers. Maritime law requires them to keep their transponders on. They're turning them off to evade our sanctions.

QUESTION: Okay. And then just one other thing. I wanted to go back to a question I asked you on Friday –

MR HOOK: Yeah.

QUESTION: – and this is the – it's going to sound awfully nerdy and technical, but I just want to make sure that – so I asked why Treasury Secretary Mnuchin used the word "jurisdictions" and not "countries," and I said – suggested it might be because Taiwan would be one of the countries getting an exemption and you said no, I get it, nations. And then the Secretary, when he made his announcement on Monday, included Taiwan as among the eight countries –

MR HOOK: Right.

QUESTION: – he specifically said. Does this mean that at least the two of you, Brian Hook and Secretary Pompeo, regard Taiwan as a country? Or is this just kind of the slip of the tongue? Have you heard from the Chinese about it?

MR HOOK: No. Our policy has not changed. The United States remains committed to the U.S. "one China" policy, the three joint communiques, and our responsibilities under the Taiwan Relations Act.

QUESTION: So why call it a country and court the ire of the Chinese?

MR HOOK: The SRE that we have granted to Taiwan is relevant to Taiwan's economy, and anything else you may have heard, whatever you've interpreted, nothing has changed on our policy.

QUESTION: Okay, thank you.

MR HOOK: Michele from NPR.

QUESTION: Thanks. Is the – the allotments, the waivers – how much oil are these countries allowed to export during this time? Is there a cap on it? And then also, can you explain how you plan to monitor the escrows in the weeks and months ahead?

MR HOOK: I can't get into specific volumes because that's confidential. It's a bilateral agreement that was reached in each of the SREs. We do –

QUESTION: But there is a cap on each one?

MR HOOK: In order to be eligible for an SRE, a country needs to show a

significant reduction. And so we are going to be continuing our path to zero. As you heard the President say today, and I think a couple of days ago, we want – we have been able to take off 1 million barrels from Iran's exports, and we have actually brought down the price of oil. It was at $74 a barrel when the President announced he was out of the deal; we then took off a million barrels of oil, and Brent is now at 72, roughly 72.

We have been very careful about applying maximum economic pressure without lifting the price of oil, and we've done that successfully. I'd just remind you that the Obama administration granted 20 SREs, 20 SREs to 20 countries over a period of many years. We have granted eight. Two of those eight countries have stopped importing Iranian crude. And if you look at all the countries that were importing Iranian crude prior to when the President left the deal in May, 20 of those countries are now at zero. And so 80 percent of this regime's revenue comes from oil exports. We are very serious about denying Iran the revenue it needs to destabilize the Middle East and fund missile proliferation and all the other malign behaviors it engages in.

Nick.

QUESTION: Brian, the ship you mentioned that sunk off the East China Sea was among those targeted for sanctions in the announcement that came out Monday. Why was that, and what does that say about the accuracy of that list of 700 entities that you put forward?

MR HOOK: Well, just because a ship is at the bottom of the sea doesn't mean that it still doesn't have economic consequences. There's still payments on the books. And so that ship, just because it sank doesn't mean that its financial lifecycle has come to an end. And so we're very serious about going after all of these energy, the way they move their ships, the oil itself. And so that's why we did that.

Laurie.

QUESTION: Hi. Kurdistan 24.

MR HOOK: Yeah.

QUESTION: The Iraqi prime minister just said that Iraq is not part of the U.S. sanctions against Iran, and it wants a balanced relationship with the U.S. and Iran. What's your comment on that? And is Iraq in compliance with the sanctions so far?

MR HOOK: Well, Iraq was a – we granted Iraq a waiver to allow it to continue to pay for its electricity imports from Iran. We are confident that this will help Iraq limit electricity shortages in the south. Iraq is a friend and a partner, and we are committed to its stability and prosperity.

QUESTION: And is it in compliance, as far as you know?

MR HOOK: We are very pleased with how we are working with the Iraqis.

Lesley.

QUESTION: Brian, since you don't – you can't reveal the details of those exceptions that you've made with eight of these countries, can you at least give us some kind of idea as to how much those countries can import from Iran during this time? And also, what level of oil – what level of – what reductions are you seeking from all of these at the end of the six-month period?

MR HOOK: I can't tell you what our target is. We do have a target.

QUESTION: You do have one?

MR HOOK: Yeah, we do have a target. And –

QUESTION: Is it zero?

MR HOOK: Well, our – yes. I mean, we have a goal to get to zero. As I said, we have an adequately supplied oil market. We have to ensure that we advance our national security objectives while we do not injure our economic interests. If we were to increase the price of oil, it would be bad for American consumers, it would be bad for the global economy, and it would give an advantage to Iran. Now, we foresee in 2019 that we will have more supply than demand, and that puts us in a much better position to bring countries – all countries importing Iranian crude to zero. So that's our target.

During the next six months, we are going to be monitoring our diplomatic progress and the price of oil to ensure that we have calibrated this the right way.

Francesco.

QUESTION: So –

QUESTION: But, Brian, why don't you want to give those figures? I mean, if it's not a transparent – this all feels rather opaque.

MR HOOK: Well, I told you the figure; it's zero. That is the figure.

QUESTION: It's never going to go down to zero.

MR HOOK: And so oil is a very fluid market. We have done a very good job of increasing oil production. So we have taken off a million barrels of oil, and during that same period the United States increased production by 1.7 million barrels and we increased exports by a million. The Saudis played a very helpful role, and the Saudi energy minister, Khalid al-Falih, was very good at increasing production during that period. We've been very pleased with oil producers increasing their capacity to ensure a well-supplied and stable oil market.

So during this period, while we have taken off a million barrels, we have not lifted the price of oil. And that is not by accident; it is through very careful and calibrated diplomacy led by the Secretary and the President.

QUESTION: So does that mean that some SRE can be renewed after the six-month period?

MR HOOK: We are not looking to grant any exemptions or waivers from our sanctions regime. We have looked at this in terms of we do want to achieve maximum pressure without harming friends or allies, and we do not want to lift the price of oil. So there are a number of variables that go into these things, and we have calibrated them very well so far.

QUESTION: So those variables –

MR HOOK: Abbie?

QUESTION: Have you received assurances from countries like China and India that they are going to go down to zero by the end of six months?

MR HOOK: We have – we have been working with a number of countries and I think that we either have concluded all of our SREs – there are no more than eight, and as I said, two of those have already stopped importing, and the rest we have reached agreement with.

Yes.

QUESTION: Can you tell us which two have stopped importing?

MR HOOK: I can't.

Nick.

QUESTION: To go back to Michelle's question, Brian. So if you won't tell us exactly how this is going to work or what number you're trying to get to, can you talk about your confidence in knowing the money that goes into these bank accounts and the monitoring that the jurisdictions do? As you know, the jurisdictions, the U.S. relies on those jurisdictions to do that monitoring. Turkey was a real problem last time. Why do you have confidence that Turkey will somehow do better than it did before the JCPOA?

MR HOOK: Well, I think you've seen a lot of pre-compliance with our sanctions over the last six months. You've seen a number – you've seen over a hundred corporations announce prior to November that they are leaving the Iranian market or they're canceling planned investments. On the oil side, we have seen the vast majority of refiners announce that they're out. I think this is a much different environment with our sanctions. I think the world knows that the President and his Secretary of State are very serious about maximum economic pressure. And that will apply to the escrow accounts. One of the advantages of these SREs is that it denies Iran the revenue from its oil sales. They do not get paid

in hard currency. This is a regime that is facing a liquidity crisis. And so now these escrow accounts, even those countries who are still importing Iranian oil, Iran does not get the revenue. They only – it stays in an escrow and then they spend down that amount to import goods from that country that was importing their oil.

The Treasury Department monitors the escrow accounts. Secretary Mnuchin, Under Secretary Mandelker, Marshall Billingsley are very focused on ensuring that these escrow accounts are never used for illicit goods, and we will police these very aggressively.

QUESTION: But as you know, Turkey was subject to criminal action last time for evading sanctions. Do you include Turkey on this list because you have confidence that they'll do something different or they've promised something different, or is this a political decision to include Turkey?

MR HOOK: Well, we have – Turkey is one of the countries. I had very good meetings with my counterparts in Turkey and we are confident that we have reached an understanding in terms of the next six months.

QUESTION: Brian, if we could –

QUESTION: On Turkey?

MR HOOK: Just one more question.

QUESTION: On Turkey? The president of Turkey, I don't know if you know, he said that, "We will not obey such sanctions." He announced that he's not going to follow the sanctions. And he said also that he sees this move by Washington as, quote, "violating the global balance," end quote. What is your answer on this?

MR HOOK: President Trump received this same question this morning, and I would refer you to his answer.

Thanks very much.

MR PALLADINO: Thanks, Brian.

MR HOOK: Thank you.

MR PALLADINO: Right through that door. There we go. Perfect. All right. A couple of things for the top.

Today the United States Agency for International Development and the Vietnamese ministry of national defense announced the completion of environmental remediation of the dioxin Agent Orange at Danang Airport. This historic six-year cleanup effort represents our long-standing commitment to addressing the legacy of the Vietnam War, improving the lives of the people of Vietnam and of future generations. Working side by side with Vietnamese counterparts, we have advanced our strategic partnership and promoted goodwill between our two peoples. The United

States Agency for International Development will now turn our attention to implementing the commitment of the United States toward remediation of Agent Orange at the Bien Hoa Airport.

And secondly, the United States is concerned by the verdict sentencing Ali Salman to life in prison in Bahrain. We've closely followed this case against the former parliamentarian and secretary general of the Al-Wefaq political society, including a previous acquittal on these same charges on June 21st. We understand the verdict may be subject to further appeals. The United States will continue to engage regularly with the Government of Bahrain on a range of shared interests, including the importance of safeguarding fundamental freedoms and human rights.

And with that, I'd be happy to take a few questions. Matt, Associated Press, please.

QUESTION: Water is good? Thirsty?

MR PALLADINO: The water is good.

QUESTION: No glass today?

MR PALLADINO: No glass. They forgot my glass. No they didn't. I stand –

QUESTION: For your on-camera debut.

MR PALLADINO: – corrected. Let me get my glass, Matt. How's that? Perfect.

QUESTION: There you go.

MR PALLADINO: All right.

QUESTION: Nice, very nice.

MR PALLADINO: Okay, good.

QUESTION: State Department logo on it, too. Very nice.

MR PALLADINO: It does.

QUESTION: I want to ask you about North Korea and the talks that have been postponed that were supposed to be tomorrow. First, logistically, why did you guys see fit to announce this at one minute past midnight?

MR PALLADINO: So you're referring to the spokesperson's statement that went out last night, and for those who haven't seen it, it announced that Secretary of State Michael Pompeo's meeting with officials from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, scheduled for this week in New York, will now take place at a later date. We will reconvene when our respective schedules permit. Ongoing conversations continue to take place. The United States remains focused on fulfilling the commitments agreed to by President Trump and Chairman Kim at the Singapore Summit in

June. As to the timing, as soon as the information that we had was confirmed, we decided to release it as early as possible.

QUESTION: What is the reason for the postponement? I understand it says in the statement that you'll set it up again once the schedules permit, but why is it not happening tomorrow as planned and is it – and is there a rescheduled date for it?

MR PALLADINO: Well, to the latter question, we have nothing to announce at this time. To the previous question, schedules change. Schedules change all the time, in fact. Sometimes we make these things public. Sometimes, as our schedules change, they're not public. This is a case, we're dealing with purely a scheduling issue, and it's as simple as that.

QUESTION: Well, I mean, scheduling issue can encompass a lot of things. Whose schedule was the problem here as far – I mean, the President when he was asked about this said something about travel, but the travel that he and the Secretary are going to – are making to Paris doesn't begin until after this meeting would've happened. Is it that kind of scheduling problem or is the problem is scheduling as in the North Koreans want your sanctions lifted now as opposed to later, and you guys want them to make another concession? They want a step-by-step – is that the scheduling that's the issue or is it personal schedules?

MR PALLADINO: Timing, timing. This has to do with timing as a matter – we're talking about scheduling. And I'll leave it at that.

QUESTION: What, Kim Yong-chol couldn't make it to –

MR PALLADINO: I'm not going to go into details on our discussions with the North Koreans regarding this.

QUESTION: If this is purely a scheduling issues, if it's just about schedules, why is that secret information? Why not just say Kim Yong-chol's schedule didn't work out or Pompeo had something else he needed to do? Like, why is this so difficult?

MR PALLADINO: We're not going to go beyond the fact that this is purely a matter of our ability to schedule this. It's as simple as that. There's nothing additional to provide here. President spoke on this earlier today as well and he's talked about this before. We're not in a rush. We're going to get this right.

More on North Korea?

QUESTION: Yes.

QUESTION: North Korea.

MR PALLADINO: All right, let's go to the front. Lesley.

QUESTION: The optics of this, it appears that last-minute changes at a

time when the North Koreans have said they want some of the sanctions lifted, appears that this has run into trouble and that the talks between the two sides have run into trouble. Would that be true?

MR PALLADINO: Not at all. We're actually – we're in a pretty good place right now. We are confident going forward. Scheduling issues can happen, and – but that's okay. We're not going to be driven into artificial timelines. President's been clear we're not going to – we don't need to rush this. We are going to continue to make progress.

QUESTION: Robert, a follow-up?

MR PALLADINO: North Korea – let's go to Francesco in the front.

QUESTION: How – how soon do you plan to reschedule this meeting if you have to plan a summit between the President and Kim Jong-un for early 2019? How soon?

MR PALLADINO: Nothing to announce right now. We would like – the President had a very good meeting with Chairman Kim not that long ago, just in June, and he very much looks forward to his next meeting. So we're going to continue to work towards that.

QUESTION: But the last time that the President canceled a meeting, it was when Secretary Pompeo was supposed to go there in Pyongyang at the end of August. He said that there were not enough progress to continue talking. And is there some kind of reason like this this time or –

MR PALLADINO: I'll say it one more time: This is purely a matter of scheduling, and we will reschedule.

Please. Let's go to Fox, please. Rich, go.

QUESTION: So the Secretary divulged a few weeks ago that there is an agreement from Chairman Kim that the denuclearization process would conclude by January of 2021. Is there a concern, if timing is no object, that that will be missed, or is that a hard deadline?

MR PALLADINO: We're not going to be driven into artificial deadlines. This is something that the Secretary has said. We're going to continue to make progress, and that's the direction that this will continue to be pushing.

QUESTION: Is 2021 or a goal or a deadline or what? I mean, it's the Secretary who floated that or divulged it.

MR PALLADINO: Right, let's not – let's – we shouldn't confuse the objective, which is the final, fully verified denuclearization of the Korean – of North Korea with the pace at which these types of meetings will take place.

Please. Go to CNN in the front.

QUESTION: If the Secretary is talking about – thank you, yeah. If the Secretary is talking about 2021 as being possible and he's saying he thinks that they can denuclearize within that amount of time, how is this not a rush? How is there not some time pressure on it?

MR PALLADINO: We've come quite far in a very short amount of time. This – the meeting in Singapore, the summit between Chairman Kim and President Trump, was a very strong first step, and we are making progress and we're going to continue focusing on that. A lot has happened since that time that we can take confidence in, from the cessation of missile tests to nuclear testing to the return of the remains of American heroes, the return of American citizens. And we're going to continue working forward and pushing forward on this. Thank you.

More on North Korea? Let's – right here, please. ABC.

QUESTION: One of the things on the agenda that the Secretary intended to discuss was U.S. inspectors being let into these sites. Are you still confident, given that this meeting has been postponed, that inspectors will be let into these sites?

MR PALLADINO: We're confident. This is a matter of scheduling. Everything else is – remains completely on track.

Please. North Korea?

QUESTION: Yeah. Thank you, Robert.

MR PALLADINO: Good. Thank you.

QUESTION: When September 19th, President Moon and Kim Jong-un meeting in Pyongyang, and Kim Jong-un already noticed that they will not give any nuclear list to United States. So how the – do you still believe North Korea will be FFVD?

MR PALLADINO: I'm sorry, that I believe North Korea will what?

QUESTION: FFVD, like finally and fully verified denuclearization.

MR PALLADINO: That's something that the – Chairman Kim agreed to at the summit in Singapore, and we very much look forward to Chairman Kim honoring his handshake with the President and meeting those regards.

QUESTION: Did not give any list for the denuclearization –

MR PALLADINO: I'm not going to get ahead of negotiations that are taking place, but I will say that we are in regular contact with North Korea and that's not going to change. Please, let's –

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

MR PALLADINO: One more North Korea? Okay.

QUESTION: Robert, I'm just – how do you balance the President and apparently now the Secretary's expression that there will not be any artificial timelines, you won't be pressured into setting those timelines against the fact that it's obviously in North Korea's interest to have this process go on for as long as possible? And as you saw from the Security Council, the desire for sanctions, for strict sanctions enforcement, is clearly crumbling.

MR PALLADINO: Sanctions remain in place, and those are the world sanctions that are – remain in place. Sanctions are what brought us to what is possible at this point and what is possible is, with the denuclearization of North Korea, truly a brighter future for the North Korean people. That's something that we're going to continue to pursue.

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

MR PALLADINO: That's – let – let's move on.

QUESTION: Hold on.

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

QUESTION: You said that – I think if I heard you correctly – this might have something to do with scheduling. And then – that you said that everything else remains completely on track. Doesn't that answer suggest that this – that these meetings aren't on track? Doesn't that response suggest that there's a problem here?

MR PALLADINO: We are – we have a scheduling matter that we are going to move on from and reschedule. And it's – there's nothing beyond that at this point. Our talks are ongoing, our conversations with the North Koreans, and we're going to continue to drive forward. Please.

QUESTION: So you're saying things are going well then, with the North Koreans in these negotiations?

MR PALLADINO: We are – we have ongoing conversations with the North Koreans. We will be rescheduling when schedules allow. Next topic, let's go – what do we got?

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

QUESTION: Thank you. Moscow announced recently it would host a meeting on November 9th on Afghanistan, and I'm wondering if you got an invitation and if any American officials will participate.

And also my second question: The administration informed the Congress that Russia hasn't complied with requirements on the chemical arms act and I'm wondering, what will be the next steps? Is there any decision already on sanctions? Can you walk us through this process? Thank you.

MR PALLADINO: Okay. Regarding the first half of your question about meetings in Moscow, the United States believes that all countries should

support direct dialogue between the Government of Afghanistan and the Taliban to reach an end to the war. And we've been clear that no government, including Russia, can be a substitute for the Afghan Government in direct negotiations with the Taliban.

Regarding an American representative, I can tell you that in coordination with the Afghan Government, the United States embassy in Moscow will send a representative to the working level to observe the discussions, and the United States stands ready to work with all interested parties to support and facilitate a peace process.

Regarding your second question, can you repeat it, please?

QUESTION: Yeah, sure.

MR PALLADINO: Sure.

QUESTION: So the administration informed the Congress that Russia has not complied with their requirements of the chemical and biological weapons warfare elimination act. And can you walk us through this process? What will be next? Is there any decision on sanctions already? And what will happen? Are there consultations or how will it go? Thank you.

MR PALLADINO: Right, okay. So we made a determination against the Russian Government over its use of Novichok nerve agent against Sergei and Yulia Skripal back on August 6th. Under the act, the chemical biological weapons act, the Russian Government had until yesterday, November 6th, to take steps to meet the conditions required under the act. Yesterday – by yesterday, it had not done so, so we followed what was required under the act and we informed the Congress that we were unable to certify that the Russian Federation was in compliance. And so what – as we move forward we will be proceeding with our statutory requirements. I'll leave it at that.

QUESTION: I have a question on the Palestinian –

MR PALLADINO: Is there anything else on Russia?

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

MR PALLADINO: Russia?

QUESTION: When do you expect to impose those additional sanctions? Is there a time – specific timeline under the statutory guidelines?

MR PALLADINO: The process takes time and we want to get sanctions right. We need to carefully consider the impact that sanctions have on U.S. national security interests, and I'll leave it at that. But this is something that we take seriously.

QUESTION: Robert, on –

MR PALLADINO: More on Russia?

QUESTION: On Russia.

QUESTION: On Russia.

MR PALLADINO: On Russia. Francesco.

QUESTION: Yeah. Some congressmen expressed regret that you weren't ready with the plan for immediate sanctions once a determination was made since you had 90 days to know what were the consequence of the sanctions on national security and so on. And they said that this kind look as hesitation towards Russia. Do you – are you going to act quickly to answer those concerns?

MR PALLADINO: We are – we're going to – we want to get the sanctions right. It's important that we do so. Sanctions require – so that's a process that takes time. As far as the law goes, the law is pretty clear that under the statute, our obligation by yesterday was to inform the Congress, and we met the requirements of the law.

QUESTION: Robert, can I –

MR PALLADINO: Anything else on Russia?

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

MR PALLADINO: Please.

QUESTION: As part of the law, one of the stipulations is the President shall either downgrade or suspend diplomatic relations. Is suspending diplomatic relations one of the sanctions that's being considered?

MR PALLADINO: We will follow the – what's required under the act itself. We intend to do that. As far as what will be considered and what will be imposed, that's – that – I'm not going to be able to preview future sanctions in that regard.

Last question on – any more on Russia?

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

QUESTION: Is it correct –

QUESTION: Can I ask a question on –

MR PALLADINO: Russia?

QUESTION: – on the Palestinian-Israeli issue?

QUESTION: Yes.

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

QUESTION: Is it correct – is it correct that there's no timeline for this consultation period?

MR PALLADINO: There – that is correct.

QUESTION: So in other words, it could last until 20 – it could last as long as the North Korea denuclearization process or even longer?

MR PALLADINO: Matt, at a time and a place that we so choose, we will – after we have worked this out, we will move forward. So let –

QUESTION: Yeah, but there's no statutory deadline for you to act. Right?

MR PALLADINO: Yeah, but we will move forward.

QUESTION: But doesn't it –

MR PALLADINO: We are unaware of a statutory deadline. Okay?

QUESTION: Doesn't this avoid the impact, though, when you're telling a country if you don't do this within this period of time, here comes the next much tougher tranche of sanctions? And now you say, well, there's no timeline. We need to get it right. The process takes time. Doesn't that take away the intended bite of the law?

MR PALLADINO: We don't intend to preview when, but the "when" will come when we are ready and – because we're going to get it right. And that's all I have on that.

Last – final question.

QUESTION: An easy question, how is that, on the topic of Israeli –

MR PALLADINO: Oh, Said. Please, Said.

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

QUESTION: Okay. So –

MR PALLADINO: Never easy.

QUESTION: Two quick questions. Prime Minister Netanyahu told Israeli radio that the occupation was "baloney," to quote him. And he says the powerful can get away with anything, referring to settlements and grasping of land and demolitions of homes in the West Bank and so on. Do you agree with his assessment that occupation is baloney?

MR PALLADINO: I would refer you to the prime minister for more information on his reported comments. Okay?

QUESTION: What is your position on the occupied West Bank? I mean, the last few months have been like free for all for the Israelis to grasp whatever lands, build more settlements, and demolish more homes, and so on. And what is your position on the occupied land? After all, Mr.

Greenblatt was just there. I don't know whether he met with any Palestinians, but could you tell us your position on these issues?

MR PALLADINO: Our policy has not changed. Do you have another question?

QUESTION: I'd like to ask you about your comment that this "the 'when' will come when we are ready."

MR PALLADINO: Sanctions take time. How about the – yeah, sanctions take time to get them right.

QUESTION: The "when" will come when we are ready?

MR PALLADINO: All right. I'll work on my phrasing. (Laughter.) Guys.

QUESTION: But Robert, what about the Congo question?

MR PALLADINO: That's it, guys. Thank you.

(The briefing was concluded at 3:23 p.m.)

Press Releases: Secretary Pompeo to Travel to Paris

Press Statement
Heather Nauert

Department Spokesperson

Washington, DC
November 7, 2018

U.S. Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo will travel to Paris, France November 10-11.

On November 10, he will arrive in Paris, where he will join President Trump in commemorating the 100th anniversary of the end of the first World War, including visits to memorial sites and cemeteries to honor our shared sacrifice and reaffirm the Transatlantic Alliance. On November 11, Secretary Pompeo will attend the formal WWI commemoration ceremony at the Arc de Triomphe and a working lunch with international partners hosted by Foreign Minister Le Drian to discuss cooperation on global priorities, including ways to counter Iranian malign behavior and to advance the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. The Secretary will also participate in the President's meeting with French President Emmanuel Macron.

Press Releases: Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Alice Wells' Travel to Geneva

Media Note
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
November 7, 2018

Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asia Alice Wells will travel to Geneva, Switzerland to discuss preparations for the Geneva Ministerial Conference on Afghanistan. The conference in late November will be an opportunity for the Afghan government to report on the progress it has made in implementing key reforms that will bring the country closer to peace and self-reliance. With over 60 of Afghanistan's international allies

scheduled to attend, the conference will also send a strong signal of the international community’s resolve and commitment to ending Afghanistan’s decades-long conflict.

Ambassador Wells will be traveling from Afghanistan and Pakistan, where she met with Afghan and Pakistani leaders to discuss ongoing U.S. and international support to promote long-term peace, security, and stability in Afghanistan and the region.