

Press Releases: Press Availability With Secretary of Treasury Steven T. Mnuchin

Press Availability
Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Washington Foreign Press Center
Washington, DC
November 5, 2018

MODERATOR: Good morning, everyone, and welcome to the Foreign Press Center. We are pleased to have with us this morning Secretary Pompeo and Secretary Mnuchin. They'll both have some opening remarks and then hopefully we'll have time for one or two questions afterwards.

Secretary Pompeo, please.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Hey, Robert. Thank you. Good morning, everyone. It's great to be here at the Foreign Press Center. It's great to see you all. In May of

this year, after President Trump withdrew from the nuclear deal, the Trump administration announced a new strategy to fundamentally alter the behavior of the Islamic Republic of Iran's leadership. At the center of this effort – and there are multiple lines of effort – but at the center of it is an unprecedented campaign of economic pressure. Our objective is to starve the Iranian regime of the revenue it uses to fund violent and destabilizing activities throughout the Middle East, and indeed around the world.

Our ultimate goal is to convince the regime to abandon its current revolutionary course. Just look at what happened last week. Denmark announced it had uncovered an Iranian regime assassination plot on its own soil. The Iranian regime has a choice. It can either do a 180-degree turn from its outlaw course of action and act like a normal country, or it can see its economy crumble.

We hope a new agreement with Iran is possible, but until Iran makes changes in the 12 ways that I listed in May, we will be relentless in exerting pressure on the regime. As a reflection of that resolve, today we're reimposing all sanctions that were previously lifted under the nuclear deal. This includes sanctions on energy, banking, shipping, and shipbuilding industries.

Since the Trump administration came into office, we've done 19 rounds of sanctions targeting 168 Iranian entities. Today's sanctions will accelerate the rapid decline of international economic activity in Iran since the implementation of our strategy in May. Since that time, since back in May, over 100 companies have withdrawn from Iran or canceled plans to do business there. It should be noted that if a company evades our sanctions regime and secretly continues sanctionable commerce in the Islamic Republic, the United States will levy severe, swift penalties on it, including potential sanctions. I promise you that doing business with Iran in defiance of our sanctions will ultimately be a much more painful business decision than pulling out of Iran and it – being connected to Iran entirely.

More than 20 importing nations have zeroed out their imports of crude oil already, taking more than one million barrels of crude per day off the market. The regime today, since May, has lost over \$2.5 billion in oil revenue. We have decided to issue temporary allotments to a handful of countries responsible to specific circumstances and to ensure a well-supplied oil market. The U.S. will be granting these exemptions to China, India, Italy, Greece, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and Turkey. Each of those countries has already demonstrated significant reductions of the purchase of Iranian crude over the past six months, and indeed two of those eight have already completely ended imports of Iranian crude and will not resume as long as the sanctions regime remains in place. We continue negotiations to get all of the nations to zero.

Additionally today, 100 percent of the revenue Iran receives from the sale of oil will be held in foreign accounts. Iran can only use this money for humanitarian trade or bilateral – in bilateral nonsanctioned goods.

Speaking of Iran's nuclear program, we have decided to grant narrow and

temporary waivers that permit the continuation of three nonproliferation projects currently underway. Allowing these activities to continue for the time being will improve ongoing oversight of Iran's civil nuclear program and make these facilities less susceptible to illicit and illegal nuclear uses. Rest assured Iran will never come close to getting a nuclear weapon on President Trump's watch.

I will now turn it over to Secretary Mnuchin.

SECRETARY MNUCHIN: Thank you. Today the United States is executing on the final actions to withdraw on the Obama administration's fatally flawed Iran deal. This morning, we will fully impose sanctions on the Iranian regime. This is part of a maximum unprecedented economic pressure campaign the United States is waging against the world's largest state sponsor of terror. Today we sanctioned more than 700 individuals, entities, aircraft, and vessels as part of Treasury's largest ever single day action targeting Iran. Over 300 of those sanctions are new targets. In addition, we are relisting hundreds of individuals and entities that were previously sanctioned, granted sanctions relief under the JCPOA.

These powerful sanctions directly target Iran's banking, energy, and shipping sectors. The Iranian regime has funneled billions of dollars for the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps force through the banking sector. Today's designation includes 50 Iranian banks and their foreign and domestic subsidiaries in connection with Iran's regime support for international terrorism, proliferation of mass destruction, or their means of delivery and human rights abuses.

Our actions include the identification of more than 400 targets, including over 200 persons and vessels in Iran's shipping and energy sector; Iran Air, the national airline of Iran, and more than 65 aircraft; the placement of nearly 250 persons in associated block properties on the Specially Designated Nationals list; the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran.

Over the last five months, Treasury has implemented some of the most impactful sanctions ever seen. Combined with the previous actions, more than 900 Iran-related targets have been sanctioned under this administration in less than two years, marking the highest-ever level of U.S. economic pressure on Iran. We are making it abundantly clear to the Iranian regime that they will face mounting financial isolation until they fundamentally change their destabilizing behavior.

Iran's leaders must cease support for terrorism and end destructive regional activities immediately. They must stop ballistic missiles and abandon their nuclear ambitions if they seek a path to sanctions relief. We are watching the Iranian regime with laser focus. If they try to evade our sanctions, we will take action to disrupt their activity time and time again.

The maximum pressure exerted by the United States is only going to mount from here. Companies around the world need to know we will be strictly enforcing our sanctions. Thank you.

MODERATOR: That – we'll have time for a few questions. Let's go to Sky News, Cordelia Lynch.

QUESTION: Hello, this is a question for Secretary Pompeo. The President invoked Game of Thrones when he was discussing sanctions. Do you think that was appropriate?

SECRETARY POMPEO: This administration has been consistent from, frankly, President Trump's campaign to the first day he was inaugurated about our intention. We understand that the Islamic Republic of Iran presents a threat to the United States of America, and we are determined to stop it. And much has been made about this Game of Thrones. Qasem Soleimani responded, and I haven't seen any of you comment on that. This is a man who has American blood on his hands. He's killed American soldiers, and that's not funny. And the actions that the Islamic Republic of Iran are taking are not about little silly things that people get wrapped up here in Washington, D.C., but about very serious matters that impact all of Europe, all the Middle East and the world, and our young men and women who are in harm's way today.

MODERATOR: Thank you, sir. Next question is going to be Asahi Shimbun, Yuko Lanham. Yuko?

All right. We're going to move on to EFE, Beatriz Pascual Macias.

QUESTION: Hi, thank you very much. Thank you very much. I was wondering, what could you say to the European countries that were expecting to be in this list of countries that are not going to suffer the sanctions? And what kind of relation have you have with them, what are the conversations regarding this topic? Thank you.

SECRETARY POMPEO: You want to talk about on the financial side, Steven?

SECRETARY MNUCHIN: Well, I don't think we've ever said that it relates to the European countries, that they'll be exempt. I think quite the contrary. We've said that we expect them to honor the sanctions. Having said that, there are certain transactions that they can continue to do, whether they're humanitarian transactions or specific trade in the restricted accounts. And again, let me just emphasize, as I said last week, we will make sure that humanitarian transactions are really going for those purposes. So this is not about hurting the people of Iran, but we will not let money be diverted to humanitarian purposes and then put for terrorist activities.

SECRETARY POMPEO: And then just to follow up, with respect to the relationship, we've been very candid and clear with all of the European countries. There are more than three, we should note. Many of them are fully supportive of what it is that we are undertaking. They have taken a different approach with respect to the JCPOA, but it is also something that the whole world should know. European businesses have already made their decisions. They've decided not to do business with the Islamic Republic of Iran, and so we're very confident that the sanctions regime that we're putting in place will be effective.

MODERATOR: Al Jazeera English, James Bays.

QUESTION: James Bays from Al Jazeera English. You talk about the destabilizing behavior of Iran in the region. How does that differ from the behavior of Saudi Arabia?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So let me just go through the list: Underwriting Lebanese Hizballah, that presents a threat to the United States of America and Israel; underwriting the Houthis in Yemen, causing an enormous conflict to take place there in that country; the efforts in Iraq to undermine the Iraqi Government, funding Shia militias that are not in the best interests of the Iraqi people; their efforts in Syria; the list goes on. The difference in behavior between those two countries is remarkable. Since we've taken office, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has been very supportive of our efforts on counterterrorism. They've assisted us. I know Secretary Mnuchin has worked with them on a couple of projects as well. It is completely clear the Islamic Republic of Iran is the destabilizing force in the Middle East today.

Do you want to add to that?

SECRETARY MNUCHIN: No, I think it's well said.

MODERATOR: Last question. Let's go to TASS, Dmitry Kirsanov.

QUESTION: Thank you. Gentlemen, thanks a lot for coming over to brief us. For Secretary Pompeo. Sir, you mentioned that three waivers have been issued for the civilian nuclear energy project. Could you clarify what those are? And Bushehr nuclear power plant, will it be the one under the waiver? Thank you.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you. That's a great question. It's a pretty complicated area, that nonproliferation issue. There are three. Bushehr is one of the three. But if I may, we will get out a full fact sheet on that here in the next hour or so that you'll all be able to see. What we've authorized is very narrow, very limited, very time limited as well, but important nonetheless that these nonproliferation projects are not things that are taking place without some ability to see what's going on, and we'll give you the full details of the scope of those waivers.

MODERATOR: We have time for – this is the last one. Let's go right to the front, right here, please.

QUESTION: Thank you. Roj Zalla with RUDAW TV in Iraqi Kurdistan. Mr. Secretary, Iran has very powerful hands in Iraq. Are you not concerned that with these sanctions Iran might increase the pressure on some of your allies in Iraq? And in that case, what can you do to reassure those allies?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So it's a very reasonable question. Here's the facts. Since the United States entered the JCPOA in 2015, Iran has turned up the heat on those very entities to which you're referring. So we have a history, we have data set, we have a historical basis upon which to say that we know that the JCPOA didn't impede Iran one bit from putting pressure on Kurdistan, pressure in Baghdad, pressure throughout the region. We are very hopeful that the set of efforts we're undertaking – we've focused here on the financial and

economic, but the full range of efforts we're taking to push back against the Islamic Republic of Iran will have the intended effect of reducing Iran's capacity to be destabilizing and present risk to the Middle East, to Europe, and the world.

MODERATOR: With that, that concludes this morning's briefing. Thank you very much to Secretaries Pompeo and Mnuchin.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you all

MODERATOR: Thank you, sir. Thank you all

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[Press Releases: Joint Statement Following the Annual Bilateral U.S.-Polish Strategic Cooperation Consultative Group \(SCCG\)](#)

Media Note
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
November 5, 2018

The following is the text of a joint statement following the annual bilateral U.S.-Polish Strategic Cooperation Consultative Group (SCCG).

Begin text:

Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security Andrea

Thompson, and Polish Under Secretary for Security Policy, Minister Bartosz Cichocki, co-chaired the bilateral Strategic Cooperation Consultative Group (SCCG) in Warsaw, Poland on November 5, 2018. The SCCG is a forum for consultation and cooperation on a wide range of regional and global security issues that reflect the depth of the relationship between the United States and Poland. This meeting of the SCCG built upon the 12th round of the Poland-U.S. Strategic Dialogue in Washington, D.C. in September 2018, and the Declaration signed on September 18, 2018 in Washington by the Presidents of Poland and the United States entitled ***“Safeguarding Freedom, Building Prosperity Through the U.S.-Poland Strategic Partnership”***.

As North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Allies, the United States and Poland discussed a wide range of issues related to Polish-American relations, including NATO deterrence and defense policy, as well as bilateral security cooperation issues such as the U.S. military presence in Poland, the U.S. European Deterrence Initiative, and defense industry cooperation. They also discussed initiatives on European security such as the OSCE’s Structured Dialogue and EU defense initiatives, as well as a range of nonproliferation issues, including Russia’s repeated violation of the INF Treaty. The two countries reaffirmed that the relationship between the United States and Poland is stronger than ever, and that the wide ranging SCCG dialogue helps to further solidify the bilateral partnership.

End text.

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[Press Releases: Ambassador Nathan A. Sales Travel to Saudi Arabia and Bahrain](#)

Media Note
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
November 5, 2018

Ambassador Nathan A. Sales, the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, will travel to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia November 5-6 and Manama, Bahrain November 7-8. He will meet with leaders there to discuss cooperation to blunt the Iranian regime's support for terrorism, countering the financing of terrorism, and deterring terrorist travel.

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[Press Releases: Interview With John Dickerson of CBS Face the Nation](#)

Interview
Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Washington, DC
November 4, 2018

QUESTION: We want to go now to the State Department Diplomatic Room in Washington and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. Mr. Secretary, I want to start with the sanctions that will be reimposed this week on Iran. A number of European countries do business with Iran. The President had formally said anyone doing business with Iran will not be doing business with the United States. So can European allies expect they will not be doing business with the United States?

SECRETARY POMPEO: John, good morning. That's right. The European companies will not be permitted to do business with both the United States and with

Iran, frankly since May, since the President's announcement of withdrawal from the ill-fated agreement. European companies have fled Iran in great numbers. Hundreds of businesses have departed Iran. The whole world understands that these sanctions are real, that they are important, that they drive the Iranian people's opportunity to make the changes in Iran that they so desperately want and stop Iran from having the wealth and money that they need to continue to foment terror around the world.

QUESTION: But it's the companies that won't be doing business, not the countries themselves. In other words, they won't be punished if any company doing business in Iran – the country won't be punished.

SECRETARY POMPEO: That's right. These sanctions apply to those who conduct sanctionable transactions. The Treasury has a set of sanctions, the State Department has its own set of sanctions, and those will all come back into place on Monday of this week, and they'll be the toughest sanctions ever placed against the Islamic Republic of Iran.

QUESTION: The President put out a poster of himself and said, "Sanctions are coming." What was that about?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yeah, he was putting the world on notice that the terror regime which threatens Israel through Iranian funding of Lebanese Hizballah; that the terror regime that attempted to conduct an assassination in Denmark over the past few weeks; that the terror regime that continues to fund the Houthis launching missiles into Riyadh and into Dubai – that's going to stop. That behavior must change, and sanctions from the United States will be reimposed at midnight tonight.

QUESTION: What if they restart their nuclear program in Iran?

SECRETARY POMPEO: We're confident that the Iranians will not make that decision.

QUESTION: Let me ask you a question about North Korea. You have talks this week. North Korea is saying they might restart their nuclear program if the U.S. does not start lifting sanctions. Is it still the U.S. position that North Korea will not see any economic sanctions lift until there is complete denuclearization?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So, John, I will. I'll be in New York City at the end of this week meeting with my counterpart, Kim Yong-chol. I expect we'll make some real progress, including an effort to make sure that the summit between our two leaders can take place, where we can make substantial steps towards denuclearization.

John, we have to remember and the American people need to remember the North Koreans haven't launched a missile, haven't conducted a nuclear test. They allowed the return of American remains. We've had success in just the handful of months since this past June, and we continue to make good progress. I'm confident that we'll advance the ball again this week when I'm in New York City.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, you said that North Korea will not see any economic sanctions lifted until it has demonstrated complete denuclearization. Is that still your position?

SECRETARY POMPEO: It is. Not only complete denuclearization, but our capacity to verify that that has taken place –

QUESTION: Okay.

SECRETARY POMPEO: – is also a prerequisite to lifting economic sanctions.

QUESTION: Let me ask you about the caravan at the U.S. southern border. General Colin Powell said, “I see no threat requiring [that] this kind of deployment.” He’s referring there to the deployment of troops from the Pentagon. Retired General Martin Dempsey said it was “a wasteful deployment of over-stretched Soldiers and Marines.” What’s your response?

SECRETARY POMPEO: This is a problem that’s gone on too long. President Trump is determined to ensure that we have sovereignty of America at our southern border and that we protect our American border.

As the Secretary of State, I’ve been very involved in working with the governments in Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, and certainly the Government of Mexico, and I’ve also had the chance to speak with the incoming government that is now 26 days out from taking power in Mexico. We have made clear to them they need to undertake every effort that they can to stop this illegal migration from entering the United States, and the President has made very clear they will not be permitted to enter our country unlawfully.

QUESTION: The charge –

SECRETARY POMPEO: If they want to come here legally, if they want to come here lawfully, that’s the American tradition. It’s the American way. We continue to be the most generous nation in the world with respect to immigration. But illegal immigration will not be permitted.

QUESTION: The charge here, Mr. Secretary, is that the President is thinking about this in political terms and that’s why he’s done this deployment, all of this rhetoric this week. Do you think he thinks about it in political terms, this caravan and how it might benefit the Republicans?

SECRETARY POMPEO: I’ve been involved in scores of conversations about stopping illegal immigration from Mexico, and never once has there been a discussion of the political impact in U.S. domestic politics. It has always been –

QUESTION: Then, Mr. Secretary –

SECRETARY POMPEO: – about securing the safety of the American people and securing our southern border.

QUESTION: So if that’s never happened, why then did the President – in a rally said, speaking about the caravan, “Did they energize our base or what?”

SECRETARY POMPEO: The President has been trying diligently to get our foolish immigration laws changed since he took office. He talked about this in his campaign. Many of the challenges we face today with illegal immigration are because we have a set of rules, a set of laws, that don't allow us to fully secure that southern border. The President is working through the proper process, the Constitution and political process, to make those changes to the laws, and he is very hopeful, I think, that when Congress returns in January there will be a Congress prepared to support his efforts to secure our southern border.

QUESTION: But you would agree –

SECRETARY POMPEO: That's completely appropriate.

QUESTION: You would agree that the President thinks this is a benefit for his base, which he says has been energized by this caravan and his response to it. So it seems like he does see it as a political benefit.

SECRETARY POMPEO: As the Secretary of State, I want to talk about American national security. We are determined to secure the southern border, John.

QUESTION: Okay. I'll take that lack of a response as a yes. Final question, Mr. Secretary, is on Saudi Arabia. You are waiting for more investigation on the death of columnist Jamal Khashoggi. What more needs to be answered?

SECRETARY POMPEO: We still have lots of work to do to figure out the full range of persons that need to be held accountable. We're working with the Turkish Government, with the Saudi Government, and with anyone else who has relevant facts for us to be able to determine all of those who were responsible for this atrocious murder of Jamal Khashoggi, which the Saudis themselves now acknowledge was premeditated. We need to get to the bottom of it. We need to find out who was responsible and hold them accountable, and do all of this, John, while protecting the enormously important strategic interests that the United States maintains with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. We began our conversation about Iran. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has been an important partner for the United States in attempting to change the behavior of the world's largest state sponsor of terror from that Islamic republic.

QUESTION: Very briefly, is it still possible the crown prince could be involved in this?

SECRETARY POMPEO: We're going to chase the facts wherever they go –

QUESTION: All right.

SECRETARY POMPEO: – and we're going to hold accountable each of those who we find responsible.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, we're very grateful. Thanks so much for being with us.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you, John. Have a good day.

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Press Releases: Delivery of Humanitarian Assistance to Rukban

Press Statement
Heather Nauert

Department Spokesperson

Washington, DC
November 3, 2018

We welcome the news that the UN is finally able to begin delivering aid to the Rukban encampment from Damascus. This delivery comes after months of pressure from the United States, the UN, the UN Security Council, and wider international community for the Syrian regime to allow the UN to deliver critically-needed assistance to the displaced persons at Rukban.

We also recognize Russia's role in persuading the regime to finally comply with the UN Security Council's authorizations for the delivery of cross-line humanitarian aid by issuing the administrative approvals required for this convoy to move; we hope to see Russia use its influence with the regime to address the continued lack of humanitarian access across much of Syria.

Above all, we must recognize the tireless, courageous efforts of the humanitarian workers who are undertaking these operations. We hope this delivery lays the foundation for sustained rapid, safe, and unhindered humanitarian access to Rukban and all areas in need throughout Syria through cross-line and cross-border aid deliveries in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 2393, and we will continue our diplomatic efforts to ensure that is the case.

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