

Press Releases: Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo With Mark Reardon of the Mark Reardon Show

Interview
Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Via Teleconference
November 1, 2018

QUESTION: Secretary of State Mike Pompeo with us this afternoon on KMOX. Mr. Secretary, how are you?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Good afternoon, Mark. I'm good. How are you doing today?

QUESTION: Good. Thanks for coming on. Let me get right to it here because we have a variety of issues. Can you explain what's happening in Yemen right now and why – I guess one of the questions would be why folks here in my listening area should pay attention or how this plays into the broader issue with foreign policy.

SECRETARY POMPEO: So two things. First, in Yemen, al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula continues there to plot terror attacks on the United States of America. The United States is involved in order to prevent those. We've been very successful to date at disrupting those terror plots. We sometimes take for granted the fact that we've not had terror attacks from al-Qaida here in the United States for a bit, but that's due to a lot of hard work, much of which is taking place today in Yemen.

Second, we have Iran very active in Yemen. Iran, the world's largest state sponsor of terror, continues to provide missiles and artillery that threatens Western interests throughout the Middle East. It's those very real threats to the United States that cause us to have an interest in making sure that the American people are safe and secure.

QUESTION: And this sort of plays into the topic of Iran sanctions, and you're imposing new sanctions. These are called snapback sanctions. What's the goal here? What are we trying to accomplish overall?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Iran continues to proliferate missiles. Just this week in Denmark an Iranian intelligence officer was arrested for having attempted an

assassination attack inside of Europe. These kinds of things could most certainly impact American citizens traveling, business people doing business in Europe. This remains the world's largest state sponsor of terror.

The previous administration had entered into the JCPOA. President Trump said, and I agree with him, it was among the worst deals ever struck by the United States. And so the President withdrew back in May, and now this coming Monday we will reimpose the sanctions that were in place before that deal was entered into, which will deny Iran the money they need to continue to foment terror around the world.

QUESTION: So they – I'm sure they want to get around those sanctions. They're trying to make financial ties with other countries. Do you think they can do that successfully?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Well, the six months since the withdrawal from the JCPOA would indicate that they're going to have a real challenge in doing that. Nearly all of the major companies that were doing business in Iran – European companies, Asian companies, countries frankly from around the world that had their businesses doing work in Iran – have withdrawn from that country. And so I think they will be incredibly challenged to continue to do business with the rest of the world. The President has made this point very clearly: You can choose to do business with Iran or with the United States, but you cannot do both.

QUESTION: So if the sanctions result in the pressure that you're hoping for, what do you hope that the reaction then from the Iranians will be?

SECRETARY POMPEO: We hope they'll behave like a normal nation – stop conducting assassination plots in Europe, stop launching missiles into Saudi Arabia and the Emirates, cease their activities all around the world in supporting Hizballah that risks – puts at risk Israeli lives every day and Americans who are traveling to Israel as well. The kinds of activities we're asking them to cease, they're no different, Mark, than what we ask every country in the world to do. Behave like a normal nation, and then you are welcome to rejoin the community of nations.

QUESTION: And that sounds like it makes sense, but with Iran in particular we haven't seen them behaving in a way in the past to indicate that that would be something that they would do moving forward. Have we?

SECRETARY POMPEO: We haven't seen that. But one of the reasons we haven't is because the previous administration took an approach where it thought that it could work with Iran, it thought that if it opened up and cut a deal with them that the ayatollah would change his ways. That has proven to be patently false. Indeed the risk to the world from Iran increased during the JCPOA, and this administration is determined not to repeat that.

We're going to be diligent. These sanctions are not aimed at the Iranian people. Indeed, it is the Iranian people who we are supporting, and we hope that it will be the Iranian people that will demand that their government simply do the things that we've asked, to behave like a normal country.

QUESTION: Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is with me on KMOX this afternoon talking about a variety of foreign policy topics. Have you heard the audio tape of Khashoggi being killed yet?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Mark, I have not.

QUESTION: What's the next step in that situation? Obviously we have jobs on the line here. It's a tough situation because you have to balance human rights versus the economic reality. Boeing here in St. Louis, there are big defense contracts. How do you navigate these waters?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So we have deep and long-term strategic relationships with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and at the same time the murder of Jamal Khashoggi in the consulate in Turkey is unacceptable. President Trump has made clear that it violates all norms, and we don't – we neither condone it, nor will we permit it to go unresponded to.

So with respect – you asked with respect to next steps. We're continuing to understand the fact pattern. We are reviewing putting sanctions on the individuals that we have been able to identify to date that have – that were engaged in that murder. It'll take us probably a handful more weeks before we have enough evidence to actually put those sanctions in place, but I think we'll be able to get there. We're going to find the fact pattern. The President said we will demand accountability for those who were involved in the commission of this heinous crime.

At the same time, President Trump has made very clear not only do we have important commercial relationships, but important strategic relationships, national security relationships with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and we intend to make sure that those relationships remain intact.

QUESTION: Are you satisfied with the level of cooperation right now in that investigation with the Saudis?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yes. We're getting cooperation. We've had good cooperation with Turkey as well. And frankly, there's been good cooperation between Turkey and Saudi Arabia, although sometimes uneven. There's been good cooperation there as well. So yes, we're continuing to develop the fact pattern, as are other countries around the world. We'll form our own judgments about who should be held accountable for that murder.

QUESTION: You've been racking up some frequent flier miles to North Korea. I think you've been there four times already. There hasn't really been a breakthrough. What's the status of those negotiations, or what might happen? There's still talk of a summit next year, another summit. What can you tell us about that?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yes, sir. Well, we've made some progress, right? We stopped their missile testing. There is no longer nuclear tests being conducted. Those are really dangerous activities, and the North Koreans have stopped them.

We've had – they have closed down a couple of sites. We have been told that

we will get to inspect those sites shortly. Chairman Kim told me that himself. I'm hopeful that that will take place before too long as well.

And then we are continuing our negotiations not only, as Americans have seen, on the return of the remains of our fallen there in North Korea – a very important thing that we shouldn't underestimate either, at least the beginning of that. It is very important to those families.

But we're working diligently to complete what Chairman Kim and President Trump agreed to back in June, which is the complete and verifiable denuclearization of North Korea. No one ever thought it would be easy, straightforward, or quick, and so we're working to put the next steps in place so we can begin to take real, measurable, impactful steps, reducing North Korea's nuclear threat. And when we're done, when we get to the end, President Trump wants there to be a brighter future for the North Korean people. We're determined to get to that point.

QUESTION: Obviously this is a trust but verify situation, but why should we believe that the North truly wants to give up those nuclear weapons?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Well, he said that he will. We'll have to verify it. We have to see it. Your point is well taken. No one should for a moment believe that President Trump or me or this administration is going to take anyone's word for this. We'll need to see it. We'll need to know it. And once we've had the capacity, the opportunity to verify that this has taken place, then and only then will the economic sanctions that have been put on North Korea be removed.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, thanks so much for joining me here in St. Louis. Appreciate that.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you, Mark.

QUESTION: What's a tougher job, CIA director or Secretary of State? You've had two non-stressful jobs.

SECRETARY POMPEO: They're both incredible privileges to serve America, Mark.

QUESTION: I thought that might be the answer. Mr. Secretary, Mike Pompeo, thank you so much.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you, sir.

QUESTION: Appreciate it.

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Press Releases: Department Press Briefing – November 1, 2018

Robert Palladino
Deputy Spokesperson

Department Press Briefing
Washington, DC
November 1, 2018

Index for Today's Briefing

- [RUSSIA](#)
- [CUBA](#)
- [BRAZIL](#)
- [MEXICO](#)
- [NORTH KOREA](#)
- [ISRAEL/PALESTINIANS](#)
- [SYRIA](#)
- [IRAN](#)
- [CHINA](#)
- [RUSSIA](#)
- [TURKEY](#)
- [SAUDI ARABIA](#)
- [BURMA](#)
- [YEMEN](#)

TRANSCRIPT:

Today's briefing was held off-camera, so no video is available.

2:24 p.m. EDT

MR PALLADINO: One for the top. Today in Vienna, at the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the United States joined a coalition of 16 countries invoking the Moscow Mechanism, a rare diplomatic action reserved for serious human rights concerns. This action triggers a formal international fact-finding mission to look into reports of impunity for human rights violations and abuses in the Russian Federation's Republic of Chechnya.

The United States and other OSCE countries repeatedly have pressed the

Russian Federation to investigate disturbing reports of extrajudicial killings, torture, arbitrary detentions, and other violations and abuses in Chechnya. These violations and abuses targeted members of the LGBTI community, members of human rights, nongovernmental organizations, and those the Chechen regime labeled, quote-unquote, "terrorists."

We and likeminded countries have demanded that Moscow hold accountable those responsible for such violations and abuses. Russia has failed to provide a substantive response to repeated expressions of international concern and calls for accountability. Therefore, with these actions at the OSCE, the administration will continue to work with our European partners to expose Russia's human rights violations and abuses.

With that, I'd be happy to take some questions.

QUESTION: Thanks, Robert. This is actually serious, though: Where is Heather? Is she in the building?

MR PALLADINO: Heather is in the building, hard at work.

QUESTION: Is she in New York, measuring curtains? (Laughter.)

MR PALLADINO: Heather is at work today, hard at work.

QUESTION: Okay. But she's not down here. She hasn't graced us with her presence in some time.

MR PALLADINO: Yes. If you may have noticed, Matt, we have a deputy spokesperson now.

QUESTION: Yes.

MR PALLADINO: And that would be me. And Heather –

QUESTION: Okay. Well, you're welcome to be here too.

MR PALLADINO: Excellent. Thank you, Matt.

QUESTION: I'm just glad that there is a body up there. Okay. With that out of the way –

QUESTION: But can we maybe – Matt –

QUESTION: Sure.

QUESTION: Let's just ask about – I mean, there's reports that she is – has she accepted a job – the job as UN ambassador?

MR PALLADINO: That – any – I've seen that report. And any announcement like that, of course, is the prerogative of the White House, and that's the President's decision to make.

QUESTION: Would it be a job that she's interested in?

MR PALLADINO: I have absolutely no information in that regard. What I would say, though, is she's a fantastic boss.

QUESTION: How many off-camera practice sessions you have been given to? (Laughter.)

MR PALLADINO: This will be my fifth. This will be my fifth. Please.

QUESTION: Yeah. Into a little bit of substance – just a little bit.

MR PALLADINO: Yeah. Good.

QUESTION: Today Ambassador Bolton down at Miami made a speech in which he lashed out or criticized what he called the "Troika of Tyranny." And I want to ask a couple things about that. One is who came up with this "Troika of Tyranny" thing? I mean –

MR PALLADINO: These were the national security advisor's remarks, and I would have to refer you to the national security advisor on his remarks.

QUESTION: But I mean, it seems like too cute by half. "Trinity of Totalitarianism" and "Trio of Terrorism" and all those kind of – I mean, it just seems a little odd. But anyway, the speech in fact was serious, even if that line wasn't. And he went after Cuba, announced new sanctions.

But at the same time as he was giving his speech down in Miami, in New York the General Assembly was voting on the annual resolution that Cuba brings every year that condemns the embargo. Yesterday Ambassador Haley had challenged or had posed the question: Who will vote with us? And today the answer came back: two. Only – well, only one country voted with you – Israel. A hundred and eighty-nine countries voted against; the United States and Israel were alone. And – sorry – 189 countries voted in favor, and the United States and Israel vote – were the only two that voted against the resolution.

And – so I want to know, this is the same thing that happened last year, what does this tell you about your policy toward Cuba?

MR PALLADINO: We are – our policy towards Cuba – the ambassador – Ambassador Bolton today laid out our policy towards Cuba pretty clearly. That came out not long ago. And these countries are repressive, and the United States is going to stand firmly against them.

QUESTION: Well, I'm sorry, but what does it mean – what does it tell you, for a second year in a row, the second time the administration has gone through this exercise at the UN General Assembly, and literally the entire rest of the world, with the exception of Israel, votes against you. Do you not see that – or can you not accept that other countries have a problem with the policy?

MR PALLADINO: We're committed to the people of the countries that are repressed in our hemisphere, and the suffering of the Cuban people,

along with the Venezuelans and the Nicaraguans, is something that the United States is going to continue to stand up for and speak out for. And so we're – that's our policy. We're going to continue to pursue that.

QUESTION: So this vote, this annual vote, is just irrelevant to you? You don't think that it means anything? You don't – you're not willing to take any lesson or anything from the fact that every other single country in the world, with the exception of one, disagrees with you?

MR PALLADINO: We're going to continue to speak full-throatedly, forthrightly for the freedom of people in our hemisphere. It doesn't – we're going to stand up for that, and I don't have much further. Yeah.

QUESTION: You can do all that – but you can do all that without the embargo, can't you?

MR PALLADINO: We are going to maintain pressure on this regime until we're able to see progress for the Cuban people.

QUESTION: On the same subject, the election of Bolsonaro was seen as somewhat controversial and pretty divisive there. The comments he's made have been homophobic, misogynist, racist. But the national security advisor said that his election is a positive sign for the region. Does the State Department agree with that, and if so, why?

MR PALLADINO: The President and the Secretary of State have both had good calls with the president-elect, and we look forward to working with his administration, and we're confident in Brazil's democracy and the choice of the Brazilian people.

Yeah. Next question?

QUESTION: Does –

MR PALLADINO: Let's go to Francesco.

QUESTION: Does the Secretary and the State Department also think that Bolsonaro is a likeminded leader, the same kind of policies coming from him and the United States?

MR PALLADINO: We look forward to working with the president-elect and having a close and constructive relationship with Brazil.

QUESTION: Well, is the State Department somewhat disturbed by some of these comments that he's made?

MR PALLADINO: We're – we are – we take Brazil's commitment to democracy and human rights, and that's something that we're going to continue to engage on and work closely with Brazil.

Yes. Let's go – any more on the Western Hemisphere?

QUESTION: Well, actually, yeah, someone –

MR PALLADINO: All right.

QUESTION: Does the State Department agree with the opinion expressed by others in the administration that these caravans, plural or singular, represents an invasion of the United States?

MR PALLADINO: We're – our position – we're in close contact with Mexico and Central America. I mean, the Secretary of State had a call just yesterday with the foreign minister, and we're working – of Mexico. We remain in close contact, and we are – we welcome the efforts that the Government of Mexico is taking in their plan to work with the UN High Commissioner on Refugees. They're building up an existing program to address this situation. And we support their work and we stand ready to assist both the Government of Mexico and the United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees to address this concern. And I'll leave it at that.

QUESTION: What's the concern? The concern is that it's an invasion from the State Department's point of view, or that these people represent a threat? Is that –

MR PALLADINO: We are – we encourage all countries in the region to support safe, orderly, and legal immigration. The movements of people between and across countries' borders must be in accordance with the law, and I'll leave it at that.

Any more Western Hemisphere? Let's go to North Korea.

QUESTION: Thank you very much. Forgive me my voice, because I've been to dentist today, so I cannot much talk.

MR PALLADINO: It sounds fine. Please.

QUESTION: Okay. Did the United States allow observator or inspectors to dismantle North Korea's nuclear site? Is it observations or inspections for the North Korean nuclear site? What is it, because a little bit confused about this, because they already destroyed the Punggye-ri nuclear site. But why they invited right now for the observations for that, or they invite other country too for inspectors? Or what is that?

MR PALLADINO: Okay. I – this is going to be something that will be discussed moving forward – the details of inspectors, the composition and the modalities of the inspection, and I would leave it at that.

QUESTION: What – but –

MR PALLADINO: Any more North Korea?

QUESTION: Did they have –

MR PALLADINO: Any more North Korea?

QUESTION: North Korea.

MR PALLADINO: Francesco.

QUESTION: It's been more than week and a half since the Secretary said that he will meet – week and a half with some North Korean counterpart. Does that mean that this meeting is canceled or that it's just postponed, and do you have any date or announcement to make?

MR PALLADINO: He said yesterday that he would be speaking to his counterpart soon – next week, I believe. And so I don't have any further details to announce today on how – on that, and I'll leave it at that.

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

MR PALLADINO: Sure, Elise. Go ahead.

QUESTION: Okay. The Secretary said he was going to be meeting with his counterpart. That was like – as Francesco said. The South Koreans are saying that he's going to be meeting with him, and he said he's going to be speaking with him. So, I mean, isn't it kind of logical to assume that the North Korean counterpart is coming in the next week or two or in the coming weeks and you just don't have a date? I mean, why are you parsing as opposed to, like, he's speaking to him, he's meeting with him? I mean, he said he was going to be meeting with him, even if a date isn't scheduled.

MR PALLADINO: Because I have nothing further to announce at this time.

QUESTION: We understand you don't have a –

MR PALLADINO: And so I think the Secretary's words speak for themselves and I don't want to get ahead of anything that we have to announce.

QUESTION: Well, he said that he was going to be meeting with him, so should we go with that he said he's going to be meeting with him or that he said he's going to be speaking with him? Like, I think there's a little bit of parsing going on and it's like a little too cute by half in a sense.

MR PALLADINO: I think a meeting would be a safe conclusion based upon all the things that have been said previously, but I have no further –

QUESTION: And there's just no specific schedule? It's not specifically scheduled?

MR PALLADINO: We have nothing to announce at this time, absolutely.

QUESTION: North Korea.

MR PALLADINO: North Korea?

QUESTION: Yes, North Korea.

MR PALLADINO: Let's go North Korea over there, please.

QUESTION: Thank you. Yesterday Secretary Pompeo in an interview said that inspections in North Korea will be something that he'll be talking with the North Korean counterpart, right, so is he going into such details as a Secretary of State? Because the working-level meeting that U.S. has requested to North Korea, North Korea has refused to hold that with Representative Biegun. Is this why Secretary Pompeo is going into details of the inspections with his counterpart in a high-level meeting?

MR PALLADINO: I would disagree with the characterization of your question. The Secretary – there's a lot of things that we are going to be talking about and the Secretary's going to be talking about. I don't want to get ahead of the negotiations that the Secretary of State will be involved in, but one of the big things that he'll be talking about is a – the next summit between the President and Chairman Kim, and that's something that we previously have talked about and it's something very much that we look forward to moving ahead on as well.

And separately, Special Representative Biegun has just been to the region, and he remains engaged with his counterparts as well. Our objectives here remain the same, and that's the final, fully verified denuclearization of North Korea. Nothing has changed in this regard. We continue to move forward and we're at a good place.

A follow-up, sure. Please, follow up.

QUESTION: One more follow-up. One more follow-up. One more follow-up to that, yes. So is the State Department in discussion with international organizations like IAEA and CTBTO to set up the modality for inspections in North Korea?

MR PALLADINO: I don't have any information on that from the podium today, yeah.

QUESTION: North Korea.

QUESTION: One more North Korea.

MR PALLADINO: Any more on North Korea?

QUESTION: Way back here –

MR PALLADINO: Let's go to North Korea over here.

QUESTION: When the Secretary just recently spoke about international inspectors being let into two sites, one of the things that the North Koreans have stated is that that would only happen if there were corresponding measures by the U.S. Can you say whether or not an end of war declaration is among the measures that the U.S. is still considering in this upcoming meeting?

MR PALLADINO: Yeah, I'm not going to get ahead of any future

negotiations. There's still a lot of work to be done, and as the President and the Secretary of State both have said, our eyes are wide open, and we continue to work towards this.

QUESTION: When he said they committed, though, to allowing inspectors into those two sites, from what we've seen, they've committed as long as the U.S. is taking corresponding measures. So has the U.S. agreed to do anything to – as a corresponding measure in order to allow that to happen?

MR PALLADINO: I'm not going to get ahead of any negotiations that are going to be going forward.

On North Korea? Any more on North Korea?

QUESTION: South Korea.

QUESTION: Way in the back there is, Robert.

MR PALLADINO: All right, let's go to North Korea in the back.

QUESTION: Thank you. So, when Pompeo last visited North Korea, he had talked about accelerating the working level progress. So, wondering if there are plans for Steve Biegun to finally meet with his North Korean counterpart, and when the working level negotiations for the upcoming summit are expected to begin.

MR PALLADINO: I don't have any announcements on the special representative's meetings at this time.

Next subject, let's go to Said.

QUESTION: Robert, Robert –

MR PALLADINO: Said.

QUESTION: All right. Thank you, Robert.

QUESTION: Can we stay on South Korea?

MR PALLADINO: Let's go to Said. We can come back to South Korea.

QUESTION: Thank you. Last Sunday, the Israelis killed three Palestinian boys in Gaza, and yesterday they said it was a mistake because they were doing suspicious activities and so on. Shouldn't this stop? I mean, this has been going on now day after day, the Israelis doing this to suspicious activities. They deem all activities by Palestinians on their side as suspicious. Shouldn't this be outrageous? I think you would be outraged if this happened elsewhere.

MR PALLADINO: Well, I guess as a parent – this is a pretty dangerous place. And as a parent I might – I guess I would say that there's really no justification for the recklessness and cynicism that Hamas has shown

in urging people to engage in violence that exposes them to this terrible risk. And –

QUESTION: But these boys were not part of any demonstrations. They were playing. They were playing last Sunday. They were playing on their side, and they were targeted because the Israelis thought they were doing something suspicious. Should that excessive –

MR PALLADINO: Israel –

QUESTION: Let me ask you this directly. Should the excessive use of force that the Israelis do day after day, should they reduce that level of excessive force?

MR PALLADINO: Israel has a right to defend itself, and Hamas continues to drive peace further away and cause more suffering.

QUESTION: What's the meaning – I mean, you started that –

QUESTION: And how is that related to the two kids that were playing? I don't quite make a connection – playing children, Hamas.

QUESTION: And I don't get how you – why would you even say “as a parent.” Are you somehow holding the parents of these –

MR PALLADINO: No. I'm saying –

QUESTION: – kids responsible for allowing their children to play?

MR PALLADINO: I'm saying this is an extremely dangerous situation, and to allow teenagers into this area strikes – that is the heightened – that is cynicism at its – in its height.

QUESTION: So it's the parents – their parents' fault, that the Israelis shot them?

MR PALLADINO: We would call on Hamas to put the welfare and safety of the people of Gaza –

QUESTION: But you said specifically in your answer – you said “as a parent.” So I want to know what it is that you have against these Palestinian parents.

MR PALLADINO: This is a dangerous situation, and there really can be no justification for urging people, allowing people, to engage in violence in these areas that exposes them to such terrible risk.

QUESTION: But is there – but there is justification?

MR PALLADINO: This is dangerous. It exposes them to risk.

QUESTION: So – but there is justification? You can find someplace that there is justification for shooting children who are playing?

MR PALLADINO: Israel has a right to defend itself. And this is a dangerous situation. And for further –

QUESTION: Let me just follow up. One question. One. One more question.

MR PALLADINO: Fine.

QUESTION: Tomorrow marks the 101st anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, and the Palestinians have been for the past 101 year under occupation, military occupation, and so on. Isn't it time for them to get independence, maybe with your help? I mean, you're always championing human rights and independence and the right to sovereignty, and so on.

MR PALLADINO: We're looking – there is a – obviously, at the appropriate time, this administration will be releasing a peace plan, and we hope that the people will judge this plan by its merits. The Palestinian people deserve leadership that will give them a chance for a way forward to end this conflict.

And I'll move on. Let's go on.

QUESTION: Syria?

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

MR PALLADINO: Laurie. Laurie.

QUESTION: Yeah. How do you see the overall political situation in Syria now? On Saturday Turkey hosted a summit that included Russia, Germany, and France. Is there a reason you weren't there? And what's your view of the results of that summit?

MR PALLADINO: Our view of the results of that summit are we welcome the endorsement that occurred there regarding the Idlib deconfliction agreement between Turkey and Russia. And I'd say further about that meeting we are encouraged, frankly, on the specific commitment to launch the constitutional committee by the end of the year. And we will continue to consult with those that were present at that meeting to ensure that we continue in that regard.

As far as our coordination goes, we supported the four-party summit. We supported this, and we consulted extensively with the representatives of all four participants prior to it taking place. In the end, the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2254 is what we advocate and what we want everyone behind. This meeting helps us drive towards that as well, so we would welcome that. And our engagement on the issue certainly continues. Ambassador Jeffrey's – was, is in the region – or he's in Europe currently. He just participated in a small group meeting this past Monday, and that's just an example of our engagement. And we'll continue to push forward on that.

QUESTION: And if I could ask you a follow-up question on –

MR PALLADINO: Sure.

QUESTION: – what Secretary Pompeo said in his interview with Tony Katz today. He mentioned Turkey; we're working together to deny terrorist safe haven, terrorists who have, in fact, plotted to attack U.S. civil aviation. Could you explain what plot that was to attack U.S. civil aviation?

MR PALLADINO: I haven't heard the interview and I don't have any further information on that, Laurie, right now. Sorry about that.

QUESTION: China?

QUESTION: South Korea?

QUESTION: Russia?

MR PALLADINO: Let's go to South Korea. I promised South Korea. Let's go.

QUESTION: Can you confirm reports, both from Seoul and New Delhi, that the U.S. is giving a waiver for oil imports from Iran to South Korea and India?

MR PALLADINO: The United States is in the midst of an internal process to consider significant reduction exceptions for individual countries, but that is only on a case-by-case basis. We have – we continue to discuss our Iran policy with our counterparts around the world and the implications of our re-imposition of sanctions previously lifted or waived under the JCPOA.

QUESTION: Robert –

QUESTION: China?

QUESTION: Robert, on Iran?

MR PALLADINO: On Iran? Let's go – Iran in the front.

QUESTION: Robert, can you say as the administration goes through that process and is set to re-impose the JCPOA sanctions that the regime that will be in place will be at least as strong as the one that was lifted in 2015?

MR PALLADINO: We're quite confident moving forward. And then we're – if we look at what's already taken place, we see businesses making business decisions and leaving Iran. We're tracking around 100 major companies that have already made their business decisions to leave Iran and choose business with the United States over business with Iran. We are going to continue to push forward and we're quite confident.

QUESTION: There are some – on the enforcement side, though – on the enforcement side, though, there are some concerns. We talked about the waivers that you say you're looking at a case-by-case basis, but also

when it comes to processing transactions through SWIFT, that perhaps the enforcement regime won't be as strong as it was years ago.

MR PALLADINO: For any questions on SWIFT, I'd have to refer to the Department of Treasury. We are – we're quite confident moving forward that the actions that are being taken are going to help us exert maximum pressure against the Iranian regime and this leading state sponsor of terrorism is going to see revenues cut off significantly that will deprive it of its ability to fund terrorism throughout the region.

QUESTION: Robert –

QUESTION: China?

QUESTION: On Russia?

QUESTION: On Iran?

MR PALLADINO: Stay on Iran, please. Lesley.

QUESTION: Are there any countries that have actually gone down to zero on oil imports from Iran as you're moving into the sanctions?

MR PALLADINO: Lesley, I don't have that level of detail to speak to here at the podium today. Sorry. Anymore Iran?

QUESTION: Yeah.

QUESTION: China?

QUESTION: Russia?

MR PALLADINO: Iran?

QUESTION: Yes.

MR PALLADINO: Let's go – Michele.

QUESTION: Thank you. The State Department's Twitter feed and social media has been focusing a lot on human rights abuses and corruption in Iran in recent weeks and days, and I wonder if that's meant to encourage protesters to rise up, to make sure that Iranians don't blame the U.S. for economic hardships once the economic sanctions goes in. Can you just describe a little bit about what you're trying to do there?

MR PALLADINO: What I would say is the Iranian people are the ones who have suffered greatly thanks to the misuse of funds by the Iranian regime to fund proxies and malign activities across the globe. I would say the United States has at its disposal diplomatic information and economic avenues, and from the State Department that's something that we – we look at the realm of what we can accomplish and something that we pursue.

QUESTION: Wait, what does that – what does that mean?

QUESTION: Iran?

MR PALLADINO: Yep. Let's go – Nick.

QUESTION: So just, right off bat, if the U.S. believes that Iranian human rights negative actions have increased under this policy by this administration, is that not a negative side effect of the pressure that you're trying to impose, and self-defeating if the actual actions of the Iranian regime are going in the opposite direction you're trying to achieve?

MR PALLADINO: We're going to continue to exert maximum pressure against this regime. We ask that it modify its behavior, and the Secretary has been clear frequently on what we expect from the regime and human rights are certainly an important aspect of that. It's – this is something that we're going to ask others to help us with and we're going to maintain this pressure on this regime. There is much more that it's going to need to do.

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

QUESTION: Are you disappointed – are you disappointed that it –

MR PALLADINO: Nick, Nick, do your follow-up. Nick.

QUESTION: Just the specifics on the secondary sanctions. Bolton said yesterday a number of countries may not be able to go to zero immediately, we want to achieve maximum pressure, we don't want to harm friends or allies either. So just on what you were saying before, who are those friends and allies that you're negotiating with? And have there been any decisions made – I know you said you're in the middle of it, but any decisions made about specific countries on exceptions to Iranian oil sales?

MR PALLADINO: I would just say that we're prepared to work with countries that are reducing their imports on a case-by-case basis, and our goal remains to get to zero.

QUESTION: But you are interested in working with countries not necessarily to get to zero so long as they're showing progress?

MR PALLADINO: We're prepared to work with countries that are reducing their imports on a case-by-case basis. We have an internal process to consider significant reduction exceptions for individual countries and we continue to discuss that. And I'm not going to go into detail, any further detail on what that would constitute.

QUESTION: China?

QUESTION: Turkey?

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

QUESTION: China?

MR PALLADINO: Let's go to China.

QUESTION: Real quick.

MR PALLADINO: Who had China?

QUESTION: China right here.

MR PALLADINO: Okay.

QUESTION: Yeah. I just wanted to ask, there was a report out of Australia talking about these detention camps in Xinjiang increasing in size in just the last three months alone, and I'm wondering if the U.S. is considering any sanctions.

MR PALLADINO: We – I would just start off by saying we don't preview sanctions from the State Department.

QUESTION: Well, is the State Department considering any kind of action to sort of change Chinese behavior?

MR PALLADINO: I would say about these what the Chinese Government has called humane vocational training sites, I believe – I would say that the United States is alarmed that the Chinese Government has detained as many as one million Uighurs, Kazakhs, and other members of minority Muslim groups in re-education camps in Xinjiang. And claims that these camps are humane job-training centers are preposterous. We will – the United States will continue to demand transparency and access for diplomats and journalists to Xinjiang, and we urge China to immediately release all those arbitrarily detained in these camps.

QUESTION: Turkey?

QUESTION: On Russia?

MR PALLADINO: Any more on China? Okay.

QUESTION: Turkey?

MR PALLADINO: Let's go to Russia.

QUESTION: As we look to that deadline that we talked about yesterday, is it safe – on the secondary tranche of sanctions for chemical weapons on Russia, is it safe to say that they have neither assured the U.S. that they're not using chemical weapons and have not allowed international inspectors in to make sure that's the case?

MR PALLADINO: That's not something I'm going to be able to speak to at the podium.

QUESTION: Turkey?

QUESTION: Robert, can we stay in the region? Can we stay in the region?

MR PALLADINO: Let's go right here.

QUESTION: Actually, just on that and on the technical point that I raised yesterday about the actual date, so –

MR PALLADINO: Yeah. Okay.

QUESTION: So it goes by – this was actually announced and the determination was announced on August 8th, not – the determination may have been made on August 6th, but it wasn't – but Congress wasn't notified until August 8th. So are you sure that it's November 6th and not November 8th, as I suggested it might be yesterday?

MR PALLADINO: Matt, I'm as good as the information that I have, and I am quite –

QUESTION: Well, that's not very encouraging.

MR PALLADINO: I know, there we go. (Laughter.) No, I'll take the question, but I'm pretty confident that we are – that we are confident.

QUESTION: Thanks. Okay, because if Congress wasn't notified until the 8th, then I don't know –

MR PALLADINO: I'd have to look –

QUESTION: All right.

MR PALLADINO: I'd have to ask a little bit more about that, but based upon the State Department's calculation, we're looking at – we've got the date. Yeah.

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

QUESTION: (Inaudible.) Whether it's the 6th or the 8th, do you believe that you have to announce on the 6th or the 8th your decision?

MR PALLADINO: Nick, we talked about this yesterday a little bit, and so November 6th is the deadline by which the State Department certifies to the Congress that Russia has met the conditions in the Chemical and Biological Weapons Act.

So that certification would basically be us – the State Department saying that Russia has taken steps to get back into compliance, and that would include Russia having ceased and ensured that it's not going to use chemical weapons again, that it has allowed international inspectors to verify those assurances, et cetera. So if we can't make such a certification by that time, then we are required to impose a second round of sanctions by the law after consultations with the Congress.

QUESTION: In other words – I'd love to meet the lawyer who wrote that

explanation. The – in other words, what you're saying is that you might not do anything on the 6th or the 8th.

MR PALLADINO: There's no time – we must make a determination –

QUESTION: In other words, if you're unable to – well, hold on a second. If you're unable to –

MR PALLADINO: – and begin consultations with the Congress –

QUESTION: If you're unable to certify, do you have to affirmatively tell Congress that you cannot certify them on the 6th or the 8th?

MR PALLADINO: We – I would have to look at the statute itself on that, but we have to make a determination by the 6th or –

QUESTION: Well, apparently –

MR PALLADINO: – begin consultations with the Congress. Correct.

QUESTION: Right, but you're leaving – the way it sounds now is that you might not do anything on the 6th or the 8th. You don't have to – if you can't positively confirm or certify that Russia has taken these steps, it sounds to me like what you're saying is that you don't have to do anything. You just begin a consultation period with Congress.

MR PALLADINO: We will follow the law. We will –

QUESTION: Well that's really, really good to hear.

MR PALLADINO: Okay.

QUESTION: But I'm asking more specifically if you are required to actually do something on the 6th or the 8th if you are unable to certify.

MR PALLADINO: We are required to begin coordination and consultation with the United States Congress, and that's something that we will do.

QUESTION: Yeah, but that means you don't actually have to do anything on the 6th or the 8th. You don't have to come out and say, "We're not able to certify," or you can just go to the Hill and say, "All right, we're going to start consulting you now, because we couldn't certify." And that means it might be – if this deadline, whatever day it is, could come and go without anything happening, right?

MR PALLADINO: We would make an internal decision. We might have nothing to share with you, Matt. That's not to say that –

QUESTION: That wouldn't be anything new.

MR PALLADINO: Okay.

QUESTION: Just to put a point on what Matt's saying –

MR PALLADINO: Yeah.

QUESTION: There is no deadline for consultations with Congress. There's just a deadline to start consultations with Congress.

MR PALLADINO: There is no timeline associated with these consultations. That is correct.

QUESTION: Turkey?

QUESTION: Myanmar?

MR PALLADINO: Let's go –

QUESTION: Can we stay on Russia?

MR PALLADINO: Let's go Turkey. Turkey.

QUESTION: Yesterday, you called on both sides, Turkey and SDF, to de-escalate the situation in Syria. I just want to know if any senior State Department official has reached out to his or her Turkish counterparts on this.

MR PALLADINO: Let me – yes, the answer is yes. We have been in touch with our Turkish counterparts on this. Next question.

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

QUESTION: Turkey?

QUESTION: Yemen?

QUESTION: Turkey?

MR PALLADINO: I'm sorry. Sure, in the front right here, VOA.

QUESTION: Yes.

MR PALLADINO: Hi, Cindy.

QUESTION: Yes. Parents and families of Jamal Khashoggi are asking for his remains or at least part of his remains to be returned so that he can be given the burial that he wanted in Medina. Would you call on the Saudis to please turn over his remains to his family?

MR PALLADINO: Give me a second, please. Excuse me.

QUESTION: That would seem to be a question that could be able to be answered relatively quickly.

MR PALLADINO: I would say yes.

QUESTION: Got it.

MR PALLADINO: The United States would say that Mr. Khashoggi's remains should be located and returned to his family for a proper burial as soon as possible.

QUESTION: Okay, thank you.

QUESTION: Is it your feeling that the Saudis know exactly where the remains are?

MR PALLADINO: We continue to work diligently to ascertain all facts involved in this murder. We're going to hold accountable not only those who executed the murder but also those who led, were involved, and were connected to it. Any further –

QUESTION: Robert, do you have anything on Myanmar?

QUESTION: Yemen?

MR PALLADINO: Any further on Saudi Arabia?

QUESTION: Yemen.

MR PALLADINO: Let's go – Myanmar?

QUESTION: Yeah.

MR PALLADINO: Sure, let's try Myanmar.

QUESTION: Myanmar and Bangladesh have agreed to begin a repatriation of Rohingya refugees beginning in mid-November. There are a lot of concerns, though, that the conditions are not right and that Rohingya could be forcibly returned to Myanmar. Does the United States Government share those concerns?

MR PALLADINO: We – it's important to us that our efforts remain focused on steps that would improve the situation for the Rohingya refugees and to hold accountable all those responsible for this. And our goal here is to ease human suffering and to address the root causes of conflict, violence, and abuse. We continue to call for accountability for those that were responsible, and we would look closely at any plans to ensure that it is in fact voluntary.

QUESTION: So you don't have any comment on whether or not the conditions are right right now?

MR PALLADINO: Not from the podium today I don't. I don't have anything further on that right now, no.

Okay.

QUESTION: Yemen.

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

MR PALLADINO: Yemen?

QUESTION: Here.

MR PALLADINO: Okay, let's go Yemen.

QUESTION: Do you have any updates on your calls for cessation of hostilities and anything that's reducing the humanitarian crisis that's going on? Has anybody from the State Department has reached out to either side?

MR PALLADINO: I would say that we talked a little bit about this yesterday. The deputy secretary of state met with Special Representative Griffiths just last week. We – based upon conversations that we have been having – diplomatic conversations, as well as intelligence, as well as other things that now – there is positive movement and we think that there is a – now is a good time to push forward on this.

QUESTION: But you in your statement day before yesterday and yesterday – you asked the rebels to stop and then the coalition will stop. Like, is there any change? Have you talked to either side? Have you reached out to either side?

MR PALLADINO: We are having dialogue with a wide range of Yemeni interlocutors and international partners on this, and we are engaged.

Yeah, please.

QUESTION: Why the sequencing? If you're calling for a ceasefire, shouldn't you call for a mutual cessation of hostilities? Why does one have to stop before the other, and the one that doesn't have to stop is the one that's bombing population areas?

MR PALLADINO: A little good faith up front, I think would be a good thing as we move forward. We've got to focus on what the goal here is, and we are – now is the time that we want to push forward the political solution, so first thing is stop – cessation in the hostilities and then push forward on the political engagement. And that's what in the long run is going to be what reduces the – just the tragedy of human suffering that has transpired.

QUESTION: Sure, sure, but why isn't it a mutual cessation of hostilities? Why does one have to end before the other?

MR PALLADINO: Our Saudi and Emirate partners, it's – they have a right to defend their borders. We continue to support that right, and we call on the Houthis to cease missile and UAV strikes into Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates immediately, and then the rest of the progression can continue.

QUESTION: Robert, are you confident that both sides are interested in speaking, that they're ready to come and actually engage in the way that you want them to?

MR PALLADINO: We – the climate is right based upon conversations that have taken place with our partners, with Yemeni interlocutors, and we have got a team very focused on this. And we are – we take – we do think that now is the time. There is a change.

And this is the last question. Yemen? Yemen?

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

MR PALLADINO: Yemen.

QUESTION: Just to clarify, on Yemen.

MR PALLADINO: Yes.

QUESTION: Let me ask you to clarify on Yemen: Now, the Yemeni – the Houthis are saying that part of your plan is actually to divide Yemen. You don't support as part of a political solution dividing Yemen again, do you?

MR PALLADINO: Martin Griffiths will take the lead on the political settlement, and I'm not going to get ahead of anything that he will be – that he'll be tackling in that regard. That's not something that I would want to address.

All right, last question. This one's last. Okay, let's – sir, let's go. What have we got? You.

QUESTION: You're expecting another meeting between President Trump and President Putin in Paris. Are there any meetings between Secretary Pompeo and Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov planned before or during that event?

MR PALLADINO: I do not have anything to announce in that regard today, but thank you for the question and thank you all.

(The briefing was concluded at 3:09 p.m.)

DPB # 55

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Press Releases: Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo With Lars Larson of the Lars Larson Show

Interview
Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Via Teleconference
November 1, 2018

QUESTION: Welcome back to the Lars Larson Show. It's a pleasure to be with you. We'll get to your calls a bit later, but it is my great pleasure to welcome to the program the Secretary of State of the United States Mike Pompeo. Mr. Secretary, thank you for the time today.

SECRETARY POMPEO: It's great to be back on your show, Lars.

QUESTION: Well, and it's great to be – to have a man who's doing a fantastic job for a fantastic President. Let's start with some of the top-of-the-line issues right now. Let's start with Yemen. You want to see Yemen stop this civil war right now because it's putting us in a very tough spot with the Saudis. And then we can talk about the murder of Mr. Khashoggi as well.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Look, we need a peaceful resolution in Yemen. All parties – the Iranians, the Houthis, everyone needs to lay down their arms, begin a political resolution, and restore order and stop the civil war there in Yemen. It's in the people of Yemen's best interests, in the Middle East's best interests, and it's certainly in America and the world's best interests as well. And so we're hopeful that Martin Griffiths, who is leading the reconciliation effort, can get everyone to do that and then have a conversation about how to move forward in Yemen.

QUESTION: I mean, because we've got a war there that Saudi's involved in, and they want our help in it. There've been 17,000 people killed and eight million people are on the edge of starvation. But does this put us in a tough spot when we're also dealing with this side issue of the murder of Jamal Khashoggi?

SECRETARY POMPEO: No, I mean, we've been working on this issue in Yemen for some time. Lars, don't forget – and I hope your listeners won't forget either – we still have a substantial threat from al-Qaida in Yemen. This is separate

from the civil war, but it is something that gets talked about less. You still have al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula operating from that space, and America, along with its partners in the Middle East, working to prevent those threats. They – largely threats to civil aviation that have emanated from that region from getting – from being successful against American interests.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, let's talk about Iran, still in the region. Where do we stand in this? I mean, I was glad to see the President pull out of the Iran deal. It was a bad deal for America and a bad deal for the world, but where do we stand with that country now?

SECRETARY POMPEO: It was a bad deal. The President pulled out of the JCPOA in May. I had opposed it when I was a member of Congress; I didn't think it made sense. So I think the President has the right end of the stick. I think we're moving in the right direction.

On Monday, in front of us, all of the sanctions that had been relieved by the Obama administration will return. And that's important, because Iran remains – after a couple years plus of the JCPOA, they still remain the world's largest state sponsor of terror. They continue to produce better and better missiles that can threaten the Middle East and eventually potentially Europe as well. These are not the kinds of behaviors of a normal nation. And so President Trump has made clear that the United States will apply pressure to the Iranian regime to change that behavior, to act like a normal country, and stop threatening the world. And when they do, we're happy to let them rejoin the community of nations.

QUESTION: All right. I'm talking to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. But if Europe is still doing business with them, but our sanctions land Monday – and I'm sure that because they knew the date they were going to land, they've already been to some extent anticipated – if Europe is still – and many European countries are still doing business with them, are the sanctions going to have as much effect on Iran?

SECRETARY POMPEO: I'm convinced these sanctions are going to have an enormous impact on the Iranian leadership. And most European countries – in spite of the UK, Germany, and France having determined that they want to stay inside the JCPOA, in spite of that, nearly every significant European company has already fled Iran. So while their governments say it's okay to do business there, they know. They know the President's words, which are that if you choose to do business with Iran, that is your choice, but if you do you won't do business with America as well. You have to choose between us. And the history, since May, now almost six months on, is that most European companies are choosing – not surprisingly – to do business with America. So I'm very confident these sanctions will have their intended effect.

QUESTION: No doubt. Mr. Secretary, what would the mullahs have to do to satisfy both you and President Trump that they've decided to rejoin the community of nations and not be this terror sponsor, and also the nuclear ambitions they still seem to have? What would they have to say or do?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Lars, we've laid out 12 items. And 12 may seem like a lot

to some, but frankly these are simple asks, asks like cease firing missile into the Middle East; stop arming Hizballah, which threatens Israel; cease engaging in terror activities in Europe. I don't know if you saw, just yesterday or the day before Denmark arrested an Iranian official who was plotting an assassination attempt in Europe. Stop those kinds of things.

And on the nuclear file, we've asked them to do what, frankly, was the United States official position until the previous administration caved, which is cease their nuclear activity. We're happy to provide them with the energy that they need, but cease their nuclear activity in a way that doesn't create proliferation risk throughout the world.

QUESTION: Do you have any doubt that they are still trying to pursue nuclear weapons at this point?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So what I can say is this: The Islamic Republic of Iran has refused to do the kinds of things which are the hallmark of countries that truly want to have a peaceful nuclear program and who don't have the intention or at least want to have the capacity to use their nuclear tools in a way that harms the world.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, let's move to North Korea. You did a lot of the preparatory work for President Trump. You were there on the frontlines. Where do we stand in that? I mean, it seemed as though we got some fairly substantial movement, more movement than I think anybody's seen in 25 years, despite all the accommodations that have been made for that country over the last 25 years. President Trump drew a hardline and he pushed back when North Korea pushed back, and I think North Korea got the message. But where do we stand there today?

SECRETARY POMPEO: We have made real progress on North Korea. There still remains an awful lot to do; I'll concede that. But no one thought this would either be easy, straightforward without some complexity, nor did anybody think this would be quick. Remember, we're only a few months past the June summit. This has been a problem that's gone on for decades.

We have convinced North Korea not to test fire their missiles. They haven't conducted a nuclear test. They returned a number of remains of American fallen soldiers. I'm hopeful there will be more to follow. And they have dismantled a couple of facilities, which we are hopeful we will get a chance to actually conduct verification on before too long as well. There still remains an awful lot of their nuclear program that needs to be dismantled and verified. We're working to bring those steps forward.

But make no mistake, President Trump's been clear. The economic sanctions will not be lifted until such time as we have had the capacity to verify that they have eliminated their nuclear program.

QUESTION: I mean, there have been times that the leader of North Korea, the dictator, has been very vocal, very belligerent, very much on the world stage. Lately, he seems to have been quiet. Am I misreading that he's being quiet because he is finally getting with the program, or is he being quiet

because he's got something else up his sleeve?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Goodness, it's all about verification. I was there a few weeks back. I met with Chairman Kim. He reiterated his commitment to denuclearize. We made a little progress on what the next steps ought to look like. I'm hopeful we'll have a summit before too long, where we'll make another substantial step along the way. Only time will tell.

What I want your listeners to know is, unlike previous administrations that have begun negotiations, grown weary of them, and then have provided North Korea with a whole bunch of money, this administration has no intention of allowing that to happen.

QUESTION: Let me ask you about one other issue, and that is Mexico. I understand that the President is taking the lead on that. I understand that in this – at this point, who knows. But does diplomacy play a role in negotiating with Mexico with regard to the caravan that's coming north toward the border? The President has said as recently as yesterday 10-15,000 troops down on our border to send the message: Don't try to come in illegally. Where does diplomacy play a role, if any, in this at this point?

SECRETARY POMPEO: It certainly does, Lars. We are not going to permit these caravans to come across our border. They will not be permitted to enter. Diplomacy comes in in multiple, as I talk to my counterpart there nearly every day about the progress that's being made and how it is that we can do the right things here in America so that Mexico can do the right things to ensure that these Hondurans, El Salvadorians, Guatemalans, and others don't transit their country and enter the United States. So we spend a lot of time. It's a foreign policy issue. It's a national security issue. The President's made that abundantly clear. And so there is a diplomatic element into urging these countries to do the right thing and prevent this unlawful entry into the United States.

QUESTION: And as a matter of international law, Mr. Secretary, now that they're in a country that has said – Mexico has said we'll give you safe haven here; we can – you can stay here; you can work here; you can make your home here. They're not truly refugees or asylees, are they?

SECRETARY POMPEO: It is the case the Mexican Government has been very generous in offering them an opportunity to stay and to work and to receive the benefits of having done that work. It certainly changes the legal context, in my judgment. But more importantly, I think it makes clear to these people who are traveling that heading to the United States is the wrong thing to do; it won't be successful. There are alternatives that will permit them and their families to have better lives. And so they should cease their movement towards the United States and either return to the country from which they came or follow the procedures that Mexico has put in place, which will permit many of them – indeed, nearly all of them – to stay in Mexico.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, I have to tell you personally, as an American, it is a great pleasure to see a man who's on the same page as a great President, doing great work, and representing people, going to far-flung exotic places

like North Korea. God bless you for what you're doing, and thank you.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you, Lars. Bless you, too. Have a great day.

QUESTION: Take care now. That's Secretary of State Mike Pompeo.

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[Press Releases: "100 Years of Diplomatic Couriers-None Swifter than These" Exhibition Opens at the U.S. Diplomacy Center on November 7](#)

Notice to the Press
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
November 1, 2018

The Department of State's Diplomatic Courier Service will launch the "100 Years of Diplomatic Couriers-None Swifter than These" exhibition at the U.S. Diplomacy Center at the U.S. Department of State on November 7. This exhibition includes photos, videos and objects documenting the birth and evolution of the Department's Diplomatic Courier Service – from its remarkable founding in post-World War I Europe to its globe-spanning presence today.

The exhibition will be open to the credentialed members of the press from 10:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. on Wednesday, November 7. Current and retired diplomatic couriers will be available to discuss their work and role safeguarding diplomacy around the world.

Media who plan to visit the exhibition must RSVP by Tuesday, November 6 to Angela French, Diplomatic Security Public Affairs, at frenchaj1@state.gov or (571) 345-2507.

Media representatives may participate upon presentation of one of the following: (1) A U.S. Government-issued identification card (Department of State, White House, Congress, Department of Defense or Foreign Press Center), (2) a media-issued photo identification card, or (3) a letter from their employer on letterhead verifying their employment as a journalist, accompanied by an official photo identification card (driver's license, passport).

For a sneak peek at courier history, visit the Diplomatic Security Service's [Flickr site](#), and view videos from the Department's Office of the Historian, featuring first-person accounts of what it was like to be a courier [Through the Khyber Pass](#), [Behind the Iron Curtain](#), [Into Moscow](#), and [Before the Jet Age](#).

For further information, please contact Angela French, Diplomatic Security Public Affairs, at frenchaj1@state.gov or (571) 345-2507.

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[Press Releases: Department Press Briefing – October 31, 2018](#)

Robert Palladino
Deputy Spokesperson

Department Press Briefing
Washington, DC
October 31, 2018

Index for Today's Briefing

- [DEPARTMENT](#)
- [CAMEROON](#)
- [YEMEN](#)
- [SAUDI ARABIA](#)
- [NORTH KOREA](#)

- [ISRAEL/PALESTINIANS](#)
- [PAKISTAN](#)
- [RUSSIA](#)
- [TURKEY/SYRIA](#)
- [DEPARTMENT](#)
- [CHINA/TIBET](#)
- [IRAN](#)
- [RUSSIA](#)
- [TURKEY](#)
- [BRAZIL](#)
- [SRI LANKA](#)

TRANSCRIPT:

Today's briefing was held off-camera, so no video is available.

2:22 p.m. EDT

MR PALLADINO: A couple things for the top. Pleased to announce that Ambassador John Cotton Richmond, the department's new Ambassador-at-Large to Monitor – to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, started on Monday. Ambassador Richmond previously served as a federal prosecutor in the United States Department of Justice's Human Trafficking Prosecution Unit; as an expert on human trafficking for the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; and as a field office director at the International Justice Mission in Chennai, India. Most recently, Ambassador Richmond was co-founding director of the Human Trafficking institute, a non-governmental organization that works to improve criminal justice systems around the world and empower police and prosecutors to combat human trafficking.

The United States Department of State leads the United States global engagement to combat human trafficking and supports the coordination of anti-trafficking efforts across the United States Government. And just two weeks ago, Secretary Pompeo chaired the President's Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons at the White House. At that meeting, Secretary Pompeo announced the creation of the Human Trafficking Expert Consultant Network, which will allow us to meaningfully incorporate survivor input into the department's anti-trafficking work. He also announced a second 25 million award under the program to end modern slavery, which seeks to achieve a measurable reduction of modern slavery in specific countries or regions. This funding will continue this important work. And so we welcome Ambassador Richmond to the Department of State.

Secondly, The United States confirms the death of an American citizen

near the town of Bambui, in the Mezam Division of Cameroon's Northwest Region, on October 30th. We extend our deepest condolences to the family and friends of the deceased, and the department is providing all possible consular services. This tragedy occurred in the midst of the Anglophone crisis that affects the Northwest and Southwest Regions of Cameroon. Both the separatist fighters and government security forces have used violence against innocent civilians. We call on both sides to view the tragic death of this American citizen as an opportunity to put an immediate stop to violence and to allow unhindered access for humanitarian aid workers and healthcare providers in the Northwest and Southwest Regions. We urge all sides to undertake an immediate and broad-based dialogue without preconditions to restore peace and resolve grievances.

With that, I'd be happy to take some questions.

QUESTION: Just on that to start with briefly. Do you have any indication that the – there are some reports indicating the family believes that he was – this person was targeted intentionally, and there are other reports that it may have been the government that was responsible for – government forces that were responsible for killing him. Can you shed any light on either of those two?

MR PALLADINO: We've – sure. Thanks, Matt. We've been in touch with senior Cameroonian officials, government security officials, and we believe the victim was caught in crossfire.

QUESTION: So not intentionally?

MR PALLADINO: Correct, correct. And Cameroonian officials have assured us that a full investigation has been opened and that the results would be shared with us.

QUESTION: Okay. If no one has anything else –

MR PALLADINO: Any other?

QUESTION: – I want to ask about yesterday's statements on Yemen, and then to – from both Secretary Pompeo and Secretary Mattis. And then I'm a little bit curious why he did two interviews this morning and he didn't mention Yemen at all, after what appeared to be such a concerted combination one-two punch, shall we say, delivered by the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of State yesterday. Why? What's going on here?

MR PALLADINO: Well, as you point out, the Secretary did issue a statement last night about ending the conflict in Yemen. And the statement goes through in detail some of the sequencing that we expect, and we're calling for an immediate cessation of hostilities. We're calling that the Houthis must cease missile and UAV strikes into Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates immediately. And as soon as this happens, the Saudi-led coalition must cease airstrikes in all populated areas.

As far as the political process goes, we are calling on all parties to support the United Nations Special Envoy Martin Griffiths in finding a peaceful solution to the conflict based upon the agreed references, and that's the national dialogue, the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2216, and the Gulf and the GCC initiative as well.

Now, as far as the Secretary's interviews this morning, I listened to them and he was responding to questions asked by the interviewers, so I would say –

QUESTION: Well, it was a function of the questions he was asked not the function of this having dropped off or dropped lower down on his radar screen in the past 12 hours.

MR PALLADINO: This is incredibly important to the United States Government and to the Secretary of State, absolutely.

QUESTION: And then just one more thing and I'll stop. When you say that as soon as the Houthis stop their missile strikes then the coalition should stop its airstrikes in populated areas, does that mean, one, that while airstrikes continue you're okay with them continuing to bomb populated areas in which there have been – it's been well documented that these have caused major numbers of civilian casualties? And then two, even if that's not the case, does it mean then that after the – if and when the Houthis stop, that you're okay with the coalition bombing quote/unquote "unpopulated areas" and continuing this, because – and how do you define a populated area? Is that just places where – a place where people have a residence?

MR PALLADINO: What we're calling for is an immediate cessation of hostilities. We want to see the parties engaging in the United Nations special envoy's consultations in good faith, and we believe that the cessation of hostilities will provide the best basis for that. And as far as the specific conditions go, the – that's something for the United Nations special envoy to speak to and I don't want to get ahead of what he's able to do during his November consultations.

QUESTION: Well, fair enough. But you didn't answer either of my questions. Are you okay with the Saudis continuing to bomb populated areas of Yemen if the Houthis have not stopped all their missile strikes?

MR PALLADINO: We are – our goal here has been consistent for some time, and that is specifically to work with international partners, our international partners, to bring peace, prosperity, and security to Yemen. And we have been consistently and continuously urging all sides to work towards a political settlement that ends the conflict in this dire humanitarian situation. We've always said that an enduring solution will only come through a comprehensive political agreement, and that's going to require compromise. We've also always supported comprehensive peace negotiations under the auspices of the United Nations, and we've supported the United Nations special envoy's efforts to restart talks of

those parties.

Now, as far as the timing goes, the United Nations special envoy has continued to make progress in laying the groundwork for these peace negotiations, and I would point to last week. Based upon our meetings here at the State Department – well, with the Deputy Secretary of State, his meeting with him last week, we believe that the climate is right for both sides to come to the table. And what the United States is reiterating and trying to state clearly at this time is our support for a cessation of hostilities and the UN special envoy is important, and this cessation and a vigorous resumption of political talks, that's what's going to help us end this humanitarian crisis.

So our message is end the conflict, replace the conflict with compromise, and allow the Yemeni people to heal through peace and reconstruction.

QUESTION: I'll let it go, but can you just acknowledge that you're not answering my question? (Laughter.)

MR PALLADINO: We've been – we have called for cessation of hostilities –

QUESTION: (Inaudible) yes or no.

MR PALLADINO: – for a long time now.

QUESTION: (Inaudible.) Move on.

MR PALLADINO: Excellent.

QUESTION: Can I just follow up on this very point?

MR PALLADINO: Yes, Said.

QUESTION: You're saying that, first of all, cessation of bombing in populated areas which you allude to, which means that they will continue selective bombing. But second, forces on the ground can't remain exactly where they are? Is that what you're saying?

MR PALLADINO: What I would say is we continue to support the right of Saudi Arabia and our Emirati partners to defend their borders. And as far as – I don't want to get ahead of consultations that are led by the UN special envoy's agenda. But I would understand that his consultations would include topics such as implementing confidence-building measures to address the underlying issues of the conflict, demilitarization of the borders, and concentration of all large weapons under international observation.

QUESTION: Can I follow up on that (inaudible)?

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

MR PALLADINO: Okay, let's try – let's go right here. Sure, go ahead.

QUESTION: Your critics would say that the U.S. could stop this war almost immediately by pulling support, military support for the coalition. If you are interested in ending the war, why not do that?

MR PALLADINO: The timing right now, we've come – we've seen progress being made on the ground, and we continue to make progress on laying the groundwork for peace negotiations. We – the deputy secretary of state's meeting last week has brought this fresh to the fore, and the climate is right. We've come to the assessment that the climate is right at this time to move forward.

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

QUESTION: (Inaudible) right now versus –

MR PALLADINO: I'm not going to be able to go into detail on the – on private conversations. This – let's go right over here, please.

QUESTION: Thank you very much.

MR PALLADINO: Go ahead.

QUESTION: On North Korea.

QUESTION: Can you stay on Yemen?

QUESTION: Oh, okay.

MR PALLADINO: All right. One more. One more. Let's go on Yemen. All right. All right.

QUESTION: To what extent do you think that the Khashoggi matter gives the U.S. more leverage in solving problems like this one?

MR PALLADINO: The two are unrelated. Over here, Michelle. Go ahead.

QUESTION: Wait a minute, wait a minute. Can I follow up on that, please?

QUESTION: Can you say what the consequences there will be? You're calling for a 30-day ceasefire, but if that doesn't come through, if the Saudis don't support that, what are the consequences? What does the U.S. plan to do? Has there been any threat given?

MR PALLADINO: We're going to focus on what's right immediately in front of us. We're not going to get into hypotheticals. We've made our call clear. We've made clear what we're urging all sides to do and we're going to support the United Nations.

Last one on Yemen. Right there. Go.

QUESTION: Can I just follow up on that, the question about Khashoggi? I understand you said that they're unrelated, but this is not the first concern you've had about Saudi Arabia and this government. And so to what extent is this incident, the coverup, the way the Saudis have dealt

with it, part of a larger conversation going forward about the actions of this government and the need for the U.S. and Saudi Arabia to move forward working collaboratively in a new spirit?

MR PALLADINO: We've – the Secretary spoke about what we expect related to the Khashoggi investigation this morning again, and we – and that hasn't changed. We will hold those responsible for the killing of Jamal Khashoggi. We'll hold them responsible, and we want all the evidence, we want to get all the facts first, before we make a determination on what our response to that is going to be.

QUESTION: It's not in a vacuum, though, in terms of some of the larger concerns that you've had about the adventurism, some might say, of the government, of their actions in Yemen, of their actions vis-a-vis Qatar. I mean, this is part of a larger concern, isn't it, that you've had with this government?

MR PALLADINO: I would say that our call for a cessation of hostilities is something that we've been doing for some time right now in Yemen. This is consistent, and we are raising it again now at this time because the time is right. We've been calling for this throughout the conflict, the cessation of hostilities, and now is the time for both sides to come to the table.

QUESTION: And you don't feel like – just one more on this – and you don't feel right now that the kind of Saudi desire to not placate, but smooth over relations with the United States in the wake of this incident gives you a little bit more of an opportunity, a open door, an open ear if you will for them to hear these concerns about Yemen, Qatar, or other things?

MR PALLADINO: They're unrelated. Let's go to North Korea. Right here, please.

QUESTION: Thank you very much. On North Korean human rights issues, there is 120,000 North Korean religious peoples and the people of North Korea are now in political prison camp in North Korea. How will the United States resolve the North Korean human right abuse? Do you have any agenda for further religious freedoms from North Korea?

MR PALLADINO: Look, the United States has been pretty forthright on North Korea's human rights record. It's something that we document annually, it's something that we have raised consistently. The President has highlighted it repeatedly both from the Oval Office to the State of the Union address. We have been consistent on the human rights situation in North Korea. Right now, we're very focused on achieving the final, fully verified denuclearization of North Korea, and that is something that the United States Government hopes to push forward and to satisfy the agreement that was made at the Singapore summit between Chairman Kim and President Trump. And so we're going to continue pushing forward on that, and that will allow further vehicles for the United States to engage on all kinds of issues as we're able to go forward.

QUESTION: North Korea?

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

MR PALLADINO: More on North Korea?

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

MR PALLADINO: Let's go to North Korea. One more on North Korea right there, sure.

QUESTION: Just – it's been brought up before and it's brought up to the Secretary. You said the final verified denuclearization, but you dropped the "irreversible." Is that intentional?

MR PALLADINO: Final, fully verified. That's about – that's everything as far as I can –

QUESTION: Because before, the State Department was saying "irreversible," and recently the "irreversible" has been dropped. Is it –

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

MR PALLADINO: I really don't have the order of adjectives. I've got nothing further on our order of adjectives right now.

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

MR PALLADINO: We got a little more on North Korea?

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

MR PALLADINO: Let's stick right here in the front. North Korea.

QUESTION: The Secretary mentioned that he's meeting with his North Korean counterpart again in an interview today. Do you have any more details on that? That's the second time I believe he's been on the record mentioning this.

MR PALLADINO: I think what the Secretary said, he would be speaking to his North Korean counterpart.

QUESTION: So there is no meeting?

MR PALLADINO: I have nothing – no further details to provide about how that speaking to his counterpart will take place, where, when, et cetera. I have nothing further at this time.

QUESTION: (Inaudible) smoke signals?

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

MR PALLADINO: I will support smoke signals, Matt. Okay?

QUESTION: What is the Secretary – what's the Secretary doing today? Where is he? Is he in town?

MR PALLADINO: I would refer you to his public schedule. I have nothing further beyond his public schedule, right –

QUESTION: Robert, in the interview, in the – I think the same interview you were just mentioning, he said something about the North Koreans having agreed to inspectors at two separate sites. One of those is the nuclear site. Do you happen to know what the other one is?

MR PALLADINO: I don't. I don't have that in front of me. But that – but I mean, inspections for final, fully verified denuclearization, "verified" and "inspections" go hand in hand. This was something that was raised on the Secretary of State's trip to Pyongyang recently and the modalities and the composition of these inspections is something that they'll be discussing going forward. Yeah.

QUESTION: Okay. The other thing is that in response to the question on human rights, you said the administration's focus now is on the denuclearization, whatever words you want to put in front of "denuclearization," and that once that – you get that, that will allow further vehicles to engage the North Koreans on other subjects. How is that any different than what the Obama administration said it did with Iran? I mean, it seems to me that that was exactly their argument for why they were only focused on the nuclear question in the negotiations with Iran because once they got that, that would open up, to use your words, other vehicles so they could address human rights, they could address missiles, they could address the malign activity. Now, this administration, after criticizing the previous one for doing that, you're adopting – you seem to be adopting the exact same approach with North Korea. So how is it different?

MR PALLADINO: Iran's malign influence has expanded credibly since that deal was enacted under the previous administration

QUESTION: Well, how do you know that the North Koreans won't do the same thing?

MR PALLADINO: We have an opportunity with North Korea to – we've made more progress in this administration on moving towards peace than previously has been made. This is really a new opportunity. Nuclear testing has stopped, the ballistic missile tests have stopped. We are – our Americans have been returned home, and we are making progress on this front. We believe that there is a brighter future for the North Korean people and we're going to continue pushing forward on this. Anything more on North Korea?

QUESTION: Do you have anything to say about the no-fly zone over the DMZ agreed to between North and South Korea going into effect?

MR PALLADINO: I – we're in close coordination with our Republic of Korea

ally.

QUESTION: Well, yeah, but –

MR PALLADINO: We continue this coordination –

QUESTION: But the U.S. was opposed to the no-fly zone in the past. Do you have anything to say now that it's going into effect?

MR PALLADINO: We are maintaining very close coordination with our Republic of Korea ally as well as our Japanese ally. We are coordinating on a daily basis. Our special representative, Steve Biegun, was just in Seoul over the last week and as I mentioned yesterday, we're going to be further strengthening the coordination that's happening between our two governments as we move forward. Change the subject. All right, Said. Go ahead.

QUESTION: Yeah, very quickly. Yesterday the secretary general of the PLO, Saeb Erekat, accused Israel of plotting to separate Gaza from the whole Palestinian issue with your help. Are you committed to the unity of the Palestinian issue, Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem, as you were in the past?

MR PALLADINO: I would quote our Special Representative for International Negotiations Jason Greenblatt on this subject. He's been quite clear, and what he's said is that Gaza and the West Bank have been separated for 10 years, not only physically but politically, between the Palestinian Authority and Hamas, and it's absurd to deny that reality. In contrast, our peace plan intends to bring them together. Make no mistake, we are in this to help all Palestinians in both the West Bank and Gaza. The type of disinformation being spread by some parties who have not even seen the plan yet wish to be spoilers and does nothing to benefit ordinary Palestinian lives.

QUESTION: So independent of, let's say, the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and Hamas in Gaza, you believe that the Palestinian issue ought to be resolved as one issue?

MR PALLADINO: We have made it clear that the final boundaries of Israeli sovereignty and Jerusalem remains to be decided through negotiations.

QUESTION: Robert, no one's seen the plan. Have you? No one's seen it, so in the absence of people not seeing something that the administration keeps saying is wonderful and great and is going to be the deal of the century, but there is no there there, I mean, how do – what are people supposed to – how are people supposed to understand or accept your explanation that these – this misinformation is not true if there's no way to prove that it's misinformation?

MR PALLADINO: Well, decrying a peace plan that has not yet been seen does nothing to advance the cause of peace or to lead the Palestinian people to a better future.

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

MR PALLADINO: And when – we will – what we will – we will release the plan at the appropriate time and we hope that people will judge it on its merits.

QUESTION: So promoting a plan that no one has seen before doesn't do the same thing?

MR PALLADINO: We – let's, at the appropriate time, let the people judge it on its merits.

QUESTION: Different topic?

QUESTION: Russia?

QUESTION: North Korea.

MR PALLADINO: Different – okay, let's go to Shaun. I'm going to go to Shaun in the front, AFP.

QUESTION: Pakistan. Pakistan.

MR PALLADINO: Pakistan. Okay.

QUESTION: A Pakistani – the supreme court rescinded the blasphemy verdict against Asia Bibi. I know that's been something that in the past has concerned the United States. Do you have any reaction to this decision? To what extent was the U.S. in contact in – ahead of this decision?

MR PALLADINO: We're aware of the decision and we've been following the case closely, as you point out and say.

QUESTION: Do you have any comment on the decision itself?

MR PALLADINO: I would just say as a general principle – I mean, we've spoken about the case previously in our International Religious Freedom Report, and so we – the United States Government has spoken about the case previously. As a general principle, we've been clear that religious freedom is a universal, God-given right to which all people are entitled. Secretary Pompeo has said as much many times.

Please.

QUESTION: Iran. Iran.

MR PALLADINO: Same – we off of Pakistan?

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

QUESTION: Khashoggi.

QUESTION: Russia.

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

MR PALLADINO: Russia. Let's go to Russia. Russia.

QUESTION: Well, the U.S. is now quitting the treaty, and Russia is asking question: When will U.S. agree to revive the strategic dialogue? So as far as we know, such questions were asked since June, when Andrea Thompson came to the office. So – and since that, Russia has not any reply. So when do you think will it be – it will be possible to come back to the dialogue?

MR PALLADINO: Yeah, I don't have anything for you on that today from the podium.

Let's go – Laurie. Let's go to Laurie.

QUESTION: Yesterday, Turkey's president again threatened Syria's Kurds, and it has begun shelling Kurdish cities. In turn, the Syrian Democratic Forces led by the Kurds have announced today a temporary halt in their offensive against ISIS. What is your comment on this situation?

MR PALLADINO: Unilateral military strikes into northwest Syria by any party, particularly as American personnel may be present or in the vicinity, are of great concern to us. Coordination and consultation between the United States and Turkey on issues of security concern is a better approach. We have been in touch with Turkey and the Syria defense forces to emphasize the need to de-escalate the situation. Turkey is a NATO ally and a key partner in the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, and we are fully committed to our ally's border security.

QUESTION: And Erdogan also accused you of supporting, quote, "all terrorist organizations indiscriminately," end quote, including ISIS. What's your response to that?

MR PALLADINO: We – coordination and consultation with our Turkish ally on issues of security is the better approach. We have seen such cooperation with our – with Turkey in – with our Manbij roadmap, for example, and that's an example of our full commitment. It's on schedule. It's something that Secretary Pompeo and the foreign minister of Turkey agreed to. You can see American and Turkish forces actively training side by side. That's a critical mission, and we're confident that that kind of cooperation is what is needed here.

Now, ISIS – that campaign is not over and that fight remains difficult. And our Department of Defense colleagues are working closely with the Syrian defense forces who are in the midst of an offensive operations against ISIS and we're still committed to the Syria defense forces.

QUESTION: Robert, the Russian military said that the coalition – as a result of the coalition airstrikes in eastern Syria, 120 civilians were killed last month alone. Are you keeping – how do you track casualties and so on on the ground in the areas where the coalition is targeting ISIS?

MR PALLADINO: I saw that report in RT, I believe, right?

QUESTION: Yes.

MR PALLADINO: Okay. We – I would say first off, of course we deeply regret any civilian casualties that are a consequence of coalition operations in Syria. Secondly, I would say we defer to the Department of Defense on the matter of the airstrikes that you mentioned. And I would finally say that we have not seen any information to suggest that such claims are accurate and anything more than additional Russian propaganda.

QUESTION: On the (inaudible) in Syria –

QUESTION: Speaking of Russian propaganda –

MR PALLADINO: Let's go over here. Michelle, fine, go.

QUESTION: So you opened yesterday talking about the Global Engagement Center and a move of putting \$40 million in towards countering disinformation from Russia, Iran. I wonder, given that, if you had any comment from this building on the segment put out by Radio Marti, the U.S. taxpayer-funded station, which appeared to involve some disinformation about George Soros.

MR PALLADINO: Give me a second here. I would refer to the CEO's statement on that, CEO's statement from the Office on Cuba Broadcasting, and I would refer to them. But I would point out that the CEO said that those deemed responsible for this production will be immediately placed on administrative leave pending an investigation into their apparent misconduct and that TV Marti has directed an immediate, full-content audit to identify any patterns of unethical reporting at the network. And anything further than that, I would refer you to the United States Agency for Global Media.

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

QUESTION: Two Saudi questions?

MR PALLADINO: Let's go right here. Nike, go.

QUESTION: Thank you. Can we stay in Asia? In Tibet, do you have anything on this sad news about the pass away of Lodi Gyari Rinpoche, who used to be the special envoy of His Holiness Dalai Lama in Washington, D.C., and he pass away on Monday.

MR PALLADINO: I'm sorry. I just don't have anything on that today, but we could take that question and we could get back to you. I'm sorry, I haven't seen that report.

QUESTION: What is the message we should be reading given there has not been a special – has not been a Tibet special coordinator at State Department under this administration?

MR PALLADINO: The – we are well served by our Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, as well as our International Freedom Office here at the State Department. That's not to say that this position is not something that we want to see supported as soon as possible as well.

QUESTION: There has not been a dialogue between the Chinese Government and the Tibetan exile government. Would the United States support the resumption of a dialogue? You can answer in Mandarin if you wish.

MR PALLADINO: (Speaks in Mandarin.) I'll take your question, though, and we'll get you a proper answer, okay, Nike? Thanks. Let's go.

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

QUESTION: On Iran.

MR PALLADINO: Iran, back to Iran, all right. Who's got Iran? Who's – where's Iran?

QUESTION: It's next to –

MR PALLADINO: Yeah, help me out, Matt, good.

QUESTION: It's between Iraq and Afghanistan.

MR PALLADINO: Excellent, excellent.

QUESTION: He had to think about it for a second.

QUESTION: Well, I was – yeah.

MR PALLADINO: Do we have a question on Iran?

QUESTION: Saudi?

QUESTION: Robert –

MR PALLADINO: A question on Iran?

QUESTION: We have some Saudi questions.

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

MR PALLADINO: Let's stick with Iran. Let's go with Iran. Go ahead. Go ahead with Iran, please.

QUESTION: Thank you. The second round of sanctions are going into effect on Sunday. Which sanctions will be going into effect and which specific industries will they target? And then second, has Secretary Pompeo discussed with Secretary Mnuchin sanctioning Iran's access to SWIFT?

MR PALLADINO: Okay, I'll start with the second question, and the questions on SWIFT I would refer to the Department of Treasury and I'm not going to be able to go into dialogue between the two secretaries at

this point. But on November 5th, 12:01, as you point out, sanctions that were lifted under the Iran nuclear deal will come back into full effect. And the sanctions that are reimposed on November 5th will target critical sectors of Iran's economy, such as energy, shipping and the ship-building sectors, as well as the provision of insurance and transactions involving the Central Bank of Iran and designated Iranian financial institutions.

Now, the Iranian regime is the world's leading state sponsor of terror, and these sanctions are meant to cut off revenues that the Iranian regime uses to conduct terrorism and fund terrorist groups around the world, and that includes Lebanese Hizballah, Hamas, Kata'ib Hizballah and the Taliban. These groups foment global instability, they use these funds to support their nuclear and ballistic missile programs, and these funds are used to line corrupt Iranian leaders' pockets rather than help the Iranian people, who are the longest-suffering victims. I'll stop there.

QUESTION: And just a quick follow-up. Will there be a third round of U.S. sanctions on – or will all sanctions that have been lifted under the JCPOA have been reimposed by November 5th?

MR PALLADINO: I have nothing – I can't forecast anything beyond that at this time.

QUESTION: Are you – are you going to do more sanctions on Russia in November or not?

MR PALLADINO: On Russia sanctions – I have this – the Chemical and Biological Weapons Act mandates that the State Department certify to the Congress whether Russia has met conditions required by the law three months after the initial determination of the Skripal case. Now, that initial determination was made August 6th, and that takes us to November 6th, which is the certification deadline. So November 6th, that's the deadline by which the Department of State must certify to the Congress that Russia has met the conditions in the Chemical and Biological Weapons Act. The conditions that we would have to certify are that Russia has ceased and assured that it will not use chemical weapons again, and that it has allowed international inspectors to verify those assurances. So have they taken the steps to get back into compliance is the issue. And if we can't make such a certification, the State Department is required to impose a second round of sanctions after consultations with the Congress.

QUESTION: And what kind of sanctions it should be? Can you say this now or it's undecided?

MR PALLADINO: I can't – I cannot preview that today, no.

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

MR PALLADINO: Matt's got a Russia follow-up.

QUESTION: No, I just – you said November 6th and I just want to make sure that that's the – is that the correct day? Because the way I had calculated it, and maybe I'm wrong – fully willing to admit that – was November 8th. But –

MR PALLADINO: The 6th.

QUESTION: Okay.

MR PALLADINO: The 6th.

QUESTION: China?

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

QUESTION: Any sign of them meeting those conditions? Any sign of them allowing inspectors in?

MR PALLADINO: I'm not going to get ahead of that, (inaudible), get ahead of that at this time.

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

MR PALLADINO: Any Russia?

QUESTION: Khashoggi.

QUESTION: Iran.

MR PALLADINO: Khashoggi? Let's go to Turkey.

QUESTION: Russia, Russia.

MR PALLADINO: I'm sorry, to – Saudi Arabia. Go ahead. And Turkey. There we go.

QUESTION: Secretary Mattis said last night that so far, everything that the Turks have said about the case has turned out to be true. This morning, the Turkish prosecutor said that Mr. Khashoggi was brought to the consulate, strangled, his body was dismembered, and that the Saudis haven't been able to produce a body so far. Is that true? Is that your understanding?

MR PALLADINO: We've got to see where the facts ultimately fall. We're still in that. We are still calling for a full accounting of what's transpired. There's more that we want to learn first. And what we acquire will come from both the Turkish and Saudi investigations as well as what we are able to gather on our own.

QUESTION: So –

MR PALLADINO: And we will form – we will form an assessment and make determinations about future actions based upon this full accounting. We have – I'll stop there.

QUESTION: Do you see it as a problem that the Saudis won't extradite these people that they've already identified as being responsible or involved to Turkey?

MR PALLADINO: We are – we want all the facts first, and we are going to remain focused on getting a full accounting of what's transpired. The Secretary of State has spoken repeatedly to Saudi leadership – to the king –

QUESTION: Right, so –

MR PALLADINO: – to the crown prince, to the foreign minister. We have made clear the seriousness to which the United States attaches to what's transpired, the unacceptability of what's taken place, and at the same time we recognize the importance of protecting American interests as well.

This is the last question. Right there, please. Go.

QUESTION: About Brazil. Secretary Pompeo talked on Monday with the new president-elect in Brazil, Bolsonaro. They mentioned Venezuela, so I was curious if you could provide us some more detail about specifically what they talk about Venezuela, and what kind of partnership – could, like, the U.S. help with Brazil regarding this topic, Venezuela.

MR PALLADINO: I'm sorry, I don't have anything additional beyond the readout regarding the content of their discussion, but our policy on Venezuela has been pretty forthright, pretty clear, and a clear majority of countries in our hemisphere, we are united in support of the Venezuelan people and their right to live in a democracy. And as far as Brazil goes, the President has called the president-elect, the Secretary of State has called him as well. And of course, the inauguration won't take place for a little bit, but we look forward to working with the new Brazilian Government. We've got a lot of common interests and shared things that we hope to accomplish together and with –

QUESTION: May I follow up on that?

QUESTION: A question on –

MR PALLADINO: Last one.

QUESTION: A follow-up on that.

MR PALLADINO: Go – just follow – go.

QUESTION: Would like the – would the U.S. like Brazil to have a more active role in Venezuela?

MR PALLADINO: I don't have anything further. Of course, we are looking for the – there's a lot of countries that are active with us, and it's a clear majority, and there's always more that we can do. We need to apply sustained pressure on the Maduro regime until it takes the actions that

are necessary to return to democracy. The Venezuelan people are the ones that are suffering under what's transpired in Venezuela, and they desperately need access to humanitarian aid, and we call upon the Maduro regime to return to the 1999 constitution, to respect human rights and the authority of the democratically elected national assembly. We call on the Maduro regime to release all political prisoners and to permit entry of international assistance to provide for the urgent humanitarian needs of the long-suffering Venezuelan people.

Thank you all. Have a good night.

QUESTION: Can you take the – Robert, can you take the Sri Lanka question?

MR PALLADINO: Take the – okay, the –

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

MR PALLADINO: Okay, Sri Lanka. All right.

QUESTION: (Inaudible) update on the crisis in Sri Lanka.

MR PALLADINO: Okay.

QUESTION: There's no end to crisis, and they haven't listened to your calls on – immediately calling on the parliament to elect a –

MR PALLADINO: Okay, so thank you for the question. It is an important question, and I am happy to take a second day of Sri Lanka questions. As you point out, this is an important issue. The United States for now, we're focused on the need for Sri Lanka to follow the necessary constitutional process to determine its leadership. So we – again, we call on the president in consultation with the speaker to reconvene parliament immediately and to allow the democratically elected representatives of the Sri Lankan people to fulfill their responsibility to affirm who will lead their government. And we urge all sides to uphold the law and to respect due process.

QUESTION: Has the new ambassador taken over there?

MR PALLADINO: The new ambassador arrived today and presents her credentials tomorrow. So yes, she's there.

QUESTION: So as of today, who do you recognize as the prime minister of Sri Lanka?

MR PALLADINO: The Sri Lankan constitution includes provisions on changes in the government and related authorities, and the implementation of those provisions is a matter for the elected representatives of the Sri Lankan people. It's up to the parliament to decide who the prime minister is. And that's it. Thank you.

QUESTION: Final question –

QUESTION: Thanks.

QUESTION: Thank you.

(The briefing was concluded at 3:08 p.m.)

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