

Press Releases: Interview With Hadley Gamble of CNBC

Interview
Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Beverly Wilshire Hotel
Beverly Hills, CA
May 11, 2019

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, thank you so much for joining CNBC.

SECRETARY POMPEO: It's great to be with you.

QUESTION: I want to kick off by asking you specifically about what we've seen in the last couple of weeks. We've seen a ratcheting up of the rhetoric when it comes to Iran. We've also seen, of course, more pressure coming from the Trump Administration in the form of sanctions on individuals, on commodities, on oil, and of course, lots of questions about whether or not what we've seen in terms of the movement of the *USS Abraham Lincoln* toward the Gulf and the possible deployment of a Patriot system to the Gulf as well is maybe signaling that we're going to have imminent conflict. How do you respond to that?

SECRETARY POMPEO: President Trump has been clear since the beginning of his administration, and then a year ago – just a bit over a year ago now – we withdrew from the nuclear deal. It was a terrible deal. All kinds of bad things happened during the deal. They increased terrorism, more missile launches, and a radical increase in malign behavior from Iranians toward entities that range from the Houthis to Hizballah. All of that occurred while we were in the JCPOA, and President Trump is determined to change that behavior from the Islamic Republic of Iran.

We laid down in May of last year the 12 simple things we're asking Iran to do. And the pressure that you see – the economic pressure we have applied, the sanctions that we've put in place, the efforts we've made to help Iraq stand up its own independent sovereign government, the support we provide to Lebanon – are all aimed at the same thing. Iran is the major destabilizing influence in the Middle East, and we aim to fix that.

QUESTION: And walk me through what led you in recent weeks to this uptick in terms of the military pressure that you're placing in the Persian Gulf?

SECRETARY POMPEO: What we've seen from the Iranians is increased threats, and we've seen this reporting. It's real. It appears to be something that is current; that is, things we're worried about today. So we've done all of our things to increase our security posture to the best of our ability, but we also wanted to make sure that we had deterrent forces in place, so in the event that Iran decided to come after an American interest, whether that be in Iraq or in Afghanistan or Yemen or any place in the Middle East, we were prepared to respond in an appropriate way.

QUESTION: That's a whole lot of military hardware that's going into the Persian Gulf right now. It's a place that I've lived over the last 10 years. I mean, in terms of this uptick, there are a lot of fears, and whether they be in the military itself or externally in the region, about potential for miscalculations there. How worried are you?

SECRETARY POMPEO: We're not going to miscalculate. Our aim is not war. Our aim is a change in the behavior of the Iranian leadership. We hope the Iranian people will get what they finally want and what they so richly deserve.

The forces that we're putting in place, the forces we've had in the region before – you know we often have carriers in the Persian Gulf. But the President wanted to make sure that in the event that something took place, we were prepared to respond to it in an appropriate way. And as the Secretary of State, I wanted to make sure that we had all the political-diplomatic tools in the right place, and we wanted to make sure that we can provide the President with an option set in the event that the Iranians make a bad decision.

QUESTION: I want to ask you about something in terms of what happened over the last week or so. You made a surprise trip to Baghdad, and amongst all of the press reports that we saw in the last several days there was a great deal of surprise, I think, on the part of our European allies, potentially even the German chancellor herself, as regarding the fact that you missed a meeting that was a longstanding meeting. Do you want to set the record straight there, kind of clear the air?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yeah. Look, I regret that I wasn't able to meet with Chancellor Merkel and my counterpart, Heiko Maas. We've rescheduled them already. It's back on the calendar. I'm confident we'll do this in the next couple weeks. We've not announced the exact date, but I think we've got it now set that on a day that works for both she and I. I very much want to have that conversation and –

QUESTION: Were you surprised by that backlash that you saw in the press?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Only in this. Our European partners are important allies on this issue with respect to the Islamic Republic of Iran, right? There's assassination campaigns taking place in their countries. They, even the Germans, have arrested Qods Force officials inside of their country.

And they've seen too – we've seen European businesses respond. They

understand America's sanctions. They have almost entirely withdrawn their business operations from the Islamic Republic of Iran in spite of their government's efforts to keep some of them in there.

This is the pressure that we hope to convince the leadership in Iran that there's another path, that there's a straightforward way forward for them. And we're happy – as President Trump says, we're happy to sit down and have a conversation with them, begin to have talks about ensuring they have no pathway to a nuclear weapon – something that was given to them under the JCPOA; that their missile program comply with 2231 – that's a UN Security Council resolution; and that this adventurism, this revolutionary effort to control capitals in Damascus and in Beirut and in Sanaa, that that's not appropriate, it's destabilizing. And we're asking them to conform to the normal things that normal nations do – nothing more.

QUESTION: You mentioned the difference between European businesses, German businesses for example, versus the actions of some of these European governments. Walk me through what you see as the relationship with the United States in that post-Merkel world.

SECRETARY POMPEO: So look, when I talk to the Europeans, they get the threat from the Islamic Republic of Iran. On the nuclear file, they entered into an agreement and they have taken a different path. President Trump made the right decision to withdraw. It was the right decision for America. They've made the sovereign choices for their nation.

But when we talk about threats of terror, and we talk about threats of destabilization, and we understand the risk from Hizballah and the Houthis and from Iraqi militias under Iranian control and not under the control of the Iraqi Government, which is what we want, I think the Europeans understand and they share our concerns.

QUESTION: Apparently, your meetings in Baghdad led to more meetings (inaudible) a great deal of worry there that anything that might happen to U.S. troops or U.S. military installations could have a major backlash for Iraqis and their government. What's your take there?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yeah. So that's not our intention. Our intention is to help the Iraqis with the needs that they have. ISIS still remains in Iraq. We have forces on the ground there working to help the Iraqi Security Forces stand up and rebuild themselves so that we can continue to keep ISIS risk at bay. They understand that we're there for that purpose.

And we don't want Iraq in the middle of this. This is what we went to tell them. They needed to make sure that Americans were safe at the facilities that they have invited us to be in; and second, they needed to understand that if there were actions taken against American forces in Iraq that we would respond forcefully and appropriately against Iran; that that response likely would not take place in Iraq but would likely take place in Iran itself.

QUESTION: Of course, you've mentioned that the Trump administration,

President Trump, has said again and again that he doesn't want a conflict directly with Iran.

SECRETARY POMPEO: None of us do. None of –

QUESTION: But you set up a situation whereby you could respond, as you say, militarily if you needed to. But this, of course, is a president that campaigned on the idea that we need to end these foreign engagements, we need to bring the troops back from Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria. How worried are you that we could escalate the situation?

SECRETARY POMPEO: This is the President who made clear that we would protect America's interests, right? He campaigned on America First. If a nation strikes an American interest, President Trump has been unambiguous. You saw the strong action he took when Assad used chemical weapons, right? We drew a red line, and when we made the commitments, President Trump executed that.

In the same way, an attack on American interests from an Iranian-led force, whether it's an Iranian proper or it's an entity that is controlled by the Iranians, we will hold the responsible party accountable. President Trump has been very clear about that. Our response will be appropriate.

QUESTION: Obviously, investors and governments have been keenly watching what all of this has done in terms of movements in the oil markets, the moves in energy markets generally. How do you respond to the idea that the United States has realized what other governments in the past, particularly Saudi Arabia, have, which is that oil can be used as a weapon?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Simple math. That's how I respond. About a year ago, President Trump withdrew from the JCPOA. You'll recall – I'll bet on your television station – folks were talking about how oil prices would rise, they'd spike; it would be chaos in the crude oil markets. In fact, crude oil prices today are lower than they were the day that we withdrew from the JCPOA. Lower. Not higher, not radically higher, not crazy higher, not chaos, but lower.

We've done the good diplomatic work to ensure that our oil markets are adequately supplied. We've worked with our partners. American economic excellence, freedom, deregulation has created enormous capacity for crude oil production in the United States itself. And that combination of good work around the world and work inside the United States has continued to make sure that crude oil markets are adequately supplied, and I am convinced they will continue to be.

QUESTION: And when it turns to higher oil prices, obviously higher oil prices, good news for countries like Saudi Arabia and other GCC nations.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yeah, but they're not higher.

QUESTION: My question would be in terms –

SECRETARY POMPEO: I mean, it's just math. It's just math. You can chart it yourself. Put the chart up on your screen. The prices are lower today than

when we withdrew from the JCPOA.

QUESTION: Well, taking Iran off the table in terms of its supplies to the markets, that actually benefits Russia.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Oil prices are lower today than when we took the first barrel of oil off the market from Iran. They were producing roughly 2.7 billion[1] barrels per day for export. They're down to now somewhere around a million barrels per day. We're heading them towards zero. And crude oil markets, even the futures market – show them on your screen – they continue to predict that there will be adequate supply in the crude oil markets.

QUESTION: When you talk about Saudi Arabia specifically as a U.S. ally, when I spoke to Deputy U.S. Secretary of Energy several months ago at the Munich Security Conference, we had a long conversation about the nuclear file with regards to Saudi Arabia, because of course, we've heard from Mohammed bin Salman over the last couple of years. He said if Iran were to get a bomb, we would want to get a bomb as well. And he assured me that were Saudi Arabia to start working with U.S. companies that there would be a red line drawn, that they would have to subscribe to this 123 agreement, that they would not be given a green light to enrich uranium on their own. Where are we today on this? Because there has, of course, been a great deal of controversy over the potential for U.S. material and technology to make its way to Saudi Arabia.

SECRETARY POMPEO: So the United States position is very clear. We don't want any country, Saudi Arabia or Iran, to have nuclear weapons systems. We're working to prevent that in both places. I only wish that John Kerry had done that with Iran. I only wish he had gotten us a deal which would have prevented them to having a clear pathway to a nuclear weapons system. I regret it's what we're having to deal with today.

As for Saudi Arabia, we've been in negotiations with them for some time. If they are able to get their civil nuclear program right and we're able to get the security assurances we need, I assure you they'll be better security assurances than John Kerry got from Iran. But I have to say, when you talk to the Saudis, they say we want the deal Iran got. This is difficult. And so we're going to get them to the right place. And if we do, if we're successful, there'll be good outcomes for American businesses as well. This will help grow the American economy.

QUESTION: So you have no worries that we could end up with a potential arms race in the Middle East?

SECRETARY POMPEO: There's always concern. That's why I wish John Kerry had gotten a real deal. The threat of Iran having a nuclear weapon is precisely what is driving Saudi Arabia to be so concerned about where it sits today.

QUESTION: Shouldn't we be trying to prevent that at all cost?

SECRETARY POMPEO: We're trying to prevent it in Iran. That's exactly what we're working on.

QUESTION: Walk me through the difficulties made for you in your position when

you have your predecessor, John Kerry, having high-level conversations with counterparts or former counterparts in Tehran. Does this make your job difficult?

SECRETARY POMPEO: It's inappropriate. It's not consistent with what former secretaries of state ought to be doing, and I'll leave it at that. Suffice it to say previous secretaries of state ought to just get off the stage. When their day is done, they ought to leave foreign policy to their successors.

QUESTION: And he shouldn't be prosecuted potentially under the Logan Act?

SECRETARY POMPEO: You've heard what the President has said. I'll leave it to the Department of Justice to make decisions about prosecutions. I know only this: If you're out talking to someone that you did the deal with before, and you're urging that country to behave in a way that is inconsistent with American policy, that's not right.

QUESTION: Walk me through this. So you, in a speech a couple days ago, described China as a new kind of challenge. Where I sit in the Middle East, I have seen not only the growing Russian influence in countries like Saudi Arabia and UAE, but also the rise of China. They are now the largest foreign direct investor for the UAE, for example. And speaking to the ambassador a few days ago, he essentially told me we can't not work with China, we can't not get engaged with Asia more broadly. How worried are you about these new relationships as they continue to evolve? Does that leave the U.S. out?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Hardly. We've talked about a China a great deal. These countries understand. I think each of these countries in the Middle East understands their true partner, their true ally, is the United States of America. I think they'll continue to do that.

Look, the United States has a great deal of trade with China, and we benefit from that. The President understands that too. He wants to get those trade deals right. He wants to make them fair, reciprocal, even. He wants our businesses to be able to compete in China in the same way that Chinese businesses can compete in the United States. Those are simple asks.

As for the Middle East and frankly all around the world, we welcome China's participation as an economic actor. What we don't – what we don't welcome is China showing up and bribing people, China showing up and lending money at rates that clearly have some implication that goes well beyond any private sector entity. These are debt traps. This is in an effort to make a loan and foreclose on that loan in a way that will give China national security power or political power. And our mission, our diplomatic mission, is to ensure each of these countries understands the risks associated with that so that they can make good decisions for their country.

QUESTION: When I spoke to the ambassador, Yusif Utayba, he told me that the growing relationship that they have with China particularly is starting to make people in Washington nervous. Is that something that you're concerned about?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Our partners and allies understand clearly what America's expectations are, from how we will handle national security matters, the things that matter to keep Emiratis safe, Saudis safe, Kuwaitis safe, Bahrainis safe, and Americans safe. We will continue to work with our partners in the region. I am confident that our alliance will remain strong and that we can trade with lots of different countries and still handle the national security implications that come alongside.

QUESTION: And when we also talk about trading partners in the region – you mentioned Russia. You're headed to Russia very shortly. What do you hope to achieve from those meetings?

SECRETARY POMPEO: President Trump has asked me to go to Russia to talk about a broad range of issues. We have lots of places where I hope we can find overlapping interests with Russia. It may be the case that we can't; and where we can't, we'll go our own ways. But it's important. I remember as CIA Director I worked closely with the Russians on counterterror. I am convinced that those efforts were important to them. They saved American lives and Russian lives.

There are places that we'll have a value set that is radically different, that we'll have different views. In those places, we're going to protect America's interests. But in those places where we can find common ground or an overlapping interest, it's completely appropriate and indeed my duty and a necessity that we work together.

QUESTION: And we've seen the United States get very tough on countries like Iran. We've seen you get tough on North Korea as well as on China in these trade negotiations. But at the same time, a lot of folks say, "When are we really going to get tough on Russia?" How much of the Mueller report is going to come into the conversations that you have in coming days?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Boy, that's crazy talk. That's absolute crazy talk. And I've heard it. I've heard it from the previous administration. They say oh, we're not tough on Russia. I only wish they would have stopped the election interference. I only wish they would have put Global Magnitsky on some of the bad actors in Russia in the way the administration has. I only wish they hadn't gutted the Defense budget to the great benefit of Vladimir Putin. Right?

We put real money into our Defense Department. Vladimir Putin can't possibly think that's a good thing for him. They've got a defense budget. The actions that this administration takes I would put up against any in terms of our seriousness in pushing back on Russia and raising costs for them. And we can do that at the same time we can have conversations with them and see if there are places that we can find to work together.

QUESTION: Are you going to be able to put an end to that meddling when it comes to our next elections?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Well, it's a longstanding challenge for America. I've seen reporting that suggested somehow 2016 was the first time Russia had attempted

to interfere in a Western democracy anywhere in the world. Those of us in the national security world know that's simply not true. This has been a longstanding challenge where the Soviet Union and then Russia have tried to impact Western democracies, not just ours but others as well.

We'll certainly talk about that. We did pretty good work in 2018. Our team at DHS and FBI and all across the United States Government felt very good about the security of the elections in 2018 following the 2016 elections. It'll be even better in 2020. I'm confident that the American people should feel good about the security of our elections in 2020.

QUESTION: As you said, there are a lot of areas where the United States could work quite well with Russia, whether it was energy in Europe or the potential for movement on the Syria situation as well. Where are we today with Venezuela?

SECRETARY POMPEO: A series of good examples. I would add I hope we can find places we can work together in Afghanistan also. They face a – Russia faces a terror threat from Afghanistan also. I do think there are places.

On Venezuela we'll have a good conversation. I had one with Foreign Minister Lavrov when I was in Finland last week. We'll have another one when I see Foreign Minister Lavrov in Sochi and then with President Putin as well. We'll see how much progress we can make.

Our mission in Venezuela is very clear. We want no foreign interference. We don't want foreign interference from China, from Iran, from Russia, from Cuba, or anyone else. We want the Venezuelan people to have their country back and have their own democracy.

QUESTION: The Madison doctrine.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Monroe Doctrine.

QUESTION: Monroe Doctrine.

SECRETARY POMPEO: But more broadly, and more appropriately, we just want them to have a chance that they have elected Juan Guaido as their interim president through their constitution. That's appropriate and necessary, and our task is to ensure that they get to the benefits of that so that – you know the destruction that's been had upon that economy. It happened long before American sanctions. This is years and years of decay in their systems, so now you have starving children, children that are sick without medicine. That's not right. And any country that's interfering and preventing them from getting that ought to pack up, leave, allow the Venezuelan people to begin to regrow their economy and rebuild their nation.

QUESTION: So many people would say about – that's what that the sanctions on Iran were really doing the Iranian people, particularly the economy tanking as badly as it has.

SECRETARY POMPEO: No, these sanctions are directed at the Iranian leadership to change their behavior – point blunt – point blank.

QUESTION: But it does mean the people suffer. But the people do suffer as a direct result of them.

SECRETARY POMPEO: The Iranian leadership understands the cost that's being imposed. This is a kleptocratic regime that has stolen billions of dollars and wastes the Iranian people's own money on these proxy wars all across the world. The Iranian Government, while its people are suffering – according to them – is spending money in Venezuela. They're sending forces to Venezuela. This is not a leadership that reflects what the Iranian people want, and we are determined to assist the Venezuelan people in getting the leadership regime that leads in the way that they want it to.

QUESTION: And finally, sir, I have to ask you about how you would characterize the Trump doctrine, what we've seen with regards to China, the trade war, we've seen with regards to Iran in terms of these sanctions. And what's been interesting to international investors in particular, and those very much focused on energy markets, what's happening in the Strait of Hormuz, is the fact that with all of the pressure and all of the military hardware headed that way at this moment, the President coming out just a couple days ago and essentially saying, "I'd welcome a phone call from Tehran, just call me." How do you describe the Trump doctrine?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Of course, we'd welcome that call. Of course, we want a peaceful diplomatic resolution to each of these conflicts that we've talked about here today. It makes perfect sense. It's entirely consistent.

What President Trump has done is he's – we've spoken the truth, right? The previous administrations just ignored it. China, we've called them out. They ignored the fact that intellectual property was being stolen. We've tried to push back against it, and we will. And they had forced technology transfer in China. They have a million Uighurs being detained. The previous administration turned a blind eye. We won't.

The previous administration saw that NATO countries weren't paying their fair share. This administration has called it out.

Previous administrations allowed the Human Rights Commission at the United Nations to be occupied by some of the most grotesque human rights abusers in the world. Previous administrations wouldn't call it out. We just – we're realistic. We understand the world as it is, and we're working to make it better in every one of those forums.

QUESTION: Realpolitik.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Calling it like we see it; accepting facts as they are, not papering over them; and working every day to improve America's position in the world.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, thank you so much for joining CNBC.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you very much, ma'am.

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Press Releases: Remarks at the Claremont Institute 40th Anniversary Gala: “A Foreign Policy From the Founding”

Remarks
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SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you. Thank you all. People talk about my job being nerve-wracking. There is nothing as nerve-wracking as that much applause before you speak. (Laughter.) And you should know – Ryan, thank you for the kind introduction too – I was on this trip when I heard about this little dustup about the advertisement for this dinner, and it said they wouldn't let him post because of the offensive material. I'm like, is that me? (Laughter.) But I also know a point – with no advertisement and this crowd, you'd have needed a much bigger room.

So it is wonderful. It is great to be out with a group of people who care about America so deeply. Thank you for having me. (Applause.) I want to thank the Claremont Institute as well. As you said, I just got back on a trip where I had gone to Finland to talk about America's interests in the Arctic. I made a little detour to Iraq – (laughter) – and then back to London. Makes Southern California weather feel pretty good. (Laughter.)

First of all, I was – you talked about this is home. I grew up at basically Harbor and McFadden. My father still lives in that house. I was there today. (Applause.) Yeah, it was really something. He's lived in that house since 1961, and today they had the whole little street blocked off with California Highway Patrol and the security team, and the neighbors were all coming out like, "I know that kid." (Laughter.)

The Bible describes John the Baptist as "the voice of one crying in the wilderness." And I sometimes think about the Claremont Institute that way.

I call Kansas home. It's where I spent the bulk of my adult life outside of the military. But I had spent my childhood here, of course, when Ronald Reagan was the governor. And I have to tell you, California has changed a little bit since I left. (Laughter.) I'm going to have to come back and help you all get it right. (Cheers and applause.)

It's so important that you all know, all the people who make Claremont tick, Ryan and the team and all of those who contribute, your work goes way past California. And as Ryan said, there's been a lot written in the *Claremont Review of Books* that clarify the aims and undertakings of what we're trying to do in this administration, and the hundreds of fellows that you've educated over the years who are defending the first principles on the front lines. In fact, Ryan mentioned I have a senior advisor, Mary Kissel, and a speechwriter, who is sitting over here to my left. The two of them wrote this tonight, so if you don't like it, it is on you. (Laughter.)

It also looks like my Leo Strauss quote, Leos Strauss quote, so you're the only ones that might laugh at that joke, so thank you. (Laughter.)

Look, all kidding aside, your work to preserve the ideals of the American Founding is absolutely what America needs. There is literally, as I travel the world, there is nothing more distinctive about the United States than our politics, and wonderfully so. We are the truly greatest experiment in human freedom that the world has ever seen, and I, as America's senior diplomat, benefit from that every day. (Applause.)

I want to do a little bit of the history, because the foreign policy of the early republic reflected the attitude of a free nation which has thrown off an imperial power, which, frankly, I just left. (Laughter.) And look, I think there's three words that characterize that. They would be realism, restraint, and respect, and I'll talk about each of them just for a moment.

First, realism. The Founders were keen students of human nature and history. They saw that conflict is the normative experience for nations. Hamilton put this Federalist 34. He said, "To judge from the history of mankind, we shall be compelled to conclude that the fiery and destructive passions of war reign in the human breast with much more powerful sway than the mild and [beneficial] sentiments of peace."

I'll simplify: The Founders knew peace wasn't the norm. And in response to this reality, the Founders knew the first duty of the federal government was to provide for the safety of its citizens. Madison said, "[Security] is an avowed and essential object of the American Union." You all know that.

How about restraint? The Founders sought to protect our interests but avoid adventurism. The Barbary War, fought so soon after independence, was an effort of last resort to protect our vital commercial interests. The Monroe Doctrine – relevant even today – was a message of deterrence, not a license to grab land. "Peace and friendship," said Jefferson, "with all mankind is our wisest policy, and I wish we may be permitted to pursue it. But the temper and folly of our enemies may not leave this in our choice."

And finally, respect. The Founders had recently cast off the tyranny of an empire. They were not eager to subjugate others. In 1821, John Quincy Adams wrote that America "goes not abroad in search of monsters to destroy." But indeed, quite the opposite: "She is the well-wisher to the freedom and independence of all." And as the first nation of its kind, the world would see America as a model for self-government and liberty. And a special bond would link America to any nation that loved those things.

Let's contrast the Founders' ideas to the foreign policy of the late 20th and early 21st century. American leaders had drifted from realism. At the dawn of the post-Cold war era, hopes were high that enfolding the likes of China and Russia into a so-called rules-based international order would hasten their domestic evolution towards democracy. We hoped this order – comprised of institutions and agreed upon by codes of conduct – would temper their actions towards neighbors and to our country.

But we can see now 30 years on, after the end of the Cold War, that the Putin regime slays dissidents in cold blood and invades its neighbors; that the Chinese Communist Party has detained more than one million Chinese Muslims in labor camps, and it uses coercion and corruption as its primary tools of statecraft. And as I'll talk about here in just a little bit, both countries have foreign policies intent on eroding American power. We can't blame our leaders for their optimism, but we can blame them for having misjudged those regimes.

America too had become unrestrained, untethered from common sense. The

institutions, the institutions we built to defend the free world against the Soviet menace, had drifted from their original mission set. Indeed, some of them had become directly antagonistic to our interests, while we kept silent. We bought into trade agreements that helped hollow out our own middle class. We sacrificed American competitiveness for accolades from the UN and climate activists. And we engaged in conflicts without a clear sense of mission. No more. (Applause.)

And to round out this trio, we had lost sight of respect – not for other nations, but for our own people and for our ideals. We cozied up to Cuba. We struck a terrible agreement with the Islamic Republic of Iran that put the regime’s campaigns of terrorism and proxy wars on steroids. And many of our leaders were more eager to delight the Davos crowd than champion the principles that have made us the greatest nation that civilization has ever known. (Applause.)

By the way, the Claremont Institute sadly knows, I could also name a certain tech company that we spoke about earlier that’s forgotten our first principles too. (Applause.)

I am very confident. I am very confident that the Founders would have been perplexed by those moves. We had too much confidence in the international system and not enough confidence in our own nation. And we had too little courage to confront regimes squarely opposed to our interests and to our values. (Applause.)

But I bring you good news. One man said, “Enough.” And in 2016, you all sent him to the White House. (Cheers and applause.) President Trump’s prescription for foreign policy was very simple, right? “America First.” Now, that’s been mocked a bit. The media has spun this phrase as a dog-whistle for racists and xenophobes. But I’ve spent a fair amount of time with President Trump, in fact, virtually every single day these past two years. (Laughter.) Yeah, sometimes so good, sometimes more challenging for all of us, yes. (Laughter.)

But here’s what this really means. It means that like millions and millions of Americans, President Trump loves this country and wants to see it do well in the world – not at the expense of others, but to the benefit of our people, and by extension, the nations that share our values and our strategic goals. It’s really that simple. If there is a natural law of foreign policy, this is it.

And while he wishes every country enjoyed the freedoms we enjoy here, he has no aspiration to use force to spread the American model. You can see it in the administration’s record of its using force. I can prove it to you.

And so – and so importantly – he believes America is exceptional – a place and history apart from normal human experience, the ones that our Founders spoke about. President Trump believes it is right – indeed more than right – for America to unashamedly advance policy that serves our interests and reflects American ideals. (Applause.)

Certainly, our course of action in this administration reflects a gut-level –

a gut-level – for love of country. But taking the pursuit of America's interests up a notch is not just honorable; it's urgent in this new era of great power competition. (Applause.)

On China, the President has taken action to stop China from stealing our stuff. No longer will American companies be forced to hand over their technological crown jewels as the price of doing business in China. (Applause.) When a deal doesn't work for the United States, no deal shall be done. (Applause.)

We have bolstered our military presence in the South China Sea, and we've put nations on notice around the world that the sale of key infrastructure and technology companies to China threatens their national security. And we've strengthened the group, the entity, that screens Chinese and other foreign investments here in the United States. We are also fighting the battle to make sure that the Chinese Communist Party cannot burrow into the data of billions of internet users through companies like Huawei and ZTE. (Applause.) The internet of tomorrow must have buried within it Western values and must not belong to China. (Applause.)

This has been a real pivot to Asia. (Laughter.)

So look, how else are we putting America First? As I – I gave a speech in Brussels. I didn't get any of this applause. (Laughter.) (Cheers and applause.) I talked – I spoke that day in Brussels about international agreements and institutions in which the United States enters, and I said that for us to continue to participate it must be with our consent and has to serve our interests and ideals. It seemed pretty straightforward. (Laughter.)

Look, consider our stated intent to withdraw from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Force Treaty with Russia. I don't watch much TV, but I have seen the media mandarins swear up and down that America was putting the world closer to nuclear war. But as the 28 NATO Allies unanimously concurred, Russia is in violation of the treaty, putting Vladimir Putin closer to an asymmetric advantage of his nuclear forces. Why would one party honor a deal when the other wouldn't? It made no sense. (Applause.) We chose to abrogate the treaty but not abrogate defending the American people. (Applause.) I'll put it another way: Our decision on missiles wasn't rocket science. (Laughter.) Yeah, that was one of your own wrote that one. (Laughter.)

Look, we're also working to ensure that the future of international agreements unambiguously advances American interest. Past efforts, agreements that we entered into with North Korea, only produced more North Korean nukes and American diplomatic failure. Our diplomacy with the DPRK is laser-focused on making sure that we never again have to reopen the North Korean nuclear file.

I just this past trip to Hanoi came across a major threshold. I had spent more time with Chairman Kim than even Dennis Rodman. (Laughter and applause.)

But I want you all to know this is serious business. We want to make sure that Americans are safe, and we are determined to get our policy with North

Korea and to get our allies, Japan and South Korea, and to convince the Russians and the Chinese that this is in the world's best interest. And our diplomatic efforts to get the entire world to engage, to see the risk for what it is, and to help us get North Korea to a brighter future, is something that our administration is profoundly proud of. (Applause.)

And finally, putting America First means proudly associating with nations that share our principles and are willing to defend them. It's true; we had some earlier comments from Washington's Farewell Address. He warned against permanent alliances, but that same speech praised connections with nations based on "policy, humanity, and interest."

We have reaffirmed America's historic alliance with the only free nation in the Middle East: Israel. (Cheers and applause.)

We are banding together with the likeminded nations like Australia, India, Japan, and South Korea to make sure that each Indo-Pacific nation can protect its sovereignty from coercion. It's part of a greater commitment to a free and open order. You all know this: The distinctive mark of Western Civilization is the belief in the inherent worth of human beings, with the attendant respect for God-authored rights and liberties. Indeed, the Declaration says that "all men are created equal." And we ought to help nations protect these first things – and human rights as well.

This new pride in taking America's interests seriously is not just an American phenomenon. Countries all over the world are rediscovering their national identities, and we are supporting them. We're asking them to do what's best for their people as well. The wave of electoral surprises has swept from Britain to the United States and all the way to Brazil.

You've all heard the famous line, "What's good for General Motors is good for the United States." (Laughter.) I actually think the last administration would have said, "What's good for the world is good for the United States." Our focus is that, "What's good for the United States – a foreign policy animated by love of our unique way of life – is good for the world." (Applause.)

And as I wrap out, I want to talk about why that is.

First, countries who share our same principles find new avenues for collaboration with us. I mentioned before I returned from an Arctic Council Ministerial, a bunch of foreign ministers from eight countries whose nations touch the Arctic's. I made it clear America is now sharpening its focus in an area of increasing strategic importance. We want to cooperate with likeminded democracies who share our vision of the Arctic, and guard against those who don't – nations like China and Russia. My task as America's most senior diplomat of building alliances is hard work, but they are essential for securing the rights the Founders sought to protect.

Second, love of one's country forces leaders to better honor the will of their own people. President Trump does that every day. (Applause.)

Hamilton had it right. Hamilton had the right idea. He said, "Under every form of government, rulers are only trustees for the happiness and interest of their nation." If democratic leaders are not responsive to the jolts of patriotism which are sweeping the world, they won't be leaders for long. Those who understand that nations are the best vehicle for securing the rights of their citizens will have a much longer shelf life. (Applause.)

Third – the third reason why is that I've always been a big believer in competition. I didn't like it when I ran a small business. I wanted my own little monopoly. (Laughter.) But the truth of the matter is we all know that America can compete and win against our adversaries on security and any economic issue. But even more importantly, competition forces the best ideas to rise. And among political ideas, there is none better than the American idea. (Cheers and applause.)

I have the enormous privilege to serve as America's most senior diplomat, and what I want the world to see – the unsurpassed attractiveness of the American experiment – is something I market every day. I want other nations to take this same path. Our first president desired the same thing. He used words like this. He said, "The applause, the affection, and the adoption of every nation which is yet a stranger to it."

Look, what I've just outlined here is a foreign policy that returns America to old truths. We talk about this inside the State Department all the time. Let's speak about real facts and real truth. It's something I know that this institute, the Claremont Institute, has a deep appreciation for. President Trump has helped put the world back on track to a nation-first trajectory, and I am confident that this reawakening will last well beyond this, his presidency. As just one example you should see, look at how both parties now are on guard against the threat that China presents to America – maybe except Joe Biden. (Laughter and applause.) God love him. (Laughter.)

Winston Churchill – a name very near to this, dear to this organization – said, "America is like a giant boiler. Light a fire under it, and there's no limit to the amount of heat it can generate." A fire was truly lit back in 2016. Bathed in its light, we have embarked on a foreign policy that takes seriously the Founders' ideas of individual liberty and constitutional government. And because of it, American exceptionalism – and the American Founding – will remain alive and well in the 21st century.

Thank you, God bless you, and may God bless these United States of America. (Applause.)

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[Press Releases: Deputy Secretary Sullivan's Participation in the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine \(NASEM\) Roundtable on "Promoting and Protecting American Research and Development \(R&D\)"](#)

Readout
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
May 10, 2019

The below is attributable to Spokesperson Morgan Ortagus:

Deputy Secretary of State John J. Sullivan spoke today at the NASEM roundtable on "Promoting and Protecting American R&D." He noted the United States remains a leader in science and technology (S&T) in the Indo-Pacific and throughout the world. He called for the United States to be destination for science. The roundtable was convened by the U.S. Department of State and NASEM, and included participation from researchers and innovators in academia, the private sector, and the National Laboratories as well as thought leaders from the U.S. government.

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Press Releases: The United States Sanctions Venezuela's Defense and Security Sector

Media Note
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
May 10, 2019

Today, the United States took action against the former Maduro regime for increasing its intimidation of those supporting democracy in Venezuela, including members of the democratically elected National Assembly. Pursuant to E.O. 13850, the United States determined persons operating in the defense and security sector of the Venezuelan economy may be subject to sanctions.

In addition, we have designated two companies, Monsoon Navigation Corporation and Serenity Maritime Limited, that operate in the oil sector. We have also identified two vessels that transported oil from Venezuela to Cuba as blocked property.

The Venezuelan people continue to suffer at the hands of this despotic regime, aided in no small part by Cuba and Russia. Cuban forces provide intelligence and physical security to help oppress the Venezuelan people. Russian military personnel and companies operate in the defense and security sector. The Maduro regime's latest cowardly gambit – the arbitrary detention of National Assembly First Vice President Edgar Zambrano – is illegal and inexcusable.

We call on all actors within the defense and security sector to protect and defend the rights of all Venezuelans.

Today's determination allows the United States to take action against the malign actors that are impeding the will of the courageous Venezuelan people, who demand democracy. The United States continues to stand with them, their interim President Juan Guaido, and the National Assembly, as they work to peacefully restore constitutional order and prosperity to their country.

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[Press Releases: Senior State Department Official Previewing Secretary Pompeo's Upcoming Trip to Russia](#)

Special Briefing
Senior State Department Official
Via Teleconference
May 10, 2019

MODERATOR: Welcome, everyone. Thank you for joining us this morning. I see many of you also joined us last week while we previewed the Secretary's travel to Europe. This upcoming visit to Russia will mark the 39th country that Secretary Pompeo has visited as Secretary of State. Since his first overseas trip at the end of April 2018, the Secretary has spent 92 days on official travel. He remains firmly committed to getting out to engage with his counterparts around the world to advance the Trump administration's foreign policy goals to ensure the secure, prosperity, and freedom of the American people.

The ground rules for today's call are that it's on background. For your situational awareness only and not for reporting, today we have [Senior State Department Official], and you may cite him as a, quote, "senior State Department official," end quote. [Senior State Department Official] will talk about Secretary Pompeo's upcoming travel to Moscow and Sochi, Russia, the meetings that they have planned, and a whole range of challenges that the Secretary will be discussing on his trip.

And with that, I will turn it over to [Senior State Department Official].

SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL: Great. Thank you, everybody. Thank you for the opportunity to be here with you. And I will just run quickly through the trip and some of our issues, and then we can get into some questions.

So Secretary Pompeo will arrive in Moscow on Monday, May 13th, and begin his visit to Russia by meeting with his team at the U.S. embassy in Moscow. Under the leadership of Ambassador Huntsman, this team has done incredible work under difficult circumstances on behalf of the American people. The Secretary will have an opportunity to express his appreciation and support for all that they do.

While in Moscow, the Secretary will meet with American business leaders and U.S. exchange program alumni to hear their perspectives. He will also participate in a wreath-laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier to honor the sacrifices of those who died fighting with us against the Nazi regime.

The Secretary will then travel to Sochi on Tuesday afternoon to meet with Foreign Minister Lavrov and President Putin. An issue high on the agenda for their discussions will be arms control. President Trump has made clear that he wants arms control agreements that reflect modern reality. These agreements must include a broader range of countries and account for a broader range of weapon systems than our current bilateral treaties with Russia. There will be a full range of global challenges to discuss, including Ukraine, Venezuela, Iran, Syria, and North Korea.

The Secretary will also talk about the challenges in our bilateral relationship with Russia. It is no secret that we have many areas of disagreement with the Russian Government, and the Secretary will have a very candid conversation about concerns in our bilateral relationship, including Russia's breach of longstanding arms control agreements like the INF, and Kremlin-backed attempts to meddle in U.S. and other foreign elections. These are issues he's raised before, and he will continue to raise. No administration has been tougher than the Trump administration in imposing costs on Russia for its malign activities.

But as President Trump has said, and I quote, "A productive dialogue is not only good for the United States and good for Russia, [but] it is good for the world. [But] if we're going to solve many of the problems facing our world, then we are going to have to find ways to cooperate in pursuit of shared interests," end quote. This is the work of diplomacy: showing up, having frank discussions, and working to find areas where we can cooperate.

The United States is not the only nation having frank discussions with Russia. Our European allies and partners have stood with the United States in expressing our concern about Russian actions that threaten our shared commitment to Europe that is strong and free. We are not going to solve these issues overnight, but we are going to have – we have to be engaging to create opportunities for progress.

And we have made progress in a number of areas. The Secretary met earlier this week with Foreign Minister Lavrov in Finland at the Arctic Council ministerial, and they had productive discussions there. We have open channels of communication on a range of key issues – like Afghanistan, North Korea, and counterterrorism – where engagement with Russia can advance U.S. interests. Let me just run through those very quickly.

On North Korea, Special Representative Biegun is engaging with Russia about how to achieve our shared goal of final, fully verified denuclearization. These have been constructive discussions. Even though we don't agree with Russia about all the details of how to achieve this goal, we will continue dialogue to bridge gaps on the way forward.

On Afghanistan, Special Representative Khalilzad has met twice with his Russian and Chinese counterparts. Together they issued a trilateral statement outlining support for the Afghan peace process, demanding the Taliban take tough and public steps against international terrorists, and encouraging the Taliban to sit down with an inclusive, intra-Afghan delegation to discuss a political settlement that ends this conflict. We welcome the positive role of Russia, China, and any other country in the Afghan peace process.

And finally, on counterterrorism, our reciprocal exchange of information with Russia on foreign terrorist fighters, on preventing terrorist travel, and on the protection of major international sporting events helps protect the United States, its people, and its interests.

The Secretary then will depart on Tuesday evening to return home, so I think you see it will be a short trip but an important visit.

MODERATOR: Great. Thank you, [Senior State Department Official].

Lois, we're ready for some questions. Thank you.

OPERATOR: Thank you. And again, if you do have a question, please, press * then 1 at this time.

Our first question is from Matthew Lee from the Associated Press. Please, go ahead.

QUESTION: Hi there. Thank you. I'm wondering – you mentioned that no one's under any illusions that you're going to solve anything overnight, but I'm just wondering: Do you – is there any particular item that you think could be described as a deliverable that might come out of this meeting, or is it more just a kind of, I don't know, continuation of the President's phone call with Putin from last week and the Secretary's discussion with Foreign Minister Lavrov on Monday in Finland?

SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL: I don't want to be – I don't want to predict any outcomes. I think we're approaching this from a very realistic approach that this is an opportunity to take the conversation to a higher level and to have that frank and direct conversation on this full range of issues on the relationship.

MODERATOR: Next question, please.

OPERATOR: Thank you. And our next question is from the line of Shaun Tandon from AFP. Please, go ahead.

QUESTION: Hi, thanks for doing this. Perhaps getting a little bit more specific on some of the global hot spots that you mentioned, particularly

Venezuela and Syria. It's no secret, as you mentioned, that the two countries are on different sides on both of those issues. Do you see any room for cooperation with Russia on either of these? Do you expect to reiterate the U.S. stance on Venezuela in terms of Russian involvement there and on Syria? Do you find a way that the two countries could actually have some positive outcome together in either place?

SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL: So I think on both of those, we will be reiterating our concerns about Russia's role. I think, as you well know, on Syria we have a very productive de-confliction channel and we will continue that type of conversation. On Venezuela, our policy is very clear. We continue to support democracy in Venezuela, and the National Assembly is the only democratically elected institution in the country. We have – we disagree with Russia's continued support for Maduro and that's going to be the subject of discussion.

MODERATOR: Thanks, Shaun. Next question, please.

OPERATOR: Thank you. And that is from Nick Wadhams from Bloomberg News. Please, go ahead.

QUESTION: Hi. Could you talk about two things – one, the idea that the President essentially wants to reboot the U.S. relationship with Russia now that the Mueller report has been released and that this trip is part of that effort; and also, how much of this trip would be to lay the groundwork for a potential meeting between President Trump and President Putin during the G20 in Osaka? Thank you.

SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL: Nick, we've been clear all along that part of our Russia policy is it is in our interest to have a better relationship with Russia. The President has been clear, the Secretary has been clear on that. And so where we have concerns, we're going to raise them directly, narrow those differences, and find areas where we can cooperate to protect and advance our interests.

With regard to any future travel, I'd really have to refer you to the White House. Thanks.

QUESTION: Are you looking for a meeting?

SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL: Again, I'd have to refer you to the White House about any future meetings.

MODERATOR: Thanks, Nick. Next question, please.

OPERATOR: And that question is from Nike Ching from Voice of America. Please, go ahead.

QUESTION: Sure. Thank you very much for this phone call. Do you have any updates on the Americans being detained or under house arrest in Russia, including the case of Paul Whelan and Michael Calvey? Will this be discussed during Secretary Pompeo's meeting in Russia, and how do you characterize the handling of these cases by Russia? Thank you.

SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL: Sure, thank you for that question. So the administration places the highest priority on the safety and the welfare of U.S. citizens overseas. We stand ready to provide all appropriate consular services in cases where U.S. citizens are detained. I think you're aware of the very active role Ambassador Huntsman has played on this issue. And so I don't have something specific but I would expect this issue will be discussed.

OPERATOR: The next question is from the line of John Hudson from *The Washington Post*. Please, go ahead.

QUESTION: Hey, thanks. You mentioned that arms control discussions are going to be a top priority. I was just wondering if you have gotten any closer to finding sort of a point person on these discussions in the T family. You mentioned that you'd like a broader range of weapon systems included. Can you say what weapon systems those are? Yeah, just any sort of insight into that and the extension of New START would be helpful. Thanks.

SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL: Again, the President and the Secretary have been clear, is that we need a new era of arms control to address new and emerging threats. So I don't want to preview or get ahead of where the conversations with – between the Secretary and the Russian Government will go, but this is an opportunity to discuss exactly those issues, and we'll see where they go from there.

MODERATOR: Next question.

OPERATOR: And that's from Dmitry Kirsanov from TASS. Please, go ahead.

QUESTION: Hi. Thanks a lot for doing this. I wanted to ask what the United States expects to achieve as a result of this visit, and I also wanted to follow up on Matt's and Nick's questions and ask again if you – if we can expect any deliverables – I'm sorry – in the form of at least a joint statement or something and if a discussion about a potential summit is going to be on the agenda in Sochi.

SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL: Okay, so look, I think the starting point we have to have when we discuss any – our policy towards Russia – and this is part of what diplomacy does – and the Secretary's trip is to acknowledge frankly that Russia has taken a series of aggressive and destabilizing actions on the global stage. And this is – this trip is an opportunity to make those points clear to the Russian Government and what our expectations are and see how to forge a path forward. Again, an improved relationship between the United States and Russia would be in our interests, but we have expectations for the Russian side.

And so, again, in terms of summit or future meetings, I would have to refer you to the White House, and we will see what comes out of the visit.

MODERATOR: Thanks.

OPERATOR: And the next question is from Conor Finnegan from ABC News. Please, go ahead.

QUESTION: Hey, thanks very much for the call. Two questions if I could. The first one: Will the Secretary meet with any opposition leaders or democratic activists while he's on the ground in Moscow?

And then secondly, this has kind of been addressed, but can you just say why this meeting is happening now? I believe it's the first time the Secretary is traveling to Russia. If you could correct me if I'm wrong on that. So why does he think now presents an opportunity?

SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL: Right. So this is the Secretary's first trip as Secretary of State, but he's had multiple engagements now with Foreign Minister Lavrov, and this is a good opportunity, as I think we've laid out with all the issues on the agenda, to take that conversation to a higher level and for a frank exchange of views on where the challenges and opportunities are.

MODERATOR: Thanks. Next question, please.

OPERATOR: The next question is from Mike Eckel from Radio Free Europe. Please, go ahead.

QUESTION: Hi, thanks very much. Two questions. Fiona Hill was in Moscow a few weeks back, and we're told that she made a proposal that roughly involved Russia letting up on Venezuela in exchange for some U.S. concessions on Ukraine. Can you discuss more details of this proposal and the specific Venezuela discussions that the Secretary will have with Putin?

And secondly, on Ukraine, I wonder if you can address the question of why Ambassador Masha Yovanovitch was removed from her post in Kyiv prematurely. Was it a political decision by the White House? Was the State Department involved? Thanks very much.

SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL: Sure. So look, if you have questions about Fiona's trip, I'd really, again, have to refer you to the White House to address the substance of her visit and her conversations. I think we have a very clear policy, and the Secretary has been abundantly clear with both Russia on – with Russia on both the issues of Venezuela and Ukraine, where our concerns are about their actions, and where we expect the path forward.

MODERATOR: Last question, please.

OPERATOR: And that will come from Deirdre Shesgreen from *USA Today*. Please, go ahead.

QUESTION: Thanks so much. Can you say specifically how many Russian troops are in Venezuela, Russian military personnel, and then provide further details about what Secretary Pompeo said was their role in persuading Maduro not to leave the country?

SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL: The Secretary's concerns about Russia, they speak for themselves. We are concerned about Russia's actions in Venezuela, and we think support for Maduro is a losing bet. And so our support for the Venezuelan people continues, and that will be a subject for the discussion.

MODERATOR: Great. Thank you very much to everyone who joined today's call. This concludes the call. Again, a reminder, today's call was on background and our speaker may be referred to as a senior State Department official. Thanks so much. Bye-bye.

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