

# Press Releases: Secretary Pompeo To Release the 2018 Human Rights Reports

Notice to the Press  
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC  
March 12, 2019

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Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo will deliver on-camera remarks on the release of the 2018 *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* on Wednesday, March 13, 2019, at 11:00 a.m. in the Press Briefing Room at the U.S. Department of State.

Ambassador Michael Kozak from the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor will take questions in the Briefing Room immediately following Secretary Pompeo's remarks.

Promoting and defending human rights and fundamental freedoms are central to who we are as a country, and the United States will continue to support those around the world struggling for human dignity and liberty. The 2018 *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* are required by U.S. law and document the status of human rights and worker rights in nearly 200 countries and territories.

This event is open press coverage. Journalists who plan to cover this event in person must be seated in the Press Briefing Room by 10:45 a.m. The Press Briefing Room is accessible from the 23rd Street entrance of the Department.

*Media representatives may attend this event upon presentation of one of the following: (1) a U.S. Government-issued photo media credential (e.g., Department of State, White House, Congress, Department of Defense or Foreign Press Center), or (2) an official photo identification card issued by their news organization, or (3) a letter from their employer on official letterhead verifying their current employment as a journalist. Additionally, they must present an official government photo identification card (i.e., U.S. driver's license or passport).*

The event will be streamed live on [www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov).

Instructions for embargoed access to the reports will be sent to members of the press only, on Wednesday, March 13 at 9:00 a.m. The entire report is EMBARGOED until the start of the press briefing at 11:00 a.m. The reports will be available to the public on [state.gov](http://state.gov) at that time.

For further information, please contact the Office of Press Relations on 202-647-2492 or [PAPressDuty@state.gov](mailto:PAPressDuty@state.gov).

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## **Press Releases: United States Welcomes the UN Panel of Experts Annual Report on the D.P.R.K.**

Press Statement  
Robert Palladino

Deputy Spokesperson

Washington, DC  
March 12, 2019

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The United States welcomes the release today of a report by the UN's independent Panel of Experts on the implementation of UN sanctions on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (D.P.R.K.) and commends the panel for its hard work. The report provides timely, relevant, and impartial analysis that helps governments around the world to take decisive action and demonstrates the need for continued vigilance against entities involved in D.P.R.K. sanctions evasion activity. The United States takes allegations of UN sanctions violations seriously, and all Member States are expected to fully implement UN Security Council resolutions. International unity in implementing these sanctions continues to hamper the D.P.R.K.'s ability to further its illegal weapons of mass destruction programs and sends the message that the D.P.R.K. will be economically and diplomatically isolated until it denuclearizes.

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## [Press Releases: Interview With Laura Rice of Texas Standard](#)

Interview

Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Via Teleconference

March 12, 2019

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**QUESTION:** U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo joins us now. Secretary Pompeo, thank you for your time.

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** Thank you, Laura. It's great to be with you.

**QUESTION:** The U.S. has recently become the world's largest oil producer and new reports say it could soon be the largest oil exporter. I understand your address today will focus on how this strengthens our national security. How is that?

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** I wanted to come to Texas today to talk about that very fact. This is a game-changer for American national security. As America's most senior diplomat, I travel the world, and boy, there's not a country I go to where energy isn't at the top of their list, and what this does – what all of this success here in American domestic energy production does for me and for Americans, to keep them safe – is it permits us to share with those countries our wealth, our resources, to cut deals that support their energy security in places as far off as Vietnam and the Philippines and Europe.

And it permits them too to wean themselves from energy that they're taking from adversaries, countries that want to do their country harm. This is a big deal for American national security. It gives us lots of power throughout the world, and our capacity has increased during the Trump administration. We intend to – intend to continue to do that, not only to create wealth for and

jobs here in the United States, but to enhance America's national security posture around the world as well.

**QUESTION:** The big news today again is Venezuela. One statistic you mentioned in a press conference yesterday is that Venezuela's oil production is down by half since Nicolas Maduro took power. You accuse Cuba's involvement as being about oil. Is oil also at the center of U.S. interest in Venezuela?

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** Only in the sense that we want the Venezuelan people to have access to their own wealth and not the corruption – the corruption that has followed the Maduro regime, this oil wealth being stripped away by the kleptocrats of the Maduro regime, taken for their personal benefit and not shared with the Venezuelan people. The Cubans have done the same. This isn't what the Venezuelan people deserve, it's not what they want, and America's efforts to restore democracy and the rule of law, and to help feed and have medicine for the Venezuelan people – that's the purpose of our efforts in Venezuela. And when we get this right, when Maduro is gone and there's fair and free elections and democracy is restored, the oil wealth of Venezuela will be returned to its people.

**QUESTION:** Along with Cuba, you point to Russia as helping to support Venezuelan president Nicolas Maduro. You just announced you're withdrawing all diplomatic staff in Venezuela. In a tweet, you said, "The presence of U.S. diplomatic staff at the embassy has become a constraint on U.S. policy." How do you mean?

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** We decided yesterday that it was important that we keep American diplomats safe, and so we made the decision that we would withdraw the remaining personnel there in Caracas and bring them back to the United States. So we'll do that over the days ahead. Anytime you're dealing with a situation that is deteriorating as fast that it is – as it is in Venezuela today, decisions you make are always encumbered by the fact that you know there's real risk to your own people, people that you've sent into harm's way. We wanted to get them back, we wanted to get them out of the country so that we could move forward in a way that provided that opportunity.

We have 200 metric tons of food sitting in the region, trying to deliver into Venezuela to feed the hungry and to provide medicine for the sick. We want to make sure that as we continue to work in the region alongside of our partners, we don't have any constraints on action that we might need to take in order to achieve that.

**QUESTION:** That food that is waiting to support Venezuelan people, I assume part of the State Department budget goes out to pay for programs and food like that. What do you do with the Trump administration's new budget proposal, which includes \$13 billion in proposed cuts? Does that mean that support like this for places like Venezuela is lessened?

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** Oh, in fact just the opposite. Contained in the President's budget request is up to \$500 million, an enormous amount of resources that the Trump budget is proposing to provide to assist the Venezuelan people when the time is right. This budget will serve America well, America's national

security interests, because we're prepared to help the Venezuelan people with real resources. The American taxpayers have been most generous, and President Trump has led that charge.

**QUESTION:** So as Trump's budget decreases the spending for the State Department and also includes more military spending, should Americans be worried about policy shifting from diplomacy to boots on the ground?

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** You can take a look at the first two years of the Trump administration to see the effectiveness of our foreign policy. Our capacity to deliver really solid, really sound diplomatic outcomes – to build coalitions in a way that, frankly, the previous administration just chose not to do – a global coalition to put sanctions on North Korea, to hopefully get them to denuclearize. The world has come together – 50-plus nations – to recognize that Maduro's time had come. A big, global coalition to take down the caliphate – over 80 countries in the Defeat-ISIS Coalition. We have worked diplomatic – incredibly successfully in the President's first two years, and I'm very confident that we'll have the resources, and I know we have the talent to deliver good outcomes for the American people in the days and weeks and months ahead as well.

**QUESTION:** You mentioned North Korea. The proposed cuts to the State Department come soon after a second summit between President Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, where no agreement was made. Where do we stand now in that situation?

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** I've personally been working on this alongside the President for my entire time as the Secretary of State, and in fact even just a bit before. In Singapore, in June of last year, Chairman Kim made a historic commitment to denuclearize his country, and in exchange the United States and President Trump made a commitment to provide peace and security and stability on the Korean Peninsula and a brighter future for the North Korean people. Our Japanese partners, our South Korean partners are working alongside us to achieve each of those goals from Singapore.

We didn't make as much progress as we would have hoped in Hanoi, but the conversations continue. And meanwhile, there are not missile tests being conducted, there aren't nuclear tests being conducted. We've made progress. Obviously more needs to be done. This has been a problem of a long standing, and we continue to march down the path, hopefully leading to a place where the threat of nuclear weapons from North Korea will be enormously diminished.

**QUESTION:** U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in Houston today for the energy conference known as CERWeek. Secretary Pompeo, thanks again for your time.

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** Thank you, Laura. You have a great day.

**QUESTION:** You too.

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## [Press Releases: Interview With WOAI San Antonio's First News With Charlie Parker](#)

Interview  
Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Via Teleconference  
March 12, 2019

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**QUESTION:** San Antonio's First News with Charlie Parker, Charity McCurdy in the 24-hour news center. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in Houston, Texas today for the CERAWEEK conference all about energy, in particular America.

Mr. Secretary, appreciate the visit this morning, but before we talk about what's going on here in Texas, in particular Houston today, have to ask you about last night and what's currently going on in Venezuela. Back in January, the decision to withdraw all dependence and reduce embassy staff to a minimum, and then your announcement last night that it's time for everybody to get out.

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** Charlie, thanks for having me on the show. It's great to be in Texas. We did in fact make the decision last night that we needed to remove the remaining folks we had on the ground there in Caracas. The situation is continuing to deteriorate. We've all seen the power outages – food, water all becoming more and more difficult – and we wanted to make sure we kept all the Americans working for the United States Government safe and get them back home.

**QUESTION:** Yeah, and the international effort to get Maduro out – well, I say international, not counting China, Russia, and Cuba – if things are to this point, if things are this bad and probably looking like they could get worse,

what are the options? What do we do in Venezuela?

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** Well, the Venezuelan people have set the direction very clearly. They want Maduro gone. The Interim President Juan Guaido is leading an effort to get humanitarian assistance and the American taxpayers have been incredibly generous. Over 200 metric tons of food and hygiene kits and medicine on the ground, we haven't been able to get them in. The Maduro regime has denied food to starving people and medicine to the sick. It's really, really evil. And we need to continue to work to deliver. The Venezuelan people deserve it. This is a once-proud, resource-rich nation, and I'm confident. One of the reasons I'm here in Texas is to talk about energy, and Venezuela has it. We need to return the capacity of Venezuela to produce and create wealth for the Venezuelan people, and we're working diligently with all of our partners in South and Central America and Europe to hopefully achieve that here as quickly as possible. The time is drawing short.

**QUESTION:** Secretary Pompeo, good morning. This is Charity McCurdy. As you mentioned, you're in Houston to talk about America's energy revolution, and the U.S. is on pace to overtake Saudi Arabia and Russia as the world's biggest oil producer. As you know, Texas's Permian Basin is a major player in that. What's being done by the Trump administration to address pipeline capacity to ensure this production growth continues?

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** Well, Charity, great question, and incredibly important. First, I think the administration's done an awful lot to get us where we are today, to reduce regulation, to make permitting faster. I was in this business for a bunch of years before I entered government service. I ran a company that made pumping units. I've spent a lot of time in Midland, Odessa, East Texas. I know the industry well. We now need to take all this product that we've got in the Permian Basin, and frankly in other places in America too, and make sure that we can get it to markets not only through pipelines here, but my task as America's most senior diplomat is to make sure that there are markets available around the world, that the Europeans and Asia – they're prepared to buy not only our crude oil, but our natural gas so that we can continue to create wealth here in America. And importantly, it has deep national security implications as well if we're successful at this.

**QUESTION:** We're talking to the Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo. Obviously when it comes to energy, you got to be strong, you got to grow, you got to integrate, diversify, and advance energy security. Just exactly what does that mean, Mr. Secretary, to advance energy security?

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** Everywhere I travel – I was in the Philippines last week and in Vietnam, I'll be in the Middle East next week, then I'll be back on to Europe – no matter which country I go to, they're very focused on their own energy security. What does that mean? It means they have the capacity to deliver the energy that their citizens need to heat and cool their homes, that they have what they need for their infrastructure, for their businesses. And they want to get it from friends and allies and partners, and they don't want to have to rely on adversaries who, when times get tough, can cut them off or raise prices or make their life difficult or, frankly, use energy to coerce them.

And so this American boom, this skyrocketing of energy production – you talked about us being number one in the world in crude oil exports. We’re going to approach that and natural gas before too long. Our ability to deliver that to our friends and partners around the world creates enormous security for people here in Texas and all across America.

**QUESTION:** We appreciate what you do and I guess on a light note, I’d like – I wish you got frequent flyer miles.

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** (Laughter.) Doesn’t quite work that way, but it is an incredible privilege to represent America around the world.

**QUESTION:** And we are glad that you do, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo.

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** Thank you very much. You all have a good day.

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## [Press Releases: Interview With Hal Jay and Brian Estridge of WBAP Morning News](#)

Interview  
Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Via Teleconference  
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**QUESTION:** Yes, and Secretary Mike Pompeo joins us (inaudible) Secretary of State, kind enough to carve out a couple of moments for us. He’s headed to Houston for a – to deliver a keynote to – at a big energy conference, Hal.



**QUESTION:** All right.

**QUESTION:** And we've got a lot to get into. Secretary, thanks for the time this morning. Let's dive right into the news that came out this week that all of the sudden, the U.S. is the number one exporter of energy in the world, and this really strengthens our standing internationally, doesn't it?

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** Well great, it's thanks to be with you. And it does, that's why I'm down here. I wanted to talk about what U.S. energy production does for American national security, how it keeps people from Dallas and San Antonio and Houston and all across Texas safer, lets us work more closely with our friends and puts real pressure on those who want to do harm to the United States. So this energy production really matters. I wanted to come down here and talk about how, as American's most senior diplomat, we use that to advantage to keep America safe.

**QUESTION:** Yeah, is that leverage for you when it comes to negotiating around the world?

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** There are very few countries I travel to – I was in the Philippines last week and Vietnam, I'll be in Europe in a couple of days and the Middle East. Everywhere I go, energy is at the top of the list. Demand for energy is only growing, and those who can produce and provide it have an enormous advantage when it comes to security around the world.

**QUESTION:** Are we at the point now where America can say we don't have to worry about other countries anymore, Middle East oil, anything like that, we're – we are on our own?

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** So we're getting close to where we'll have true American energy dominance. It's a global market; it's a complicated market. But the more energy that we produce here in America, so the more we can do – and the Trump administration's done a lot of this, reduce regulations, create opportunities for jobs and wealth creation in the energy industry in America – the safer Americans will be around the world as well.

**QUESTION:** Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is with us right now. That leverage that we talk about when it comes to energy doesn't just play in the Middle East. Does it factor into the negotiations that are ongoing with North Korea at all?

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** North Korea presents a special situation for sure, but nobody can escape the truth. The truth is to grow an economy you need energy. Their electrical infrastructure needs work. They need refined petroleum products. One of the ways that we've convinced North Korea to move towards denuclearization is to reduce the amount of energy that they can import, and those sanctions that the United Nations put in place alongside of us have made a material difference. It's made it harder for the North Koreans to do the things they need to do, and I think that's at least in part why Chairman Kim made the commitment to denuclearize, and we're hopeful that even though we didn't get as far as we would have liked when the President and I were in Hanoi last week, we still have a path forward there.

**QUESTION:** Is North Korea – are we paying too much attention to it? Is there – is there a real true threat?

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** So the – any time you have a nation that has nuclear weapons and the capacity to either sell those weapons to those that would want to present risk to the United States or the capacity to use a missile system for delivery, there's a threat to the United States. Nuclear weapons are unique and especially risky, as you all well know, so I think it's important, important that we get this right, important that we take down that threat to the United States.

**QUESTION:** A different kind of threat in South America with Venezuela that I know has your attention as well.

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** It does. Last night we made the decision that we would withdraw the last of our diplomats from Caracas, so they'll all be coming home. The calamity, the chaos that is engulfing Venezuela today is a direct result of socialism, of the Maduro regime and the Cubans and the Russians all destroying a once proud economy. The United States, the neighboring regions in South America, Central America, they want to have a better life, democracy restored in Venezuela. And America is prepared to play its part, an important part I believe, in helping that happen.

**QUESTION:** Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is with us. What keeps you up at night?

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** Oh goodness. Lots of things to focus on in the world, but just like you all, right, you just keep focused, you set priorities. I work for a President that understands the incredible importance of American national security, and you get up each day, put your helmet on, and get to work.

**QUESTION:** Just so you'll know, I voted for Donald Trump, so I'll ask you this: Fill in the blank. I wish the President would stop –

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** I'm not going to answer that one for you this morning. (Laughter.)

**QUESTION:** How about this one then: I wish the President would start –

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** (Laughter.) You're not going to draw me into that.

**QUESTION:** Okay.

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** I think –

**QUESTION:** That's why –

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** I think we're getting it right most days.

**QUESTION:** That's why I said I voted for him, and I didn't mind asking those questions, so – well, thanks for playing along.

**QUESTION:** Yeah, and your timing is perfect. You're there for the last week of the Houston radio – rodeo. The Kings of Leon are playing tonight. Enjoy the concert.

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** I would love to get to that, and Susan and I – my wife – we're from Kansas. We love rodeo too.

**QUESTION:** Yeah. Mike Pompeo –

**QUESTION:** There you go.

**QUESTION:** – the Secretary of State, thanks for the time today.

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** Thank you very much. You all have a good day.

**QUESTION:** Yeah, you too.

**QUESTION:** And keep up the good work by the way, too.

**QUESTION:** Yeah.

**QUESTION:** Thanks for serving us.

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** Thank you very much. Very nice, thank you.

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