

[Press Releases: Secretary Pompeo's Call With Iraqi Prime Minister Adil Abd al-Mahdi](#)

Readout
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
December 21, 2018

The below is attributable to Deputy Spokesperson Robert Palladino:

Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo spoke today with Iraqi Prime Minister Adil Abd al-Mahdi. The Secretary discussed the recent territorial defeat of ISIS in Syria and underlined U.S. commitment to Iraq's sovereignty and territorial integrity noting the Coalition will continue to work closely with Iraqi Security Forces to defeat ISIS remnants. The Secretary also reiterated his support for the continuation and deepening of the long-standing U.S.-Iraq partnership, as articulated in the Strategic Framework Agreement.

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[Press Releases: Interview With Bryce Dolan of 550 KFRM-AM](#)

Interview
Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

QUESTION: (Inaudible.)

SECRETARY POMPEO: Sure. So the President's decision to withdraw the couple thousand folks that we've had in Syria is based on the fact that the effort there to crush the caliphate, the ISIS caliphate in the region, is now near completion. We had remarkable success: over 90-plus percent of the real estate that ISIS owned in which they attacked people in the West from that place is gone. We've achieved that mission and now it's time to make sure that we continue to fight ISIS – they exist not only in Syria but around the world – but do so in a way that reduces the risk to American soldiers. The President made that decision and we will, in an orderly way, make a transition so that we can continue to keep Americans safe without expending as much blood and treasure of the American people in Syria.

QUESTION: So with that being said, Mr. Secretary, as I alluded to, Fort Riley, the Big Red One, is sending soldiers to Afghanistan in February. What is the status of the relations in the Middle East right now?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So our – the Middle East continues to be a place where terror emanates. We have to make sure that we do everything we can to prevent that terror from reaching our homeland, from attacking Americans certainly in the United States but Americans that travel around the world. We've watched Iran be the world's largest state sponsor of terror from that region, and this administration has begun a massive campaign to put pressure on the Islamic Republic of Iran to stop that terror. We've done so by building out coalitions with our partners in the Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, all around the Middle East, our Israeli partners, to do just that – to create stability in the Middle East and prevent terror attacks on our homeland.

QUESTION: So switching topics here, Mr. Secretary, leading up to ongoing trade negotiations. How would you explain China's attitude towards the United States?

SECRETARY POMPEO: China has had for a long time before this administration an incredibly unfair trade relationship with our country. I saw that when I was a member of Congress from Kansas. Farmers who tried to sell their products into China, our aviation builders, our manufacturers all across the state couldn't get a fair shake. There weren't reciprocal, fair arrangements between the United States and China. President Trump is aiming to fix that. The negotiations that are underway are very much aimed at that. And what the President asks for is simply this: He wants fairness and reciprocity. If the Chinese can sell their products here, we ought to be able to take American products built by American workers and send them to China and serve their customers as well.

I hope we can get that done in the next few months, but the President is determined to achieve that outcome on behalf of the American worker.

QUESTION: And with that being said, after entering into a new trade agreement with Canada and Mexico, the USMCA, please explain the relationship between the two countries moving forward.

SECRETARY POMPEO: It's good I've had a chance to actually meet the incoming – or now the current – president of Mexico. I work closely with my counterpart there. I work closely with my counterpart in Canada. We now have the USMCA, which we believe will, again, be much more fair to American workers and create a North American trading system that will be the envy of the world. It'll be good for workers all across America, including those in Kansas.

QUESTION: Secretary, I know we don't have a lot of time and we could really spend hours talking about each of these questions. But as briefly as you could, could you explain the status of U.S.-Russia relations?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So it's been a real challenge during our time. President Trump very much understands that this is a nuclear-armed state and to the extent we can find places where we can cooperate and work together, that benefits America. But they have proven not to be reliable partners across almost every front. What they did in Ukraine, the actions they took against our elections – all of these things create risk for the American people and President Trump has been very strong in communicating to the Russians that this kind of behavior is simply unacceptable and we've done all that we can to deter it.

QUESTION: Just one more question, Mr. Secretary. From representing Kansas to leading the nation's highest intelligence agency, and now coming up on a year as our country's top foreign diplomat, how has your experience in Kansas influenced your work in foreign relations?

SECRETARY POMPEO: I think about home a lot. I think about Kansas all the time as I travel the world. The people that I knew there shaped me. When I ran a small business there, I came to understand how important it is to make sure American workers have opportunity to sell their products around the world. Everything about my life in Kansas shapes what I do every day. It's an incredible privilege to be America's most senior diplomat and serve President Trump, and Kansas certainly is sitting there when I'm with the President, well represented.

QUESTION: All right, Mr. Secretary, we are outside our five-minute window. I appreciate you taking the time to speak with us. Are you okay with everything that I asked and everything that was said?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yes, sir. It's all good.

QUESTION: Well, it was much appreciated, Mr. Secretary. And you have a great Christmas.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you. Merry Christmas to you too. So long, sir.

QUESTION: Thank you. Bye.

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Press Releases: Interview With Brian Grimmert of KMWU Wichita Public Radio

Interview

Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Via Teleconference

December 20, 2018

QUESTION: Good morning, Secretary. How are you?

SECRETARY POMPEO: I'm very good.

QUESTION: I'll just jump right in, since our time is limited.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yes, sir.

QUESTION: My first question is kind of a two-part question. And the first part of it is, what is it – from your perspective as Secretary of State and what you do working with other countries' leaders, what is kind of the goal of the tariffs with China? And is achieving that goal worth the cost to farmers and manufacturers here in the United States?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So the President's mission with respect to trade in China is very, very clear. I saw this when I ran a small business in Kansas. The trade relationship with China is fundamentally unfair. They charge huge tariffs for the products that we try and sell there; they steal our intellectual property when we move our businesses there. That is

unacceptable. It hurts Kansas workers.

And so the President's mission in his dealings with China on trade is to create a fair and reciprocal relationship. If they would get rid of their tariffs and they would stop stealing our intellectual property and – those are the simple things he's asking for. It's only fair to Kansas workers to do that, and it's the mission set that the President's engaged in with the tariffs. It is – his aim is to create a fair and reciprocal trade relationship so that American workers can produce products and sell them on an equal footing into the Chinese market, in the same way China has been able to do in the United States for decades.

QUESTION: Do you believe that you're making headwind in that area – or headway, sorry, not headwind. Do you believe that you're making some movement there in trying to prevent some of that intellectual property theft through the use of these tariffs?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yes, but it's difficult. The Chinese have this as a method which they have used with great intent over the years. And they're – they don't want to give that up easily, and so it is a real challenge. It takes hard-fought negotiating, hard-fought diplomacy, hard-fought trade and discussions with Department of Treasury in the United States. But we are determined to do this.

It is fundamentally unfair to allow the United States to continue to have the Chinese have forced technology transfer, force American companies who want to operate in China to behave in ways that are inconsistent with their own workers' best interest. And President Trump is the first president in an awfully long time to take this threat to American workers, Kansas farmers seriously.

QUESTION: Moving away a little bit from the trade issues, what would you have to say to some of the U.S. allies who are upset or surprised by President Trump's announcement that he's removing ground troops from Syria?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Oh, goodness. The U.S. efforts under President Trump in Syria have had extraordinary success. We've taken away more than 90 percent of the ISIS caliphate. You'll remember, they were holding people in cages and lighting them on fire. We've eliminated over 90 percent of the actual real estate the caliphate held. We've had a very successful effort there. We will continue to keep the homeland safe from the threat from ISIS.

But it no longer makes sense for there to be 2,000 soldiers stationed there. We can accomplish this mission in a different way. And the President's made a decision to do that. Our allies know the United States will always be the world's leader in fighting against terrorism around the world. We've done it for decades, and we will continue to be alongside them, making sure that not only is America safe, but the threat from terrorism around the world is diminished.

QUESTION: Just lastly, because our time is running short, what are the next steps in talks or plans for talks with North Korea? And do you think that

they are living up to some of the agreements that President Trump made the last time that he met with Kim Jong-un?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So I never talk about the actual discussions we're having, because they're private conversations on how to work our pathway forward toward the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. We're very hopeful that we can make a significant step. The next public objective is that Chairman Kim and President Trump have both indicated that they want to have a summit, and I am hopeful that not too long after the first of the year we can get the two of them together and make another substantial step along the way towards creating a reduced threat to the United States from North Korea's nuclear weapons arsenal.

QUESTION: Excellent. Thank you so much for your time. And I know you're extremely busy, and I appreciate you giving me a moment.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you very much, sir. You have a great day and a Merry Christmas.

QUESTION: You too. Thank you.

SECRETARY POMPEO: You bet. So long.

QUESTION: Bye-bye.

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[Press Releases: Secretary Pompeo's Meeting With Philippine Secretary of Foreign Affairs Teodoro Locsin, Jr.](#)

Readout
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
December 20, 2018

The below is attributable to Deputy Spokesperson Robert Palladino:□

Secretary Michael R. Pompeo met with Philippine Secretary of Foreign Affairs Teodoro Locsin, Jr., at the Department of State today. The Secretary reaffirmed the enduring U.S.-Philippines alliance, including commitments under the Mutual Defense Treaty of 1951. The two Secretaries discussed ongoing efforts to address regional issues such as the South China Sea, North Korea, and counterterrorism. Secretary Pompeo and Secretary Locsin also explored opportunities to increase people-to-people ties between our two countries, our longstanding commitment to human rights, and our cooperation to strengthen the Philippines' energy security.

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[Press Releases: Expert Report From the Moscow Mechanism for Human Rights Abuses in Chechnya](#)

Press Statement
Robert Palladino

Deputy Spokesperson

Washington, DC
December 20, 2018

Today the United States welcomes the expert, fact-finding report on human rights violations and abuses in the Russian Federation's Republic of Chechnya

and impunity for them, which we believe to be a particularly serious threat to Russia's fulfillment of its Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) human dimension commitments.

This expert report concluded that Chechen authorities committed torture and other appalling human rights violations and abuses, including extrajudicial killings of LGBTI persons and others, and describes a worsening "climate of intimidation" against journalists and civil society activists. The report observes that the Russian government "appears to support the perpetrators rather than the victims" and has "not lived up to its responsibilities" to address the "grave situation" in Chechnya.

The report, presented today at the OSCE, is the result of the invocation by the United States and 15 other countries of a rarely used diplomatic tool known as the Moscow Mechanism.

We call on the Russian Federation to protect the human rights of all within its borders, consistent with international law, OSCE commitments, and its own constitution. We support the report's recommendations that Russia conduct a new and truly independent inquiry into the violations and abuses, that human rights defenders and the media be allowed to operate in Chechnya without reprisal, and that imprisoned human rights defender Oyub Titiyev be immediately released.

The United States will continue to speak out in support of human rights for individuals everywhere, including in Chechnya, and to support international efforts to promote accountability for those responsible for human rights violations and abuses.

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