

Press Releases: Remarks at the 36th Annual Jewish Institute for National Security of America Awards Dinner

Remarks
Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Grand Hyatt Hotel
Washington, DC
October 10, 2018

SECRETARY POMPEO: Tom, thank you for the kind introduction. Catherine, it's great to see you. Catherine Herridge is my favorite reporter, but you should know that's a low bar. (Laughter.) I –

MS HERRIDGE: You were my favorite congressman. (Laughter.)

SECRETARY POMPEO: I – (laughter). Fair enough. (Applause.) Catherine is not only a very talented reporter but an incredibly capable woman, and she and her husband are good friends of Susan and mine. So thank you, thank you for

being part of this event tonight.

Tom, those were very kind remarks. Jefferson and Madison, Pompeo – it doesn't quite roll off the tongue. (Laughter.) But one can always live in hope.

I was also reminded when you said that I'm the 70th Secretary of State, and reminded that there's only 45 presidents, so that means there's a lot more turnover in my job than in his, and so I'm going to enjoy the moment. (Laughter.)

Thank you to Dr. Makovsky for having me here tonight, and thank you, everyone at JINSA, for this award. I want to accept it on behalf of the entire diplomatic corps, the entire United States State Department. And I'll also accept it as a challenge to keep my foot on the gas at the Department of State. (Applause.)

I see a lot of friends here tonight, and I know you all have had a long day, but it is worth recounting what we've done in this administration over the first now coming on 20 months. Let me start with just a basic fact: In the entire Middle East, there is only one consistently pro-American, free-enterprise, democratic nation; it's the people of the State of Israel. And this administration understands that deeply. (Applause.)

For the previous eight years, we had an administration that showed more respect to the leaders of Iran than to the people of Israel.

President Obama thought he – thought if he made dangerous concessions, removed economic sanctions, and flew a plane full of cash to Tehran, he could somehow hug Iran's leaders into behaving well and rejoining the community of nations.

But those leaders aren't from a Disney movie. They're real. They're not tragically misunderstood. They are murderers and funders of terrorism who lead chants – today, still – of "Death to America." Their goals include profiting off the misery of their own people and wiping Israel off the face of the Earth.

By and large, I think the American people understand the threat that Iran poses. It's why they opposed the deal that the previous administration made by a margin of two to one, and it's why they sent to our country a very different kind of president in 2016.

Today, after just under two years, there's a long list. Tom talked about some of them. But it's worthy of just grinding through real fast because the magnitude of the change is extraordinary.

Tom mentioned the move of the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem and recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital. Common sense, I think.

He pulled out of the JCPOA and imposed some of the harshest sanctions in history on the regime in Iran to change its behavior, and more are to follow.

He supported the commitment of the largest-ever security support of \$3.8

billion annually.

And he took a stand against anti-Semitism on the world stage by withdrawing from the U.N. Human Rights Council.

We have also exposed Hamas for what it really is, and we are making a truly historic push for peace between Israel and the Palestinians.

The bottom line? I think – I actually had the privilege to speak with Prime Minister Netanyahu today on a couple of issues of the moment, and we were talking about things a little more broadly, and it reminds me that the bottom line is that the U.S.-Israel relationship is stronger today than it has been ever. And that's good. (Applause.) And that's good for – it's good for both countries. And I want to talk for just a minute, and then I'm going to take a few questions. I want to talk about the challenges that Iran is presenting to Israel, to America, and, indeed, to the world.

Iran has seen this instability in Syria as a golden opportunity to tip the scales. Its goals have included expanding the reach of its Revolutionary Guard, gaining an entrenched position near the Golan Heights, and, ultimately, establishing a second front from which proxies like Hizballah can terrorize the Israeli people.

Today the Syrian conflict is reaching a new juncture. Assad has tightened his grip thanks to Russia, Iran, and other regional actors.

ISIS, though not completely snuffed out, has been beaten into a shadow of its former self. And these changing circumstances have required the reassessment of America's mission in Syria. Defeating ISIS, which was once our primary focus, continues to be a top priority, but it will now be joined by two other mutually reinforcing objectives. These include a peaceful and political resolution to the Syrian conflict and the removal of all Iranian and Iranian-backed forces from Syria. (Applause.)

Under President Trump's leadership, the Department of State has been now engaged in a months-long diplomatic process aimed at making headway on each of these three strategic objectives.

Last month at the U.N. General Assembly in New York, I expressed our full support for U.N. Security Council Resolution 2254, which sets a political process for ending this conflict in Syria. And we're urging every nation to support it.

At the UN we were also encouraged to find increasing international consensus that Iran and its proxies must not be allowed to maintain a foothold in Syria. The onus for expelling Iran from the country falls on the Syrian Government, which bears responsibility for its presence there.

We've been clear: if Syria doesn't ensure the total withdrawal of Iranian-backed troops, it will not seek – not receive one single dollar from the United States for reconstruction.

Our efforts at the U.N. were just a small public window into our efforts.

I've named a team. Spearheading our effort is Special Representative Jim Jeffrey. Many of you would know him. Nobody understands the web of regional interests and the political complexities better than he does. His resume includes ambassadorships in Albania, in Turkey, and Iraq, among much other parts of his storied career in diplomacy.

Meanwhile, to coordinate our efforts on Iran, I've asked Brian Hook to lead our Iran Action Group. We are leading a historic international campaign to apply diplomatic and economic pressure against the Islamic Republic of Iran. Our goal is simple, is to cut off the revenues the regime uses to spread terror and chaos, to fund its nuclear programs, and line its own pockets with money that should be given to the Iranian people.

The State Department's diplomacy itself is just one part of our interagency effort all across this administration.

Underlying this approach is President Trump's unwavering belief that Israel – like all nations – has the right to defend its own sovereignty. (Applause.) That means we'll continue to stand up for its right to target Iranian-backed militias within Syria for as long as that threat remains.

Now, I want to leave plenty of time for discussion, so let me close with just one last thought.

Israel is everything we want the entire Middle East to look like going forward.

It is democratic and prosperous. It desires peace. And it is a home to a free press and a thriving free market economy.

Compare that to Iran, whose corrupt leaders assault the human rights of their own people, finance terrorism, and undermine U.S. interests in every corner of the Middle East.

Rarely in world affairs is the contrast between two sides so stark.

Under President Trump's leadership, the United States is standing where it should firmly be: on the side of Israel. (Applause.)

I want to close by again thanking you all for being here. To get an award that was named after Scoop Jackson is truly meaningful to me, as an amateur historian, and I think important for the Department of State to recognize the good work that it is doing. I will have the opportunity tomorrow to share this with each and every one of the folks who works for me.

Thank you all so very much. I look forward to a few questions. (Applause.)

DR MAKOVSKY: All right. I want to thank you very – everybody hear me all right? Okay. I want to thank you very much again, Secretary Pompeo. And as we said earlier this evening, the efforts of yourself, the President, and the rest of the administration has certainly made America stronger, and made Israel stronger, and we just really – we all applaud it and commend it. So thank you very much. I want to just thank you again. (Applause.)

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you. Thank you all.

DR MAKOVSKY: I want to ask the first question about Iran. You mentioned you – the administration, to their credit, is – you’re imposing the toughest sanctions, re-imposing the sanctions, but imposing them in a very tough way, commendably.

Let me ask you that – at JINSA, we propose a range of ways of broadening the policy or a range of other policies. I just wanted to raise it with you, and I wanted to get your thoughts about that or other policies that you might be thinking about in ways that pressure the Iranians. For instance, interdicting arms shipments from Iran to Syria and Yemen, whether the United States could be more active in that. Giving Israel more tools – given that Israel is on the front lines, giving Israel more tools to confront the Iranians, and in a likely future war, such as by frontloading the 10-year MOU which just kicked in on defense aid. Supporting Syrian Kurdish – either strong autonomy or independence and offering to protect them. They’re our allies with ISIS, and also – but to do that also is a way to prevent the Iranian-backed Assad regime from reclaiming control over the whole thing.

And lastly, I would say pursuing a policy of – to use an old 1950s term – of rollback of the Iranians. And I – these are some ideas that, among others, that we’ve raised at JINSA, and I was curious if you’ve considered some of these or others. We’d love to hear other ways that the State Department and the administration might be considering of pressuring the Iranians.

SECRETARY POMPEO: So the sanctions get a lot of the headlines. The policy that President Trump has put in place is much broader than that. I can’t go into all the details on each of those. We don’t have time for all of that. But there’s a lot of work being done on interdiction. You don’t see it all, it’s not very noisy; I did some of it in my former job. It’s a full range of things to do the simple task of convincing the Iranian leaders to behave like a normal nation.

I listed 12 things that the Iranians have to do for us to get back in a relationship with them, and when you read through them they’re nothing more than what we ask Belgium to do, right? Like stop launching rockets into major international airports, for starters. It’s really – it seemed daunting, but at the end of the day, just be it. Just be a normal country. But it’s not just sanctions.

So five capitals, right? Beirut, Damascus, Sanaa, Tehran itself, and Baghdad. Those are the pressure points. That’s the dream of the Islamic Republic for hegemony and we are pushing back in each of those capitals, in each of those places, with every tool available to the United States Government to achieve that goal: to get the Iranian regime to behave like a normal nation.

DR MAKOVSKY: Okay. You want to address those others or I’ll just move on to the next question?

SECRETARY POMPEO: I’ll come back to them.

DR MAKOVSKY: Yeah, okay, sure. The other suggestion was – it was about how – ways we can help Israel further and also what our policy is about the Syrian Kurds who have been our allies with the – against ISIS and so on.

SECRETARY POMPEO: So look, we've worked closely with the Syrian Kurds now for my entire time in service in this administration. They have been great partners. We are now driving to make sure that they have a seat at the table. The political process that I referred, the hardest part, the reason it hasn't made progress is because we've demanded that every element in Syria gets an opportunity to be part of that future government, and in the absence of that and in the absence of their representation, we won't participate in what will be a big check that someone's going to have to write to fix the situation in Syria, and the Syrian Kurds will surely be part of that.

DR MAKOVSKY: And how would you define the administration's overall objective? I used the term "rollback" which doesn't – "containment" was maybe the policy perhaps – perhaps at times of the previous administration, but how would you define, if you had to think of a couple words to define the objectives we have towards Iran?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yeah. I mean, I don't know how else to say it. We won't be settled until we have solved each of the files adequately, right? A permanent solution to ensure that Iran never has the capacity to have a nuclear weapon for all time, in any form. (Applause.) And second – second – to push back against this terror regime which is not only taking place in Iraq and in Syria and in Lebanon, but in European capitals, around the world. It's remarkable and we – I hope we can get more support from our European partners of this effort. I'm convinced that we will over time.

And then, finally, I'll put the other bucket, the broader set of Iranian malign activity – there's much of it – and that's the mission statement. I don't know how to put it into three or four words, but it's to take each of those three spaces and ensure that Iran ceases its current activity which is so fundamentally detrimental to the world and, frankly, very detrimental to Iran's own people.

DR MAKOVSKY: Okay. I want to ask you about Turkey. Not really, unless you want to raise it, about what's been in the news in the last few days with the Saudi consulate there. I actually want to ask you a different question about Turkey.

There are two things. One is: Would a sale of our F-35s to Turkey proceed if Turkey takes delivery of Russian S – of S-400s? That was the first one.

SECRETARY POMPEO: So I can't answer that question. I don't want to get out in front of the President on this. But there are a whole series of actions that we're asking Turkey to do. They are a NATO partner. We need them to participate in the enforcement of the norms that NATO has put forward with its mission statement, and we've asked Turkey to do that in every dimension. And we're very – we're disappointed in their behavior to date, but we're hopeful that over time, they'll begin to do things that make more sense not only for the Middle East, but for the world. They have the capacity for good.

It's a big country that sits at the fulcrum between the Middle East and Europe, and we are applying every element of our diplomatic capacity to convince Turkey that being part of the West is the future for the Turkish people.

DR MAKOVSKY: The President has made, correctly, a big issue out of the fact of the American pastor Andrew Brunson being imprisoned for two years on patently false charges. His next court hearing is in two days.

SECRETARY POMPEO: In about 30 hours, yes.

DR MAKOVSKY: Yeah, is on – his next court hearing is on – in two days on October 12th. How would his release affect, do you think, overall U.S.-Turkey relations?

SECRETARY POMPEO: It's an important step, but make no mistake about it, they shouldn't have held him for all of this time. But look, it's a good thing, it's the right thing for them to do, it's the humanitarian thing for Turkey to do, and I'm very hopeful that before too long, Pastor Brunson will – he and his wife will be able to return to the United States. President Trump has had a focus on it, the administration's had a focus on it, and we're very hopeful that we'll see a good outcome before too long.

DR MAKOVSKY: Thank you. My last question is about the Palestinian Authority. Now, as Senator Cotton mentioned also about the Taylor Force Act – and this is something that JINSA and our fellow, Sander Gerber in particular, particularly championed and focused on.

However, since the passage of Taylor Force earlier this year, the Palestinian Authority has not really altered its policies or laws in paying terrorists and families. And I had a – what do you think this says about the Palestinian Authority? Do you consider it an entity that sponsors terror, for instance? What does it say about the prospects for peace and just generally about the U.S. approach to the Palestinians?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Well, I actually signed a memo today with respect to the Taylor Force Act denying \$165 million that would have been appropriated to the Palestinian Authority. (Applause.) That number is a rough estimate of the amount of money that was paid out on – for the various violations the Taylor Force Act was designed to enforce.

But you're right, the behavior has not changed materially, and this administration has taken, much as it did with the embassy, has taken a historic approach. It has said to the Palestinians we very much want you to have a space, you need to govern, you need to decide you want peace as well. We said the same thing to the Palestinians both in the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip. We've not rolled out our plan for the Middle East peace process yet, but we will before too terribly long, and we are hopeful that there will be parties on all sides that are prepared to engage in a constructive conversation that will lead to that.

We are very hopeful that one day the Palestinian people will have the same

kinds of things, the same material, the same opportunities that the people of Israel have, right? A real economy, a real governance, all the things that we want for every citizen of the world. And whether it's the Hamas leaders in the Gaza Strip or the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank, we've not been able to make that happen yet. But this administration has taken a fundamentally different view of how it is we can ultimately achieve that end objective.

DR MAKOVSKY: I just want to conclude. I know you've had a little busy travel schedule lately and I just want to thank you again and the whole administration for everything you've been doing, again, for U.S. national security and for the U.S.-Israel security relationship. We really appreciate it very much and thank you very much.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you very much, Mike. Thank you all. (Applause.)

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[Press Releases: Background Briefing on the Second Conference on Prosperity and Security in Central America](#)

Special Briefing
State Department Officials
Via Teleconference
October 10, 2018

MODERATOR: Thank you. Hi. Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you for joining us. Welcome to this background call to preview the second Conference on Prosperity and Security in Central America, which is going to happen here in Washington tomorrow and Friday, October 11th and 12th. As a reminder, today's call is on background.

So for your situational awareness only and not for reporting, we welcome two speakers. Number one is [State Department Official One]. Hereinafter, please refer to him as State Department Official One. Our second official is [State Department Official Two]. Hereinafter, please refer to her as State Department Official Two.

Again, this call is on background and the contents of this call are embargoed until the end of the call. Reporting should not reference these individuals by name but rather as State Department Official One and State Department Official Two.

I'll now turn it over to State Department Official One. He has some opening remarks, and then State Department Official Two would like to make some opening remarks, and then we'll open it up to questions and answers.

STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL ONE: Thank you, [Moderator]. Good afternoon, everyone, and thank you for joining us today. First off, I would just like to send our condolences and our wishes to all those in Central America who have been affected by the recent flooding. Our hearts go out to the loved ones and those killed in recent torrential rains across Central America as well as to the thousands who have been evacuated or otherwise impacted. And I'd just like to state that the United States stands with our Central American friends during these difficult times.

In terms of the conference, we are pleased to welcome Vice President Pence to the State Department tomorrow to open the second Conference on Prosperity and Security in Central America, just as he opened the first one in Miami a little over a year ago. And we thank the Government of Mexico and our colleagues at the Department of Homeland Security for again co-hosting the leaders from Central America.

Tomorrow we will welcome President Hernandez of Honduras, President Morales of Guatemala, and Vice President Ortiz of El Salvador at the State Department. The U.S. Government collaborates closely with the Mexican, Salvadoran, Guatemalan, and Honduran governments to address the underlying conditions driving illegal immigration to the United States. We do so because we believe we can help foster a strong, vibrant, prosperous, and secure Western Hemisphere by reducing crime and violence, addressing corruption, disrupting the activities of transnational criminal organizations, and helping these countries create greater economic opportunities for their citizens.

The conference will continue our joint efforts to strengthen prosperity, security, and governance in Central America, this time with particular attention to El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, known collectively as the Northern Triangle.

Our first goal will be to review our progress in these critical areas since we met in Miami in June 2017. The United States will examine advancements in our joint projects with Mexico in the region, as well as progress under our strategy for Central America. Under that strategy we have committed more than \$2.6 billion in foreign assistance over Fiscal Years 2015 to 2018 in Central

America. We expect the Northern Triangle governments to discuss advancements under their own reform initiative, called the Plan for the Alliance for Prosperity. They have committed to a combined \$8.6 billion from 2016 to 2018 under that plan.

Our second goal is to identify new steps to enhance progress on prosperity, security, and governance in the region. That will help us address the drivers of illegal immigration and other challenges in the region. A more prosperous Central America benefits our region and the entire hemisphere. Therefore, on prosperity day, which the Department of State will host tomorrow, October 11th, we will explore ways to expand our joint efforts to promote economic opportunity, infrastructure, economic integration, and energy markets.

On security day, on October 12th, the U.S. Government will lead a discussion on security cooperation, combating organized crime and gangs, and enhancing regional and citizen security. A more secure and stable Central America contributes to a safer and more prosperous United States by helping to secure our borders, protect U.S. citizens, and increase U.S. opportunities for our businesses.

Since last year's conference in Miami, the region has made important strides in multinational collaboration to combat international criminal organizations whose activities cross all borders, and in addressing the security-related drivers of migration.

Now my colleague from INL can describe in greater detail what this collaboration looks like.

STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL TWO: Thank you, [State Department Official One]. And good afternoon, everyone. As [State Department Official One] mentioned, INL will lead the department's discussions on security day, which is being hosted by the Department of Homeland Security. We plan to focus on the progress made to date in the region in combating transnational criminal organizations, or what I will henceforward call TCOs, as well as gangs, both of which drive the insecurity in the Northern Triangle countries and contribute to the number of individuals illegally immigrating to the United States.

The conference's discussions on security day will focus on combating organized crime, enhancing regional security cooperation, and improving citizen security. This event is an opportunity to highlight the success we've had with the Northern Triangle, as well as the maturation of our cooperation with Mexico in Central America. We've been able to take the successes from Mexico on issues such as improving information sharing, forensics, and accreditation of judicial institutions and expand them to partners in the Northern Triangle.

Our efforts focus on building the capacity of these governments to combat criminal threats effectively and efficiently. This includes a whole-of-organization approach to ensure we are addressing all aspects of TCOs' operations.

Our programs are focused on addressing the security-related drivers of migration. Through them we've seen sustained reductions in homicide rates throughout the Northern Triangle, but even more acute reductions in areas where the United States is working on improving citizen security and community policing programs.

Our goal for this conference is to both highlight the progress we've made and to push the region to do even more. The programs that INL worked on in the region are more successful when the host governments are investing similar resources. We've seen this in El Salvador, where our community policing efforts combined with our efforts under the Salvadoran Plan Seguro have contributed to higher than national average reductions in homicides.

All the efforts we plan to discuss this week have immediate impacts on the security of citizens in these countries, as well as U.S. national security. Over the past year, the conversations we've had with these countries are maturing, showing that this is truly a shared problem that we can address best by working together. This conference will reiterate our commitment to addressing these issues by enhancing our cooperation within the region.

Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you both for your opening comments. We can now open this up to question and answer. I'd ask everyone to please identify your media outlet and to limit your questions to one. Thank you.

OPERATOR: All right. And again, ladies and gentlemen, if you do have a question, it's * and 1. Okay, our first question is from Carol Morello, *Washington Post*.

QUESTION: Hi. Thanks for taking this call. State Department people have consistently said throughout the world that corruption is the enemy of prosperity and security. Yet when Guatemala – the president of Guatemala decided to scrap the commission on impunity in Guatemala, which was really good at fighting corruption, the United States said basically nothing. Do you plan to raise that – raise that issue and talk with him about it at all when he is here? And how much harm do you think that does to the widespread corruption in Guatemala?

STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL ONE: Thanks for the question. I am not going to preempt what Vice President Pence and Secretary Pompeo and others may be discussing there. I can tell you, however, that our policy with regard to CICIG in Guatemala has not changed. The United States supports CICIG reforms, as has been noted previously, and we maintain that position.

MODERATOR: Next question, please.

OPERATOR: All right. We have – next question is from Mitzi Macias with Voice of America.

QUESTION: Hello, good afternoon. My question may be directly to Official Two. It's related that all the changes that is applied during the recent months about the immigration status for TPS holders. Are you thinking maybe in

reestablish that status for the Central America people?

STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL TWO: Yes, thank you for your question. Regarding that, I would refer you to the Department of Homeland Security.

MODERATOR: Next question, please.

OPERATOR: All right. Our next question is from Conor Finnegan with ABC News.

QUESTION: Hey, thank you for having the call. I was wondering if you could provide an update on the U.S. proposal to provide \$20 million to Mexico to deport migrants from that country. I know the Secretary went ahead and transferred that money or at least initiated the process to transfer that money to DHS. But have there been any discussions with Mexico on this, and do you expect it to come up?

STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL ONE: Again, I cannot say whether that will come up in the conference. It's not something that is directly on the agenda. But I can tell you we continue to work closely with the Government of Mexico on the common challenges posed by illegal immigration and will continue to work with Congress and the Government of Mexico on this effort in order to protect our national security interests. And the department will continue to work with the Government of Mexico to ensure that this project complements our broader efforts to bolster the capacity of Mexico's immigration enforcement.

We will not move forward with implementation until we reach agreement with the incoming Mexican administration on this.

MODERATOR: Thank you. Next question, please.

OPERATOR: Okay. Our next question is from Ana Langner with La Jornada Mexican.

QUESTION: Hello. Good afternoon. I wanted to know if you are going to talk about the Safe Third Country Agreement with Mexico. I know that you have already answered a part of the question, but I want to insist in that. Are you going to talk with Mexico about this agreement?

STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL ONE: I'm sorry, can we please have the question repeated back one time? Is that possible?

QUESTION: Yes. Are you going or – tomorrow is going to talk about the Safe Third Country Agreement with Mexico?

STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL ONE: Again, that is not something that is on the agenda at the moment, but I – and I can't really say whether that might come up or not. We'll just have to see.

MODERATOR: Thank you. Next question, please.

OPERATOR: Okay. It's from Pedro Marroquin with the La Hora Guatemala.

QUESTION: Hi. Thanks for taking our questions. And I know the first one was

made about the decision of President Morales regarding CICIG. And I heard the answer, but I just have one question. In 2015 when this Alliance for Prosperity was being discussed, the former vice president said that the renewal of CICIG was going to be one of the conditions if Guatemalan people wanted support and help from the American people. President Morales has announced that the mandate of CICIG is not going to be renewed. At some point is that going to be a condition in order to continue in the Alliance for Prosperity?

STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL ONE: I'm not going to speculate on that. I think this is a matter that will be discussed between our governments at some point, but I won't speculate on any conditions. As I said previously, we maintain our support for CICIG reforms, and we hope that the Guatemalan Government and the United Nations can work out a mutually agreeable mechanism for CICIG to continue. But I'm not at liberty to get into details about these conversations.

MODERATOR: Next question, please.

OPERATOR: All right. And if you do have a question, it's *1. All right, the next question is from Conor Finnegan with ABC News.

QUESTION: Hey, thanks for taking a second question. Just more broadly, you talk about investing more in the Northern Triangle in order to alleviate the circumstances there and prevent illegal migration. But if you look at the fiscal year numbers, last year there was less than half – cuts of more than 50 percent for all three countries. Can you address how you believe you're investing more in those countries if you're actually cutting the funding?

STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL ONE: I don't have the exact figures in front of me, so I'm not sure I can address exactly your point about the cuts, and I believe they weren't quite as drastic as you've mentioned there. But part of – a large part of this strategy is to ensure that all countries – the United States, Mexico, and the Northern Triangle countries – that we all invest resources into this because the drivers of illegal migration are things that affect all of our countries, that the criminal elements that are behind these networks do affect the Northern Triangle countries, they do affect Mexico as well as ourselves. And this conference and the process that has led to this conference shows that there is a common interest in engaging and cooperating on this, and all of us are putting our resources into it. So I wouldn't obsess too much on the dollar figures. It has to do with using our resources wisely and in a cooperative manner.

MODERATOR: Great, and now time for one last question, please.

OPERATOR: Okay. We have Jose Diaz with Reforma.

QUESTION: Thank you for having this. The question is a very specific one: Are there any representatives of the incoming Mexican administration participating in the summit? And what's the nature of the conversations we have – you've had with them regarding migration from Central America?

STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL ONE: I'm afraid I'll have to refer you to the Mexican Government on that one. They will – they should be the ones to respond concerning those questions.

MODERATOR: Thank you. That concludes for questions now. Thank you very much for joining us today. To repeat this, today's call was on background. The embargo is now lifted. Please refer to both speakers as State Department Official One and State Department Official Two. Thank you all for joining us.

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[Press Releases: Roadblocks to State Department Staffing](#)

Press Statement
Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Washington, DC
October 10, 2018

In order to conduct U.S. foreign policy, the State Department needs its full team in place. Today, there are more than 60 State Department nominees awaiting confirmation in the United States Senate. That's more than a quarter of all the senior-level confirmable positions at the Department. These are excellent candidates, a mix of career Foreign Service Officers and political nominees. More than a dozen of these qualified political nominees are being held up by Senate Democrats because of politics.

We've done our part at the State Department by putting forward a slate of candidates. It's Senator Bob Menendez and his colleagues who have refused to vote on these nominees, putting our nation at risk.

Yesterday, astonishingly and shamefully, Senator Menendez blamed the Administration for a lack of confirmed nominees when he said, “This Administration’s continued inability to adequately or appropriately fill key national security positions puts our nation at risk.”

These outstanding candidates remain unconfirmed because Senator Menendez and some of his colleagues are using our nominees as a political football. This is unacceptable. The “risk” to the nation lies at the feet of Senator Menendez. We need our team on the field to conduct America’s foreign policy, and today I call on the Senator and his colleagues to stop this delay and obstruction now.

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Robert Palladino
Deputy Spokesperson

Department Press Briefing
Washington, DC
October 10, 2018

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- [VENEZUELA](#)

TRANSCRIPT:

1:41 p.m. EDT

MR PALLADINO: Something for the top. Looking ahead to tomorrow, we are honored to have the Vice President here at the State Department tomorrow to open the second Conference on Prosperity and Security in Central America. Secretary Pompeo is co-hosting this two-day event with the Department of Homeland Security Secretary Nielsen and our Mexican partners, Foreign Secretary Videgaray, and the Secretary of Government Navarrete.

We also look forward to welcoming President Hernandez of Honduras, President Morales of Guatemala, and Vice President Ortiz of El Salvador. Together, we will be reviewing and strengthening our joint efforts to achieve prosperity, security, and governance in Central America.

At tomorrow's Prosperity Day, our discussion will focus on promoting economic opportunity in the region. Our collective goal is to ensure that the people of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras are able to build futures for their families, communities, and countries.

And then on Friday, Security Day, which will be hosted by the Department of Homeland Security at the United States Institute of Peace with participation by the State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement as well as the United States Agency for International Development, we are going to discuss joint efforts to enhance regional security cooperation, reduce illegal immigration, combat organized crime and gangs, and improve citizen security.

Our cooperation is key to a strong, vibrant, prosperous, and secure Central America and Western Hemisphere. We look forward to productive discussions with our Mexican, Salvadoran, Guatemalan, and Honduran partners as we work together for the prosperity and security of our citizens.

And that's it. Why don't we open it up to questions.

QUESTION: Sir.

MR PALLADINO: Sure.

QUESTION: Thanks. Welcome.

MR PALLADINO: Thank you.

QUESTION: I hope this is the first of many occasions that we see you

behind the podium, at least that's what I say now before any questions have been answered.

MR PALLADINO: All right.

QUESTION: Let's start with the whole situation in Turkey with Mr. Khashoggi and the Saudis. We've all seen, I think – at least most of us have seen the White House statement about the calls that went out, which you're more than welcome to repeat if you want, but I want to ask you about a specific line in one report about this that said that the U.S. had intelligence, overheard or intercepted communications, suggesting that there was a threat to Mr. Khashoggi should he go. Is that correct?

MR PALLADINO: I'll get to that question, and I'll answer it directly, Matt, thank you. I would just – I would start at the top by saying, as the President has conveyed, both the Vice President and the Secretary of State, we – the United States is concerned by Jamal Khashoggi's disappearance. And we can confirm that Ambassador Bolton and Jared Kushner have spoken to the crown prince yesterday, and we can confirm as well that the Secretary of State then had a follow-up call with the crown prince to reiterate our request for more information. We continue to call for a transparent investigation, and we're going to continue to monitor this situation.

As to your specific question regarding intelligence, I would say that although I cannot comment on intelligence matters, I can say definitively the United States had no advanced knowledge of Jamal Khashoggi's disappearance.

QUESTION: Well, okay, that's a bit different than – I mean, did you have any advance knowledge that there might be some kind of threat to him should he go into the consulate in Istanbul?

MR PALLADINO: We had no advanced knowledge.

QUESTION: Okay. If you had had – based on that report that you did have knowledge, there was a lot of talk about how the administration, if it did have such information, would have been required to have warned him – Mr. Khashoggi – about that. Is that your understanding of the "No Double Standard" rule or regulation?

MR PALLADINO: It's a hypothetical question and –

QUESTION: Well, in any case –

MR PALLADINO: Without going into – and we're not going to discuss –

QUESTION: Forget about this case. Let's just talk about if the United States Government has information about a threat to an American citizen or American resident, are you required to tell them about it?

MR PALLADINO: I would need to understand clearly before commenting upon the "No Double Standard", what applies to us. And so I know it

definitely applies to American citizens, but I don't want to go into any further speculation on what it stands for.

QUESTION: So you're not sure if it would apply – if it would have applied in this case?

MR PALLADINO: What I would say is we've seen the report; and although I can't go into intelligence matters, I can definitively say that we had no knowledge in advance of Mr. Khashoggi's disappearance.

QUESTION: Robert, can I just follow up?

MR PALLADINO: Yes. Okay, please, let's start over with Reuters. Yes.

QUESTION: Well, first of all, you said that Jared Kushner and Bolton spoke to the crown prince. Did they not speak to MBS?

MR PALLADINO: That's all I have. I would refer you to the White House for any further information on calls that may have taken place.

QUESTION: MBS (inaudible) prince.

QUESTION: Okay, but who did Pompeo speak to? The same person?

MR PALLADINO: Yes.

QUESTION: Oh, okay.

QUESTION: But the fact that it's been more than a week now, and obviously all of these high-level contacts have gone on, and there's still no indication of what happened to this guy inside the Saudi consulate, this must be frustrating for the State Department.

MR PALLADINO: I would say that we continue to see conflicting reports on what has transpired, and the United States – our position – it is absolutely essential that Turkish authorities, with full and transparent support from the Government of Saudi Arabia, that they are able to conduct a thorough investigation and officially release the results of that investigation once it's concluded.

QUESTION: Robert, can I ask a follow-up on this?

MR PALLADINO: Yes.

QUESTION: Thank you. After John Bolton and Jared Kushner spoke to MBS, why did the Secretary feel it was necessary to follow on with his own phone call? I mean, Jared has a close relationship with the crown prince, so what was conveyed in that phone call that hadn't been conveyed in the previous one? And was there any sense of a timeline or a threat put forward that if this investigation isn't concluded by a certain time then there will be action taken, or a sense of urgency or sort of deeper concern expressed if this investigation goes on, drags on?

MR PALLADINO: I'm not going to be able to provide anything beyond the readouts that the White House provided on the underlying content. Those are private diplomatic conversations. I would say that the United States Government wants to understand what's going on and to express the importance of receiving a full accounting, and understanding in a very transparent and conclusive way what has transpired, that we'd like to get to the bottom of this, and we will continue to call for that.

QUESTION: Robert, can I ask a follow-up question?

MR PALLADINO: Yes, Carol.

QUESTION: There have been reports that the Turks have either an audio or a video purportedly showing the exact moment of his killing. Have they shared those, any sort of audio or video with the United States?

And if you could also address – this morning there was a statement condemning Venezuela in the death of a council member who apparently fell, pushed, or was – somehow fell from a building, and it was a very strong condemnation. Do you have some sort of metric that you use? Why not use similarly strong language in publicly demanding that the Saudis prove that he left the consulate?

MR PALLADINO: State Department senior officials and diplomats have spoken with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Government of Turkey through diplomatic channels about this matter. And from the Secretary of State on down, we have been engaged. I am not going to be able to go any further into the underlying content of those private conversations.

As to the case you raise in Venezuela, that – I saw that statement that the White House issued this morning. I mean, that's a very – the facts on that case are such that the Venezuelan Government seized him upon his return from the United Nations General Assembly. Let me take a look at the actual content of that first.

That's right. So Venezuelan authorities took Alban into custody, and that was from – upon his return from the United Nations General Assembly, where he was speaking about the importance of returning democracy to the people of Venezuela. And then, as you point out, he was pushed from a balcony or something happened. And so we, the United States – there is calling for increased pressure and we'd like to know – we would like more information. And I would also say that we extend our condolences and our sympathies to the family of Mr. Alban. That alarming detention does call for a thoroughly independent investigation free of the regime's interference. And that tragedy highlights a continuing pattern of human rights abuses in that country, repression, and excessive use of force.

QUESTION: How is the –

MR PALLADINO: In the case of what we're talking about in Turkey, we're calling for a full and transparent investigation to understand what's

transpired. We are – we are trying to get to the bottom of it and we're looking for answers.

QUESTION: Can I go on –

MR PALLADINO: Yes, please.

QUESTION: Thanks, Robert. Sorry if you already went into this. I was a minute or two late. But isn't this kind of the second round of inquiries that the U.S. has made to the Saudis? Didn't last week Deputy Secretary Sullivan and Secretary Pompeo raise this with the Saudi ambassador? And I'm just curious – if so, is this kind of follow-up because of more things that you're hearing from the Turks in terms of their investigation, or is it because you haven't gotten answers to your initial inquiries?

MR PALLADINO: We are – we – the President, the Vice President, and the Secretary of State have all spoken publicly on this now and expressed our concern. This is a journalist we're talking about, one that is known to many of us. And so we want – we want to see a transparent investigation and we would like to see official results of that investigation, and we're calling for cooperation in that matter.

QUESTION: How closely – I'm sorry – again, sorry if you addressed this, but how closely are you working with the Turks? And obviously they're investigating; are they sharing the results of their investigation with you?

MR PALLADINO: I'm not going to – we are working – from the Secretary on down, we are very engaged on this issue. Senior officials, diplomats are speaking to both the kingdom of Saudi Arabia as well as the Government of Turkey, and we're using diplomatic channels. We're going to continue to do so. The Vice President earlier today made comments that the United States stands ready to assist in any way, and I'll stop with that.

QUESTION: When he says – just one more, please. When he says that the U.S. stands ready to assist, obviously because Mr. Khashoggi is not a U.S. citizen or, I think at this point, even a legal permanent resident, there's no jurisdiction. But have you expressed to the Saudis that you would appreciate an invitation to assist in the investigation or are you just kind of standing by and waiting for them to act?

MR PALLADINO: I'm not going to go and characterize the underlying nature of our diplomatic conversations at this time.

QUESTION: Well, no, but it's a question about whether the U.S. is interested, and I know that you have to legally, according to international law, you would have to get an official invitation from the Turks. Is it your desire to join the investigation, or it's really just you're here to assist if they need it?

MR PALLADINO: I mean, that really is more of a question for the Vice President's office and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, not from the

State Department.

QUESTION: Can you – all right. Because Heather mentioned the FBI yesterday very briefly and I just want to – have the Turks made a request for FBI assistance?

MR PALLADINO: I'm not going to be able to go into the details on private conversations.

QUESTION: And then in terms of your high-level diplomatic talks, other than the calls you – other than the calls that you've read out here, presumably you have people on the ground in both Ankara, Istanbul – in Ankara, Istanbul, and Riyadh all pushing this, right?

MR PALLADINO: Our embassies overseas, absolutely.

QUESTION: Okay.

MR PALLADINO: Our diplomatic mission overseas.

QUESTION: Who again – what's the name of the ambassador in Turkey right now?

MR PALLADINO: I don't have that in front of me right now and I – Matt –

QUESTION: What's the name of the ambassador in Saudi Arabia right now?

MR PALLADINO: I see what you're getting at. Okay. We are confident in our diplomatic –

QUESTION: The answer is that you don't have an ambassador in either place, right?

MR PALLADINO: We –

QUESTION: And in fact, the charge in Riyadh has now been nominated to be the ambassador to Yemen. So just is it correct that you do not have ambassadors in place in either Ankara or Riyadh?

MR PALLADINO: But we have diplomatic staff, senior diplomatic officials –

QUESTION: I'm sure you do.

MR PALLADINO: – very much – very much in charge. And yesterday Heather spoke at the top as well about the need for the State Department to get its full team on the field, and we definitely would reiterate our request for our colleagues in the Senate and their assistance in fielding our full camp.

QUESTION: Understood. Who has been nominated to be the new ambassador to Turkey, and who has been nominated to be the new ambassador to Saudi Arabia? Who are the nominees who are awaiting Senate movement?

MR PALLADINO: Matt, I don't have that in front of me right now. And – but let me just say these are senior Foreign Service officers that have had full careers and we're confident in our team's ability.

QUESTION: You're sure someone's been nominated for both positions?

MR PALLADINO: I would have to take the question, Matt.

QUESTION: Robert. Robert, really quickly, just –

MR PALLADINO: All right, one more. Let's go to Fox.

QUESTION: Significant reporting out there that Turkish officials believe that this is the responsibility of the Saudi Government, and the UK foreign secretary yesterday said if these reports are true, it would change the relationship with Saudi Arabia. Does the U.S. share that view with the UK Government?

MR PALLADINO: I'll restate that – first of all, we're not going to engage in hypothetical questions. What the United States is calling for – we don't want to prejudge anything here, frankly. We want the official investigation to take place and we want to see the results of that investigation. So we are going to wait until the facts come out, and reiterate our call. We would like a thorough and a transparent investigation.

Guys, I don't have too much more on this subject, but let's go to AFP.

QUESTION: When you ask for an investigation and transparency on the result of these investigations, do you have the feeling that the response is positive from Saudi and the Turks, or is it too early to have that answer? Do you not know yet if they will do so?

MR PALLADINO: I'm not going to characterize private diplomatic conversations that we're having right now.

Let's go to Said, sure.

QUESTION: Thank you. Thank you for doing this. Good to see you behind the podium. I want to go the Palestinian issue very quickly. Today marked – today is the last day for the PLO office. They close at 4 o'clock this afternoon. Would you like to see them – to see this office reopened? Are you doing anything to have the office reopened? I mean, according to your letter, they have to shut down by today, October 10th.

MR PALLADINO: Correct.

QUESTION: That letter was sent out on September 10th.

MR PALLADINO: Yes.

QUESTION: Now, they shut down at 4 o'clock this afternoon.

MR PALLADINO: Right.

QUESTION: Would you like to see the office reopen and relations resumed?

MR PALLADINO: I'm not going to be able to answer that from the podium. I would take that question.

QUESTION: And one last question on the Palestinian issue. Yesterday I asked Heather about the young American student, Lara Alqasem. Have you spoken to the Israelis since then? She seems to be – apparently she's free to come back, but she doesn't want to do that. She wants to enter the country and resume her studies. Have you spoken to her, or have you spoken to the Israelis? And can you give us an update on this?

MR PALLADINO: I have no updates on dialogue between the United States and Israel since Heather's briefing yesterday. But I can reiterate what was said from the podium yesterday, that out of respect for Ms. Alqasem's privacy, there frankly – there's not much we're able to say. But we can say that we're very much aware of her case and that our embassy is providing consular assistance to her.

QUESTION: Just one quick –

QUESTION: Like, when you say – what does that mean, exactly? Have they visited her? Have they set her up with a lawyer or whatever? And when you say "the embassy," is it actually the embassy? Because remember, you moved the embassy to Jerusalem, you still have a big building in Tel Aviv, but Tel Aviv is immeasurably closer to the airport than – or to wherever she's being held than Jerusalem is. So is it –

MR PALLADINO: It is the embassy.

QUESTION: So it is the embassy.

MR PALLADINO: It is the embassy.

QUESTION: It's the consular people from Jerusalem or the –

MR PALLADINO: It's the embassy.

QUESTION: From Jerusalem?

MR PALLADINO: Correct.

QUESTION: Okay. And have they seen her?

MR PALLADINO: Out of respect for Ms. Alqasem's privacy, we're not able to talk about particulars of her case, but we are providing consular assistance to her.

QUESTION: What does that mean?

MR PALLADINO: Consular assistance – I've seen media reports with statements from her attorney on this matter, and so that also goes to

your question on whether or not she's represented by counsel.

QUESTION: Are you concerned about her detention?

MR PALLADINO: As a general principle, we value freedom of expression, even in cases where we don't agree with the political views expressed, and this is such a case. Our strong opposition to boycotts and sanctions of the state of Israel is well known and, as Heather said yesterday, Israel is a sovereign nation that can determine who enters.

QUESTION: Robert, sorry, that doesn't answer the question if you're concerned about her situation.

MR PALLADINO: I have nothing further on this at this point.

Yeah, please. Hi.

QUESTION: I'm sorry to go backward. Just one point of clarification: Can you say whether or not the Secretary also spoke with the crown prince yesterday, or was that today? You said it was a follow-up call.

MR PALLADINO: That –

QUESTION: And also was the conversation between Kushner and Bolton a joint conversation with the crown prince?

MR PALLADINO: I don't have the full details on the White House call other than what I provided. I'd have to refer you to the White House for clarification there. As far as at what time that call took place, I don't have that detail and I wouldn't want to misspeak, but I can say that it took place after the ambassador and the national security advisor and Mr. Kushner's call.

QUESTION: And just one follow-up, if I may.

MR PALLADINO: Yeah.

QUESTION: My colleague had asked this and I wasn't sure if you had answered: Has the U.S. seen any of the audio or video that the Turkish Government claims to have regarding the killing of –

MR PALLADINO: We are waiting for the results of the official investigation, and that's what we have at this point.

QUESTION: Robert –

MR PALLADINO: We would like to see a full and transparent and forthright resolution of this.

Yeah.

QUESTION: Just one quick one, Rob. I notice that Zal Khalilzad, the envoy for Afghanistan, is going to be making a trip to Saudi this week, or maybe even today, I'm not sure, but – I know this isn't necessarily

in his official lane, but will he be meeting with any Saudi officials on this particular instance or will he be raising it in his meetings on –

MR PALLADINO: The purpose of Ambassador Khalilzad –

QUESTION: I know what the purpose is.

MR PALLADINO: You know what the purpose is.

QUESTION: I know what the purpose is, but –

MR PALLADINO: And that's the purpose for his meetings as well, okay? So that's – it would be limited to his mandate.

QUESTION: So that means no?

MR PALLADINO: It means no. Okay, thank you. Yes, please.

QUESTION: Thank you, quick questions. Do you know why the Ambassador Nikki Haley resigned? Do you have any idea why she –

QUESTION: Yes. (Laughter.)

MR PALLADINO: She spoke about this yesterday from the White House. I am – I would refer you to Ambassador Haley's remarks, and I – yeah.

QUESTION: I know, but what is the reason why she resigned so quickly, though?

MR PALLADINO: I would have to refer you to the U.S. mission at the United Nations.

QUESTION: Does she have a new job somewhere?

MR PALLADINO: Of course she has a very good job, all right?

QUESTION: Oh.

MR PALLADINO: And – no, we wish her well. We've – the Secretary since his arrival has worked closely with Ambassador Haley, and Heather spoke a little bit about that yesterday. We were – we will miss her and we will – we work very closely with her staff, I would say.

QUESTION: Yeah.

MR PALLADINO: Yeah.

QUESTION: North Korea?

MR PALLADINO: Sure.

QUESTION: On climate change?

QUESTION: North Korea.

MR PALLADINO: Let's go to North Korea, okay?

QUESTION: Yeah. (Laughter.)

QUESTION: Yeah.

QUESTION: So –

QUESTION: You guys are so quick to follow up.

MR PALLADINO: Sure, North Korea.

QUESTION: All right.

MR PALLADINO: I've heard of this –

QUESTION: It's a much easier subject.

MR PALLADINO: Okay. (Laughter.)

QUESTION: So Heather talked a little bit about Secretary Pompeo. He met with the North Koreans to plan the next summit and there was also talk of working-level talks with Steve Biegun. Do we have any idea of a timeline for when Steve Biegun is going to meet for more working-level talks with him?

MR PALLADINO: No trip announcements to make at this time, but that's something that we're looking at right now, yeah.

QUESTION: Do we have any, like, soon, farther?

MR PALLADINO: Hopefully soon. Hopefully soon. We'd like to – yeah, we'd like to continue progress moving forward. Any more on North Korea?

QUESTION: Yeah.

MR PALLADINO: Okay. Let's go –

QUESTION: Soon? Soon means – soon means how soon? Before the election or after the election? That's what we want to know, timeline.

MR PALLADINO: Yeah. We have no trip announcements at this time to make, really, and so we'll keep working at that.

QUESTION: For Washington or Pyongyang?

MR PALLADINO: For the special representative, Steve Biegun are we talking now? We –

QUESTION: I mean –

MR PALLADINO: Yesterday the President spoke about this subject and he said –

QUESTION: Mar-a-Lago?

MR PALLADINO: He said specifically that after – after the midterm elections, so we'll continue working towards that. Part of the most recent trip to was basically to come up with working level teams for both sides that could continue to work together and push this forward. That's what Special Representative Biegun is leading, and part of that focus definitely will be on a second summit between the two leaders.

QUESTION: All right, thank you.

QUESTION: North Korea?

MR PALLADINO: All right. North Korea, please.

QUESTION: Thank you. Yesterday, Russian foreign ministry said that they actually proposed five-way talks, including Russia and China, United States, South Korea, and North Korea. Is that a formula you would support to ease the tension in North Korea?

MR PALLADINO: Well, we noted the statement out of Moscow, and I would just say that we look forward to working with Russia, China, and North Korea to achieve, as quickly as possible, the final, fully verified denuclearization of North Korea. The most recent trip to Pyongyang, we really – there was forward progress and we'd like to continue to see that move forward. We welcome the steps that North Korea's taken, and I would just add that the – President Trump has been very clear from the beginning that sanctions relief will follow denuclearization. And sooner we get to that point, the sooner the United States will think about lifting sanctions.

QUESTION: So you are rejecting their proposal? They called for adjusted UN sanctions ahead of denuclearization, so I guess you are saying no?

MR PALLADINO: Well, I mean, Secretary Pompeo's spoken about this before. The Russian and Chinese – for example, up at – during the general assembly, had some ideas about how we might begin to think about reducing sanctions. But in general, got to point out that they were all supportive of maintaining the United Nations Security Council resolutions and sanctions that underlay them.

The United States position continues that – it's the pressure campaign and the underlying sanctions that the world came together to impose that has gotten us to this point and will continue to be the foundation for what we earnestly hope is a brighter future for North Korea. And we are going to – the Singapore summit was such a strong first start. We're making progress and we look forward to taking further steps in that regard.

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

QUESTION: Two quick ones that we didn't get to before. Have the Saudis been helpful or unhelpful thus far in the investigation, given the

difficulty that the Turks have had getting in there and searching?

MR PALLADINO: I'm not going to characterize private diplomatic conversations other than to reiterate what the – than what we've said. We continue to call for a transparent and conclusive investigation. We'd like to see how the results of this –

QUESTION: But have they given – there have been so many conversations at this point. Have the Saudis given you any indication that they will conduct a transparent investigation and be forthcoming?

MR PALLADINO: We're having – we continue to speak with both Saudi Arabia and Turkey at the highest levels, and we're going to continue to call for that. All right, let's go over here, and we're –

QUESTION: Thank you.

QUESTION: State Department characterizes that we are – U.S. is with lockstep with South Korea and Japan. But the South Korean foreign minister confirmed that Pompeo was discontent and complained about the inter-Korean military pact in his last inter-Korean summit. What is your reaction to that? Was he discontent and complained about it, or does that mean South Korea's going ahead of –

MR PALLADINO: We talk to the South Koreans I would say almost every day, and we are closely coordinated – coordinating with our Republic of Korea ally. I – we're able to speak about a lot of things together and that's because we really share the same objective here. And I haven't seen that report, but all I would say is please, we are – we're really working closely with the Republic of Korea.

QUESTION: No, but I mean, it doesn't really answer the question of – as to whether the U.S. feels that the South Koreans are not necessarily in lockstep, that there is a perception, isn't there, on the administration that the South Koreans are leaning too forward with the North Koreans right now as you're moving in this process?

MR PALLADINO: We're really closely coordinating with them. We are – we're quite –

QUESTION: That doesn't mean you agree on everything.

MR PALLADINO: We're – many times across the spectrum, our closest friends, we're able to work through these things because we're able to speak frankly with one another. I would say that the conversations that are going on not only with Japan and South Korea, these are closely coordinated regularly at all levels of our government. They're happening constantly.

All right. Last question. I thank –

QUESTION: Can I have a (inaudible).

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

QUESTION: Wait a second. How are you going to – are you going to answer the –

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

MR PALLADINO: We got Conor – all right, we're going to – Conor.

QUESTION: – answer Conor's climate change question?

QUESTION: Thank you, Matt.

MR PALLADINO: Conor, climate change.

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

QUESTION: Apparently this is the only building in town –

MR PALLADINO: Conor.

QUESTION: – where climate change will be raised. (Laughter.)

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

MR PALLADINO: Conor, what is – what is – tell me about this question, Conor.

QUESTION: Thank you. I was interrupted.

QUESTION: On the IPCC's report that was released on Monday –

MR PALLADINO: Yes.

QUESTION: – obviously a very dire warning that there needs to be urgent action before there is irreversible changes to the climate. Do you, does the United States Government agree with that finding, and if so, what are you doing about it?

MR PALLADINO: I would say that we appreciate the hard work that the scientists and experts, many of whom were Americans, put into developing that report. And I would also say – point out – point out what it is for what it is: the Intergovernment Panel on Climate Change under their own procedures, that – that report that they produced and its contents – that remains the responsibility of its authors. Governments do not formally endorse specific findings presented by the authors.

But as to your underlying question, as we noted in the statement – the United States Government's statement about that, there are inherent limitations of trying to assess projected impacts and costs of warming at a specific temperature and time period.

QUESTION: It's what? You know that there's a hurricane that is smashing into the Florida panhandle right now that a lot of people say were – was

exacerbated by climate change? The ice is – Arctic ice is melting, Antarctic ice is melting at record paces and you're not sure?

MR PALLADINO: There are –

QUESTION: If this was two years ago, I think we would have had a vastly different answer. How is this not denial of climate change if you can't accept the report that – like this?

MR PALLADINO: Our policy –

QUESTION: Do you think it's not true?

MR PALLADINO: We are leading the world in affordable, abundant and secure energy, while at the same time we protect the environment and are reducing emissions through job-creating innovations. This is the U.S. policy. And we're doing good on this regard. Carbon emissions have fallen. From 2005 to 2017, they declined by 14 percent, while global energy-related carbon emissions rose during that time. And this has been possible because of American innovation and through the development and large-scale deployment of new, affordable and cleaner technologies to capitalize on America's –

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

MR PALLADINO: – energy abundance. Yes.

QUESTION: It's also been possible because of the previous administration's policies, many of which are now being rolled back by this administration: the Clean Power Plant, limitations on methane, waste, things that you are now actively redoing and getting rid of. Doesn't that then hurt those same standards that you're now praising?

MR PALLADINO: We are a leader, the United States is a leader in energy technology and innovation, and because of that we have seen drastic reductions in carbon emissions so they're now at their lowest level since – they've been since 1992. Our policy is such that we are unleashing the capabilities through this innovation and we believe that that's the way that the United States can help contribute to this problem.

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

QUESTION: Part of the report is that even if the policies of this administration are undertaking don't exacerbate the problem or don't take away from the progress that has already been made, that whatever is being done isn't enough and that there has to be radical change now, or in 20 to 40 years, it's too late. So do you – does the administration accept or not accept that?

MR PALLADINO: The United States is at the forefront of reducing its carbon emissions and we're doing – been able to do that thanks to these new, affordable, cleaner technologies that are capitalizing on our

energy abundance. That's – and that's the direction that we're moving in.

QUESTION: Venezuela?

QUESTION: I want to go Venezuela. Senator –

MR PALLADINO: The last one, let's – we'll stop at Venezuela, please.

QUESTION: Senator Corker went to Caracas to talk to Maduro. Was that trip taken – was – did it come with the blessing of the Secretary? And Corker's also said he's going to talk to the Secretary about that trip. Has he spoken to him?

MR PALLADINO: I don't have any information on that. I would have to take that question and get back to you, Lesley, and I'm sorry.

QUESTION: Okay.

MR PALLADINO: Guys, thank you for my first day. (Applause.) There shall be more.

(The briefing was concluded at 2:19 p.m.)

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Media Note
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Washington, DC
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Judith Garber, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State in the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, will travel to Rovaniemi, Finland, October 11-12, 2018, to serve as the U.S. government's Head of Delegation to the Arctic Environment Ministers Meeting (AEMM). PDAS Garber will represent the United States at ministerial-level fora and in bilateral and multilateral meetings on the sidelines of the event. The United States aims to safeguard U.S. security, economic and environmental interests in the Arctic, advancing a rules-based framework to govern activities in the region, ensuring access to Arctic resources, and promoting economic growth, sustainable development and environmental stewardship.

For more information, please contact OES-PA-DG@state.gov and follow the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs on Twitter @StateDeptOES.

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