

# Press Releases: Ninth U.S.-Laos Comprehensive Bilateral Dialogue

Media Note  
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC  
March 27, 2019

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The United States and the Lao People's Democratic Republic (P.D.R.) held their ninth annual Comprehensive Bilateral Dialogue on March 27 in Washington, reflecting the growing, broad-based relationship between the two nations. Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs W. Patrick Murphy and U.S. Ambassador to Laos Rena Bitter led the U.S. delegation, with senior representatives from the U.S. Departments of Defense, Homeland Security, Commerce, and Agriculture; the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative; and the United States Agency for International Development. Lao PDR Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Thongphane Savanphet led the Lao delegation, together with Ambassador to the United States Khamphan Anlavan. The delegations agreed to continue to expand ties in accordance with the 2016 Joint Declaration on the Comprehensive Partnership between the United States and Laos, and to explore new areas of cooperation.

U.S. and Lao officials discussed regional issues, including fostering a free and open Indo-Pacific, upholding the rule of law in the South China Sea, and countering transnational organized crime. The U.S. delegation thanked Laos for its role as the U.S. Country Coordinator within ASEAN, and especially its efforts as co-chair of the March 28 ASEAN-U.S. Dialogue. U.S. officials also reaffirmed the importance of ASEAN centrality and U.S. commitment to a strong bilateral relationship based on respect for Lao sovereignty.

U.S. and Lao officials also discussed high-standard economic investment and development, pointing to opportunities for increased trade and business. The delegations discussed human rights, U.S. support for clearing unexploded ordnance (UXO), people-to-people ties, and coordination on ending trafficking of people, illicit drugs, and wildlife. The United States and Laos recognize that rule of law and civil society play important roles in protecting sovereignty, openness, and shared prosperity in the Indo-Pacific.

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## **Press Releases: State Department's Foreign Policy Strategy and FY 2020 Budget Request**

Testimony  
Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Opening Statement Before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs  
Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC  
March 27, 2019

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Great, thank you. Thank you, Chairman Engel. Thank you, Ranking Member McCaul. I will be brief this morning.

Thanks for the opportunity to discuss the administration's FY 2020 budget.

It's designed around the National Security Strategy to achieve our foreign policy goals. The request for \$40 billion for State Department and USAID puts us in position to do just that.

These monies will protect our citizens at home and abroad, advance American prosperity and values, and support our allies and partners overseas.

We make this request mindful of the burden on American taxpayers and take seriously our obligation to deliver exceptional results on their behalf.

This budget will achieve our key diplomatic goals. Let me walk through many of them.

First, we'll make sure that China and Russia cannot gain a strategic advantage and age – in an age of renewed great power competition.

We'll continue our progress toward the final, fully verified denuclearization of North Korea.

And we'll support the people of Venezuela as they work toward a peaceful restoration of their democracy so they can achieve prosperity in their once-rich nation.

And we'll continue to confront the threat posed by the Islamic Republic of Iran and its malign behavior.

And we will work to help our allies and partners around the world become more secure and economically self-reliant as well.

And I take it as a personal mission to make sure that our world-class diplomatic personnel have the resources they need to execute America's diplomacy in the 21st century.

Mr. Chairman, I know that you, too, care deeply about the welfare of our dedicated professionals. I've seen it. They get up every day and carry out the department's vital national security and foreign policy missions.

And like you, my foremost priority is to ensure we have the resources to recruit, hire, develop, retain, and empower them to remain the world's finest diplomatic team.

We especially need the extremely qualified individuals we nominated to serve in important management positions across the department, many of whom have been awaiting Senate confirmation since last year.

I also appreciate this committee's focus on ensuring that the 75,000 men and women of the department's workforce are treated respectfully and justly.

I have great respect for the committee's oversight role to ensure and to – and I work to ensure that those commitments are carried out. When I served in this chamber, I pressed administration officials hard about the importance of

Executive Branch responsiveness to requests from Congress, and my team will continue to work with yours to fulfill your requests for briefings, meetings, information from the department, and work constructively to identify how we can appropriately respond to the committee's oversight and investigative requests.

I look forward to continuing to work with you on all of these key foreign policy priorities, and many more.

And I will now end my remarks so that we'll have fulsome time for a good conversation. Thank you.

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## **[Press Releases: Secretary Pompeo's Meeting With Uighur Muslims Impacted by Human Rights Crisis in Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region of China](#)**

Press Statement  
Robert Palladino

Deputy Spokesperson

Washington, DC  
March 27, 2019

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Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo met yesterday with Mihrigul Tursun, a Uighur Muslim who survived horrific conditions and abuse in a Chinese internment camp in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region. Secretary Pompeo also met with three other members of the Uighur Muslim community: Gulchehra

Hoja, Ferkat Jawdat, and Arfat Erkin, whose relatives have been detained in the camps or criminally sentenced by Chinese authorities. These individuals' family members are among the more than one million Uighurs, ethnic Kazakhs, and members of other Muslim minority groups whom the Chinese government has detained in internment camps since April 2017. The Secretary commended their bravery in speaking out about China's abuses, and pledged U.S. support to end China's campaign of repression against Islam and other religions.

These survivors' stories are just a few of among hundreds of other stories from survivors of China's repressive campaign in Xinjiang. They speak for the million or more voices in Xinjiang who are unable to speak for themselves, move freely, think for themselves, and undertake even the most basic practices of their religion. The Department of State's 2018 Human Rights Report on China detailed abuses in these camps, such as torture, repressive surveillance measures, homestays and forcible service of pork and alcohol by Chinese government officials in Muslim homes, confiscations of Qurans, and instances of sexual abuse and death. We call on the Chinese government to release immediately these individuals' family members and all others arbitrarily detained in the camps.

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## **[Press Releases: Department of State Budget Request for FY 2020](#)**

Testimony  
Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Opening Statement Before the House Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs  
Washington, DC  
March 27, 2019

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Thank you. Chairwoman Lowey, thank you, and I will absolutely summarize. Chairwoman Lowey, Ranking Member Rogers, thank you. Distinguished members of subcommittee, thank you for being with me this morning and thanks for the opportunity to discuss the President's FY 2020 budget.

I'm glad I'm here. It's the first hearing in front of the 116th Congress, and I'm glad it is with you all. In order to support the President's National Security Strategy and achieve our foreign policy goals, we this year submitted a request of \$40 billion for the State Department and USAID. It will protect our citizens at home and abroad and advance American prosperity and values. It will support our allies and partners overseas. You should know there are difficult choices when budgets are to be made. You face these constraints too, and we should always be mindful of the burden that American taxpayers have and our obligation to deliver exceptional results on their behalf.

This budget request will help us achieve our diplomatic goals in several ways. First, we'll make sure that China and Russia cannot gain a strategic advantage in an era of renewed great power competition. We'll continue our progress toward the final, fully verified denuclearization of North Korea, and we'll support the people of Venezuela as they work toward a peaceful restoration of democracy and prosperity in their country. We'll also continue to confront the Islamic Republic of Iran's malign behavior, and we'll help our allies and partners become more secure and economically self-reliant. And I'll also make sure that our world-class diplomatic personnel have the resources they need to execute American diplomacy in the 21st century.

I look forward to continuing to work with each of you on these key foreign policy priorities and many more issues as well. I want to allow enough time for questions, so I'll keep these remarks short. And with that, I look forward to taking questions from you, Madam Chairwoman, Ranking Member, and

other members of your committee. Thank you.

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## **Press Releases: Appointment of Ambassador Yasar Halit Cevik as Chief Monitor of the OSCE's Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine**

Press Statement  
Robert Palladino

Deputy Spokesperson

Washington, DC  
March 26, 2019

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The United States welcomes the appointment of Ambassador Yasar Halit Cevik of Turkey as Chief Monitor of the OSCE's Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM). As the OSCE marks the fifth anniversary of the establishment of the SMM, we recognize the crucial visibility it provides into the Russia-instigated conflict in eastern Ukraine. The United States commends outgoing Chief Monitor Ambassador Ertugrul Apakan for his leadership in standing up the OSCE's largest mission and his commitment to improving its safety and efficacy. We are grateful to the SMM monitors and staff for their valuable contributions to this mission and their dedicated service under difficult and, at times, dangerous conditions. Ambassador Cevik's extensive public service as a diplomat make him well-suited for this position.

The United States urges all OSCE participating States to reiterate support for the SMM. We call on Russia and the forces it arms, trains, leads, and

fights alongside in Ukraine to allow the SMM full and unhindered access to the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.

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