

[Press Releases: Secretary Pompeo's Meeting With Republic of Korea Foreign Minister Kang](#)

Readout
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
February 14, 2019

The below is attributable to Deputy Spokesperson Robert Palladino:□

Secretary Michael R. Pompeo met with Republic of Korea (ROK) Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha today in Warsaw. They discussed ongoing efforts to achieve the final, fully verified denuclearization of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), and updated each other on respective U.S. and ROK engagements with the DPRK. Secretary Pompeo and Foreign Minister Kang praised the enduring strength of the U.S.-ROK Alliance. Both sides also expressed their commitment to U.S.-ROK-Japan trilateral cooperation.

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[Press Releases: Secretary Pompeo's Meeting With Austrian Foreign Minister Karin Kneissl](#)

Readout

Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
February 14, 2019

The below is attributable to Deputy Spokesperson Robert Palladino:□

Secretary Michael R. Pompeo met with Austrian Foreign Minister Karin Kneissl today in Warsaw on the margins of the Ministerial to Promote a Future of Peace and Security in the Middle East. They discussed the importance of U.S.-Austrian bilateral relations and security cooperation in the Western Balkans and Afghanistan. The Secretary also raised the need for energy diversification in Europe and countering Russian aggression.

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[Press Releases: Interview With Michel Ghandour of Al Hurra](#)

Interview
Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Sheraton Hotel
Warsaw, Poland
February 14, 2019

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, thank you so much for your time first.

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

QUESTION: Thanks so much. How would this Warsaw conference help counter Iran malign activity in the Middle East and push the peace and the prosperity and the security of the region?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So you had a historic gathering of 60-plus nations. We saw for one of the first times in recent history the Israelis and the Arabs sitting together talking about how to deliver Middle East peace and security in the future. That's a wonderful advance and real progress.

We certainly talked about all the issues, whether it's Yemen or Syria, and we talked about the threat Iran poses. There was complete unanimity among – there were no objections from any country that didn't understand the real risk that the Islamic Republic of Iran presents to the Middle East and the greater world, and there was a real commitment to help every nation push back against that security threat.

QUESTION: And Mr. Secretary, do you consider Warsaw conference as a major step towards normalization between Israel and the Arab countries?

SECRETARY POMPEO: It was a remarkable thing to watch these leaders meet and gather and have conversations. It seemed – what was great about it is it didn't seem, feel historic. It felt right – nations coming together to work against a set of risks that present real risk to their own people, every country there to protect its own sovereign interest. And whether they were Arab or Israeli or European or from Asia, these countries all recognized the threat and made real commitments to come together to figure out the best way to address each of these security issues.

QUESTION: And what do you think about Palestinians boycotting the conference?

SECRETARY POMPEO: I regret it. I wish they had been here to be part of the conversation. There were many different voices here. There was lots of places where countries disagreed, and they voiced those concerns. I think we each learned from them, and it was cumulative, additive. It was better because there were different voices. I regret that the Palestinians rejected the invitation that was extended to them. I wish they had come here. I think the Palestinian people are a little worse off because their leaders chose not to participate.

QUESTION: And have you discussed the deal of the century in details and when you will be able to present it to the region and to the parties?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So Mr. Kushner was here along with Mr. Greenblatt. They shared a little bit of the outlines of the deal, really the central tenets of what we're hoping to achieve. And we hope we are able to roll out the full plan, all of the details of that plan, in the weeks ahead.

QUESTION: On Iran, Mr. Secretary, critics say that your Iran strategy is not working. You also expected that Iran's economy will fall into recession by

spring. Is that still your expectation, and how will the recession affect the Iranian regime behavior?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Well, on the economic front, the one that you've focused on in that question, our objective is simple. We want to ensure that Qasem Soleimani has as few dollars as possible to create death and destruction throughout the world. And so we are attempting to choke off the regime's money that is going towards terrorism. That's the objective.

We have a second objective in our plan. It's to support the Iranian people. We have humanitarian exceptions to the sanctions so that food and medicine can get to them, and we want that. We want the Iranian people to have their voices heard. These are our objectives. Look, we brook no ill will towards the Iranian people, indeed just the opposite. We care more about the Iranian people than many of Iranian leaders – the Iranian leaders have demonstrated. We want them to be successful. We want them to thrive. And to do that you can't squander resources, money, all around the Middle East conducting terror campaigns.

QUESTION: But is the strategy working, Mr. Secretary?

SECRETARY POMPEO: We think it's working.

QUESTION: It's working.

SECRETARY POMPEO: And we think it will continue to work in the future as well.

QUESTION: On Syria, what kind of progress have you made with the Turkish – or with Turkey regarding the security zone in Syria? And who will fill the vacuum in northeastern Syria after the U.S. withdrawal?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Remember President Trump's commitment to the destruction of ISIS/Daesh is real and it is continuing. The decision to withdraw our 2,000 U.S. uniformed personnel from northeast Syria remains. We're going to do that. This is a change in tactics, not a change in our mission. Our mission was the destruction of the caliphate, and that's almost complete. And then we have a continuing obligation to make sure that ISIS or other radical Islamist terror groups can't conduct a resurgence, can't retake that real estate. We remain committed to achieving that goal as well.

We're in discussions – ones that you referred to – about how we will manage that. We're in discussions with the Kurdish forces. We're in discussion with the Turks. We are hopeful that that political process under UN Security Council Resolution 2254 will begin to yield results before too long.

QUESTION: But it will take time after the U.S. withdrawal. Meanwhile, who will replace the Americans?

SECRETARY POMPEO: I am confident that the mission remains unchanged and that the United States will continue to do all that it takes on the mission we are set about – the complete destruction of the caliphate and making sure that the threat from ISIS remains mitigated.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, on Lebanon. Lebanon has a new government that decided to boycott the Warsaw conference. How do you assess that? And Hizballah is more powerful now in Beirut.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yep, Hizballah is definitely more powerful than they were four or five years ago. I think that's a true statement, and I regret that. In the same way, I regret that the Lebanese leadership didn't come here today to express their views, their objectives. We want good things for the country of Lebanon. We want it to be unified and we want Iran out. And the fact that they are in Lebanon under the guise of Hizballah is plain to the world. It was plain for all 60-plus countries here to see today. We talked a great deal in one of the subgroups about how we would contain Hizballah illicit finance and push back against their money laundering, some of which takes place through Lebanese financial institutions. We are partners with Lebanon to achieve a good outcome for the people of Lebanon.

QUESTION: On the GCC, Mr. Secretary, to what extent is the reconciliation between Gulf states essential to launch the Middle East Strategic Alliance, and when should we expect the launch?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So I don't know when the launch will be. We're working towards it. We're making progress. I think there was a little more progress made during this ministerial as well, although it wasn't the primary focus of the gathering. There's no doubt that the GCC rift makes that a little more difficult, but I am confident too that as we work on this process – we call it MESA – as we work on this strategic alliance, this fundamental reframing about security in the Middle East, that that effort as well will lead towards reducing some of the tensions that's created by the rift. At least we're hopeful that that will be the case.

QUESTION: My last question will be on Sudan, Mr. Secretary. Demonstrations are still going on asking for regime change there. What's your assessment?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yeah, much like I talked about in other places, it's very difficult for the Sudanese people today. We're hopeful that their voices will be heard and that the transition, if there is one, will be led by them and not by outside influences.

QUESTION: Thank you so much, Mr. Secretary. We appreciate your time.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you very much, sir. Thank you.

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Press Releases: Interview With Niusha Boghrati of Radio Farda

Interview
Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Sheraton Hotel
Warsaw, Poland
February 14, 2019

QUESTION: Secretary Pompeo, so let's begin with what has happened right here, right now: an effort by U.S. administration in order to form a broad and international coalition against the Islamic Republic, as was reflected in Vice President Pence's remarks. Now, my question is that how feasible do you think that is, given the fact that EU countries seem to be sticking to their end of the deal when it comes to JCPOA? You know that recently they've put in place a tool in order to facilitate the trade with Iran.

SECRETARY POMPEO: So the gathering was aimed at creating peace and stability throughout the Middle East. That's what 60-plus countries came together to talk about, to work on solutions to what have been intractable problems – problems in Yemen, problems in Syria, the security risks associated with the conflict between the Palestinians and Israel. Each of those topics, that's what we came together for. It's the case that when you talk about Hizballah, you have to talk about Iran. When you talk about the Houthis' mischief in Yemen, you have to talk about Iran. Iran was certainly one of the things that was discussed.

But I will tell you that the coalition is strong. Not a single person, not a single country, denied that this threat from Iran is real, whether they were Arab countries or countries that were here from Asia or from South America or from the Middle East itself. All understood the threat that the Islamic Republic of Iran presents to their citizens. And so we worked on that.

There's clearly differences on how to attack the problem. The Europeans are wedded to the JCPOA. We've made a very different decision. We think any money that goes to the Islamic Republic of Iran will end up in the hands of Qasem Soleimani and be used for mischief and, most importantly, will be used to create real hardship for the Iranian people. And so we are determined to make

sure that the Iranian people's voices are heard. We gathered people here today, we made our case, and I am confident that we came out of here today more collectively able to deal with all of the threats that exist throughout all of the Middle East.

QUESTION: But going back to Iran, how those threats that you're mentioning are going to be dealt with? This conference is viewed by many as part of an ongoing effort on Washington's side in order to pave the way for a regime change in Iran. What do you think about that?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Well, I have to say this was historic. You had the Israelis and the Arabs sitting together having a conversation about the threat that Iran poses. This wasn't a Washington-driven effort. We certainly have made clear our concerns about the Islamic Republic of Iran, and we have devoted substantial resources towards reducing those risks. We'll keep at that because we ultimately want the Iranian people to have their voices heard.

We want a change in the regime's behavior. We want them to act like a normal country. Back in May, I laid out 12 core things that the Islamic Republic of Iran needed to do to rejoin the community of nations. We are driving every day a set of policies that we hope will achieve that, and when we do, the entire Middle East and indeed the world will be a safer place.

QUESTION: About those conditions, the preconditions and the changing of behavior which has been mentioned numerous times by you and other figures in the administration, the thing is that the behavior that you have in mind is so integral with the identity of the Islamic Republic that changing them will basically be a sort of a regime change. I mean, if Iran would just abandon every single behavior that it has got throughout the Middle East, throughout the world, towards the people of Iran, then nothing is left of the Islamic Republic.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Ultimately, the how – how these behaviors will be changed – will be dealt with by the Iranian people. They'll make their voices heard. They'll assert their power. These are smart people, capable people, with a deep and rich history. They are entirely capable of managing the affairs of their nation. And so these behavioral changes that we are seeking are aimed at creating security throughout the Middle East and creating better lives for the Iranian people, and we are doing everything we can to support those Iranian voices inside of their country so that they can get a life that is the one that they want and one that doesn't pose a threat and a risk to people throughout the Middle East and the rest of the world.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, you're aware that on Wednesday, a deadly attack happened in Iran against a bus which belonged to IRGC, killing 27 people. Mohammad Javad Zarif, Iranian foreign minister, wrote in a tweet, and I quote, that, "Is it no coincidence that Iran is hit by terror on the very day that," quote/unquote, "Warsaw Circus begins?" Your reaction to that?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yeah, well, the Americans had nothing to do with this at all. I'll say this: Many countries, including European countries, meet with this man Zarif. He is actually headed to Munich, where many European

countries will meet with him. I would ask those countries when they meet with Mr. Zarif to ask him why he would say such an outrageous thing. Sometimes he is posited to be a moderate. It's not moderate to accuse the Israelis and the Americans of murder. That's not moderate. I think it shows the signs that Mr. Zarif and Mr. Rouhani are revolutionaries in the same way that the other leaders inside of Iran are as well.

QUESTION: Thank you. Thank you very much.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you for your time today.

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[Press Releases: Interview With Judy Woodruff of PBS NewsHour](#)

Interview
Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Sheraton Hotel
Warsaw, Poland
February 13, 2019

QUESTION: Secretary Mike Pompeo, thank you very much for joining us. You are in Poland for a meeting to discuss the future of the Middle East. What do you want to come out of this meeting?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Well, Judy, thanks for having me on the show. I appreciate the opportunity to speak with your audience. We've gathered 70 nations to talk about how we achieve Middle East stability and prosperity and peace. As you know, this region is fraught with risk, and we will spend tomorrow, we spent a good part of tonight talking about the various risks and how this

coalition, how different countries from every continent save for Antarctica can come together and deliver on Middle East peace. We hope to walk away from here with a number of ideas and plans. We hope to have follow-up meetings where we can truly begin to deliver on something that the Middle East certainly needs and the world will benefit from as well.

QUESTION: So we are told that a number of key Middle Eastern and European officials decided not to attend. There are some countries represented at a lower level. How does that affect your ability to move this forward?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Judy, this event's been absolutely historic. It's the first time we've put it together. And even tonight it's the first time in a quarter of a century that you had the prime minister of Israel in the same room talking about threats in the Middle East with senior Arab leaders from all across the Middle East. It was truly remarkable. It was historic. Seventy-plus countries gathered together, all sharing ideas. We come from different backgrounds. We come from different places. We see these risks differently. But tonight, I think we began a conversation which will lead to really good outcomes all across the Middle East.

QUESTION: You mentioned the prime minister of Israel, Mr. Netanyahu. He just a short time ago was quoted as saying, tweeting that the countries were there to discuss their "common interest of war with Iran." They later changed the wording to say "common interest of combating Iran," but is that the focus?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Well, it may not surprise you, Judy, I was out with American soldiers on freedom's frontier today. I didn't have a chance to spend a lot of time on Twitter, so I haven't seen those remarks.

No, this gathering is certainly about Middle East peace and stability. You can't talk about that without talking about the threat from the Islamic Republic of Iran, whether it's Hizballah, Hamas, the Houthis – I call them the three H's – whether it's their work against the Iraqi government, trying to harm the independence and sovereignty of Iraq, whether it's what they're doing in Syria today.

There are shared interests there between the Saudis, between the Emiratis, between the Bahrainis, the Jordanians, the Israelis all understand that their nations are at risk from Iran, and the Europeans heard tonight as well their nations are at risk as well. Iran is conducting an assassination campaign throughout Europe. This is a global phenomenon. The threat from Middle East instability is real, and you can't possibly talk about it without talking about the enormous influence that Iran has had in the Middle East, none of which has been for good.

QUESTION: Well, Mr. Secretary, we know you've appealed directly to the people of Iran, but a question that's been raised is how can you expect them to support this when many of them wanted that nuclear agreement to go forward, many of them just don't want to be seen as supporting the U.S. right now. How – is that a tack that you think you can count on?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Judy, we don't expect the Iranian people to support the

U.S. We expect them to take care of their own country. We hear from Iranians all the time at the United States State Department. They are wholly dissatisfied with the conditions that are inside of their country. They watch the kleptocracy that is the clerical regime there. They watch it squander money around the world. They watch it get their brothers and sisters killed in wars all across the region. And for what? For the IRGC, for Qasem Soleimani, not for the benefit of the Iranian people.

So what we want the Iranian people to do is not support Europe or support the United States or anyone else. We want the Iranian people to have the opportunity to live in a prosperous, peaceful society and one that is controlled by their desires, their wishes. And if we can get that, I am very confident that these behaviors that we see in Iran will change dramatically.

QUESTION: And one other question, Mr. Secretary, about Iran, and that is it's been pointed out that the U.S. singles out human rights abuses in Iran but does not do so with regard to countries like Egypt, like Syria, like Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. How do you reconcile that?

SECRETARY POMPEO: I mean, Judy, your statement's just false. You reconcile it by going and looking at our record, and we've made very clear that the failure to observe the most basic fundamental human rights, treating human beings with the dignity and respect to which they are entitled by nature of their humanity, the United States calls that out wherever we find shortcomings, whether that's the Muslim Uighurs that are being held in detention camps in China or what's happening in Iran or any other country where we find it, North Korea, the list goes on. The United States is very consistent, and we ask every nation to treat their people with the basic human rights to which each of us is entitled.

QUESTION: Well, one of the countries that conversation has led to has to do with the war in Yemen, and you may know that just a short time ago the U.S. House of Representatives, where you previously served, passed a bill basically saying that the U.S. can no longer put money toward the military effort, the U.S. – the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen. Is this a – how much of a rebuke, of a setback, is this to the President?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Look, members of Congress – I was one – they get to vote the way they want to vote and pass resolutions that they want to pass. That's certainly their right. You should know that we listen to them. I meet with senators and members of the House of Representatives all the time and talk to them about a range of issues, and we certainly hear their voice with respect to Yemen.

But you know just tonight, Judy, I was with foreign ministers from the Emirates, the Saudis, and Britain, the UK. We met with Martin Griffiths from the UN, who is working to solve this problem in Yemen. We have two problems – three problems really. The first problem is al-Qaida. It's still there. The United States is doing its best to take down that terror threat. The second problem is Iran continuing to fund the Houthis. If you want to know who's caused the humanitarian crisis in Yemen, you need look no further than the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Judy, for example, how many dollars has Iran provided for humanitarian assistance in Yemen? I can tell you. Do you know?

QUESTION: I don't know.

SECRETARY POMPEO: It's zero. How much money – how much money have the Emiratis and Saudis provided? The Americans, the Brits, the Saudis, and the Emiratis are doing everything we can to take down the threat from the humanitarian crisis in Yemen while Iran fuels it. It provides missiles to the Houthis that they launch into airports in Saudi Arabia and the Emirates.

These are the challenges in Yemen, these are the challenges that this administration is determined to push back against, and we're going to keep at it.

QUESTION: And we assume this legislation will go on to the Senate, which passed similar language not very long ago. So we'll watch to see what happens.

Just finally, Mr. Secretary, I want to take you to North Korea, which, of course, is another major focus of yours with this upcoming meeting between President Trump and the North Korean leader Kim Jong-un. There are reports now that the International Atomic Energy Agency may be allowed back into North Korea. Can you confirm that?

SECRETARY POMPEO: No, ma'am, I can't – I can't confirm that for you this evening. What I can tell your viewers is that President Trump is headed there on the 27th and 28th to Hanoi to have a second conversation with Chairman Kim Jong-un, and we really hope that we can make progress, a significant step towards denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula. That'll reduce risk. It'll reduce all the tension that's been along that border for far too long. And then we hope we can create a brighter future, a much brighter future for the North Korean people as well. That's the mission that the President's given me, and it's one that we hope we make a significant advance on at the end of this month.

QUESTION: Well, we will certainly be following that story and we'll be following your travels in Europe today. We wish you – we wish you safe travels, Secretary Mike Pompeo. Thank you very much.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you, ma'am. Have a good evening, Judy. So long.

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