

Press Releases: Joint Statement of the Second United States-Qatar Strategic Dialogue: Forward Together

Media Note
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
January 13, 2019

The governments of the State of Qatar and the United States held the second Strategic Dialogue in Doha, Qatar on January 13, 2019. U.S. Secretary of State Michael Pompeo co-chaired the opening session with Qatari Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani. Senior U.S. officials came to Doha to engage with their Qatari counterparts on numerous aspects of the robust bilateral relationship, including: regional security and defense cooperation, education and culture, law enforcement and counterterrorism partnerships, commercial and energy cooperation, and labor issues.

The two countries welcomed this second annual Strategic Dialogue, the first in Doha, and reviewed the significant progress since the first Strategic Dialogue was held in Washington, D.C., in January 2018. They highlighted the strength of the bilateral relationship and the opportunities to further deepen our cooperation to benefit both countries. Today, the United States and Qatar signed three Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) and Statements of Intent (SOIs) to advance cooperation in different areas.

Political Cooperation

Qatar and the United States expressed strong support for the expansion of bilateral relations evinced by high-level meetings in 2018 between: U.S. President Donald J. Trump and HH the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani; U.S. Secretary of State Michael Pompeo and Qatari Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani; U.S. Secretary of Defense James N. Mattis and Qatari Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defense Affairs Khalid al-Attiyah; and an exchange of other minister-level visits to Washington and Doha. These high-level diplomatic engagements highlight the two nations' shared commitment to advance cooperation and promote global peace and prosperity.

The two governments expressed concern about the detrimental security,

economic, and human impacts of the Gulf crisis on the region. Qatar highlighted its appreciation for the constructive role played by the United States in support of the efforts of the Emir of Kuwait to resolve the dispute. Qatar and the United States affirmed their continued support for a strong and united Gulf Cooperation Council that is focused on promoting a peaceful and prosperous future for all the people of the region and on countering regional threats.

U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for the Arabian Peninsula and Regional and Multilateral Affairs Timothy Lenderking and Qatari Ministry of Foreign Affairs Secretary General Dr. Ahmed bin Hassan al-Hammadi discussed potential mechanisms to address wider regional challenges beyond the Gulf, including establishing a Middle East Strategic Alliance (MESA) between the United States and its Gulf and regional partners.

The two governments discussed regional security, including: joint efforts to defeat ISIS, finding a lasting resolution to the conflicts in Syria, Libya, and Yemen, as well as political developments in Iraq; and efforts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The United States also recognized Qatar's active leadership and mediation to promote peace and reconciliation among all parties in Afghanistan and Sudan. The U.S. shared Qatar's concern about recent developments in Gaza and the need for tangible steps to improve humanitarian and economic conditions.

The United States acknowledged Qatar's generous humanitarian role bilaterally and multilaterally through the work of various UN agencies, in the form of a \$500 million multi-year assistance pledge, including \$8 million annually between 2019 and 2023 to support forcibly displaced populations, and assist refugees including millions of vulnerable young children and women.

Among the primary beneficiaries will be the UN Development Program, UNICEF, UNRWA, the World Food Program, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Special Purpose Trust Fund, the UNSC Counterterrorism Committee, and Department of Political Affairs, among others.

Defense Partnership

Qatar and the United States emphasized the vital contribution their defense partnership provides for the security and stability of the region. This strong and lasting partnership is key to successfully combating terrorism, countering violent extremism, and deterring external aggression. U.S. officials lauded Qatar's contributions in supporting the strategic U.S. military presence in Qatar under the U.S. Central Command.

Chairman of Military Cooperation Authority Brigadier General (Pilot) Fahad Al-Sulaiti, and U.S. Principal Director for Middle East Policy, Office of the Secretary of Defense Jennifer Zakriski participated in sessions on defense cooperation. The two governments reaffirmed their commitment to the Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation to promote peace and stability and counter the scourge of terrorism. The United States welcomed Qatar's generous

offer to expand critical facilities at bases used by U.S. forces in the country and to align operating procedures at these bases with NATO standards, thereby increasing the operational capability of U.S. and coalition forces based in Qatar. The U.S. and Qatar signed an MOU enabling deeper coordination on potential expansion at Al Udeid Air Base. Qatar's offers to fund capital expenditures and sustainment affords the possibility of a more enduring U.S. presence.

Both countries noted the recent expansion of the bilateral maritime partnership, including the visit by the largest U.S. naval ship to ever come to Qatar in October 2018. Qatar's Navy and Coast Guard represent the largest maritime contribution in the 33-nation Combined Maritime Force (CMF) Task Force-152 led by the US Navy's Fifth Fleet and continue to be high value partners and members. These missions increase regional security by providing a visible presence and deterrent to maritime crime in the Arabian Gulf.

The two governments discussed the \$26 billion Foreign Military Sales (FMS) program that currently exists between the United States and Qatar. Qatar highlighted the continued opportunity for U.S. partnership in developing Qatar's Expeditionary Amphibious Capability, Joint Special Forces expansion, as well as an improved ability to defend against external aggression and to better operate alongside U.S. and NATO military forces in coalition operations. In 2018, the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps hosted a Qatar Naval delegation to the United States to showcase U.S. expeditionary amphibious operations, and both nations conducted amphibious exercise Eastern Maverick for the first time since 2012.

The two governments acknowledged their strong and lasting bilateral security partnership, and look forward to further discussions on the possibility of more enduring basing.

Education and Cultural Cooperation

U.S. Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs Marie Royce participated in sessions on culture and education cooperation with Qatari Under Secretary of Education Dr. Ibrahim bin Saleh bin Khalifa al-Nuaimi. Both governments underscored the significance of cooperation in the fields of education and culture, as evidenced by their inclusion for the first time in the Strategic Dialogue and by the signing of the first bilateral MOU and SOI in education and cultural cooperation.

The U.S. Secretary of State Michael Pompeo and Qatari Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani signed the MOU in the field of education to continue building and sustaining key partnerships in the fields of: primary, secondary, and higher education; English and Arabic language instruction; student advising; promoting academic exchange; and facilitating a wide range of study abroad options that enable students to achieve their personal and professional goals.

Both countries expressed the importance of continued mutual cooperation in these fields, agreeing to continue working through the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Education and Culture, Qatar's Ministry of Education and

Higher Education, and the Qatar Foundation. The U.S. also praised Qatar Foundation and its affiliates for their important work on joint educational, research and cultural programs with leading American institutions, both in Doha through Education City and in the United States.

In recognition of the bilateral cooperation in the field of culture, the two governments also signed a Statement of Intent (SOI) to work together to enhance cultural understanding and people-to-people connections between the United States and Qatar, in order to foster mutual understanding, promote intercultural dialogue, and support the shared ideals of tolerance and appreciation for diversity. As a result of the SOI, both parties will encourage cultural programming, cultural dialogue, cultural and professional exchange programs, programs that support and engage youth, and both parties will support the work of individuals and organizations who are committed to enhancing cultural understanding between the United States and Qatar.

Counterterrorism & Law Enforcement Partnerships

U.S. Coordinator for Counterterrorism Ambassador Nathan Sales co-chaired a session on law enforcement and counterterrorism partnerships with Qatar's Chairman of the National Anti-Terrorism Committee, Major General Abdul Aziz al-Ansari. Qatar emphasized the United States' significant role in the region and its contributions to countering terrorism and violent extremism.

The United States thanked Qatar for its continued efforts to counter terrorism, counter the financing of terrorism, and prevent violent extremism in all forms. Both sides intend to strengthen their security and counterterrorism (CT) partnership to eradicate terrorism and violent extremism. The United States welcomed Qatar's commitment to provide \$75 million over five years to the work of the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism, including its efforts to help Member States develop and implement advance passenger information and passenger name record systems in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 2396.

They reviewed the positive progress made under the terms of the MOU on Counterterrorism signed on July 11, 2017, and the second bilateral CT Dialogue convened in Doha September 5, 2018, including the 2018 Joint Action Plan to implement provisions on border security, information sharing, countering the financing of terrorism, anti-money laundering, aviation security, cybersecurity, and judicial capacity building.

Qatar and the United States hailed the start of a robust slate of Anti-Terrorism Assistance training that began in November 2018 that will consist of 33 courses over the next four years and will provide the Ministry of Interior and Internal Security Forces with enhanced skills and abilities to detect and defeat threats from transnational terrorist and criminal organizations, with special focus on supporting Qatar's security preparations to host the FIFA World Cup in 2022.

The two governments also noted progress on a bilateral LOI on Cybersecurity Cooperation signed at the first Strategic Dialogue by Qatar's Ministry of Transport and Communications and the U.S. Department of State. The LOI

resulted in exchanges of Qatari and U.S. cybersecurity experts and officials in the last year, the participation of a U.S. cybersecurity expert in Qatar Central Bank's FinTech conference, and opened avenues for increased information sharing between Qatar's Computer Emergency Readiness Team (Q-CERT) and its U.S. counterpart.

Qatar and the United States reaffirmed the need to address violent extremism through preventive frameworks. They underscored the role that both countries play in supporting the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) and the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF) as well as QFFD leadership in transparency of developmental assistance and Qatar's active membership of the Middle East North Africa Financial Action Task Force (MENAFATF).

Trade, Investment & Energy Cooperation

U.S. Deputy Secretary of Energy Dan Brouillette and Assistant Secretary of State for Energy Resources Frank Fannon participated in a session on energy cooperation with Qatar Petroleum Director for International Engagement Sheikh Mishal bin Jabor Al Thani.

U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Economic and Business Affairs Manisha Singh and U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of Treasury for Africa and the Middle East Eric Meyer participated in a session on commercial cooperation with Qatari Under Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry HE Sultan Bin Rashid AlKhater.

The two governments acknowledged the challenges facing Qatar as a result of the Gulf crisis. Qatar and the United States also stressed the importance of maintaining freedom of navigation, overflight, and unimpeded lawful commerce in accordance with international law. Both countries also underscored their commitment to boosting trade and investment and noted the growing strength of bilateral trade relations. Qatar confirmed that the United States is its top import partner, representing 18% of all imports to Qatar in 2018.

Qatar and the United States welcomed the role of U.S. companies in Qatar's development and of Qatari investment in U.S. firms and jobs. The Qatari delegation outlined successful implementation of reforms designed to attract foreign investment in Qatar, including free trade zones and expanding business ownership for non-citizens.

The two governments recognized Qatar Investment Authority's (QIA) previous commitment to invest \$45 billion in American firms, real estate, and jobs. QIA Chief Executive Mr. Mansour al-Mahmoud described plans to increase Qatari investments in American infrastructure.

The two governments expressed their mutual desire to build upon the momentum of their MOU to enhance cooperation between Qatar and the United States in the energy sector. Both governments recognized the importance of Qatar Petroleum's (QP) announcement of a planned investment in the United States over the next five years valued at \$20 billion. They also welcomed recent moves by a number of U.S. energy companies to establish offices in Qatar to support joint ventures with Qatargas and Nakilat.

Delegations from the two countries met separately to discuss civil aviation matters, during which they reaffirmed the commitments by both governments to financial transparency and to putting business with state-owned enterprises on commercial terms set out in the Understandings initially announced on January 30, 2018. Those Understandings sought to ensure healthy competition in the global aviation sector while preserving the Open Skies relationship between the United States and Qatar.

Labor

U.S. Deputy Under Secretary of Labor for International Affairs Martha Newton participated in a session on labor issues with Qatari Under Secretary of Administrative Development, Labor and Social Affairs Mohammad Hassan Al Obaidly. Both sides acknowledged recent progress and commitments made by Qatar on combating human trafficking and advancing labor rights. Under the framework of the U.S.-Qatar Anti-Trafficking MOU signed during last year's Strategic Dialogue, the State of Qatar and the Government of the United States have undertaken over a dozen joint initiatives to build capacity, raise awareness, and promote labor rights. To further bolster these positive developments, this year the two governments look forward to signing a MOU to expand collaboration with a specific focus on strengthening Qatar's labor inspectorate and helping to address the challenges facing domestic workers.

Forward Together

The United States and Qatar emphasize the importance of their continued partnership which benefits the interests of both countries, as well as the security and prosperity of the Gulf region.

This Strategic Dialogue process underlines the commitment of Qatar and the United States to increase cooperation in fields that provide the greatest mutual and practical benefit. Such cooperation includes the issues discussed today but also incorporates important work in the fields of health, food safety, intellectual property rights, nuclear safeguards and more. Qatar and the United States remain committed to dialogue and long-term cooperation on political issues, consolidating state-of-the-art defense facilities, combating terrorism and violent extremism in all its forms, countering the financing of terrorism, expanding their trade and investment partnerships, and enhancing educational and cultural cooperation.

To expand partnerships and advance mutual policy goals in those areas, the two sides agreed to hold the first working group in April of 2019. Qatar and the United States look forward to reviewing progress in these areas at the next Strategic Dialogue in Washington in 2020.

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[Press Releases: Interview With Margaret Brennan of CBS's Face the Nation](#)

Interview

Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

January 13, 2019

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, we are in the middle of this shutdown, and I know a number of State Department employees are not getting paid, including a quarter of U.S. employees in foreign countries. You've been going to U.S. embassies. What are you telling staff about when they can expect a paycheck?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Look, it's unfortunate that we're in this shutdown. I wish we weren't too. I hope that it's resolved quickly, and I've certainly told our teams that. But you have to know these great Americans who are working in our embassies around the world, they understand the mission and they understand its importance. They understand that whether the government is open or closed they have a task to do, and they are hard at it.

QUESTION: Well, I do want to ask you since we are so focused on what's happening with the shutdown here at home, the State Department, when it comes to border issues, has issued a report in 2017 about counterterrorism, and it says that there is no credible evidence that international terrorist groups have established bases in Mexico or sent operatives via Mexico into the United States. It adds the southern border is vulnerable, but terrorist groups likely seek other means of trying to enter the United States. How does this match with the claim that there is a border security crisis?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Make no mistake about it, Margaret; keeping our southern border secure is an important national security component. It's critical that we do that while – there's a real risk to the United States of America. We need to take this seriously. We need to secure our southern border. We need

to make sure that those who want to do us harm don't have a way to access us in that way. There are many things we have to do; one of the reasons I'm in the Middle East is to work on prevailing against terror. There are lots of elements of this, but border security is certainly an important component.

QUESTION: So is the State Department report wrong to say that this is not how terrorists are trying to enter the United States?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Margaret, terrorists try to get into our country lots of ways. One of the ways they can come in is across our southern border. What you saw was an unclassified report. Make no mistake about it; terrorists will always find the weakest link, and we need to make sure that the weakest link in our national security isn't our southern border.

QUESTION: I want to get to your trip through the Middle East, but I first want to ask you about this *New York Times* report that says right after President Trump fired former FBI Director James Comey, the FBI began investigating whether President Trump himself was a potential threat to national security and whether he had been working for Russia or unintentionally influenced by Moscow. What is your reaction to this?

SECRETARY POMPEO: I'm not going to comment on *New York Times* stories, but I'll certainly say this: The notion that President Trump is a threat to American national security is absolutely ludicrous.

QUESTION: Just to clarify, since you were CIA director, did you have any idea that this investigation was happening?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Margaret, Margaret, Margaret, I've answered this question repeatedly – indeed, on your show. The idea that's contained in the *New York Times* story that President Trump was a threat to American national security is silly on its face and not worthy of a response.

QUESTION: One of the reasons you're in the Middle East is to reassure and explain to some of our allies what the U.S. policy in Syria is. So I'd like you to do that for us today, because the Pentagon announced yesterday that it actually has begun its withdrawal from Syria, yet the U.S. National Security Advisor John Bolton said that wouldn't happen until two things: one, the U.S. defeated ISIS; and two, Turkey assured us it wouldn't go after our Kurdish allies. Have those two conditions been met?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Margaret, the President's guidance is incredibly clear. The roughly 2,000 uniformed soldiers that are in Syria today are going to be withdrawn. That activity is underway. We're going to do so in an orderly, deliberate way, a way that protects America's national security, a way that allows us to continue the important mission that they were on. The counterterrorism mission, the effort to make sure that the destruction of ISIS is not only complete but that their resurgence is not possible, our efforts to counter the threat from terrorism stemming from the Islamic Republic of Iran – those are all real missions. The tactical change we've made in the withdrawal of those 2,000 troops is just that, a tactical change. The mission remains the same.

QUESTION: So has Turkey's president promised you not to attack our Kurdish allies?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yeah, look, when President Erdogan and President Trump spoke, they talked about this issue. The Turks have made clear that they understand that there are folks down in Syria that have their rights. We also want to make sure that those in Syria aren't attacking, terrorists aren't attacking Turkey from Syria. We're fully engaged. Ambassador Jeffrey is fully engaged in conversations with the Turks as well as with the SDF in Syria to make sure that we accomplish all of those missions. We can do each of those things, Margaret.

QUESTION: The SDF among some of the fighters that we were talking about, Kurdish allies there, just to explain for our audience.

SECRETARY POMPEO: That's right.

QUESTION: I want to ask you here though, because you know as a diplomat the threat of credible use of military force is what gives you power at the negotiating table. How does taking out U.S. troops from Syria get you any closer to expelling Iran?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Margaret, the United States of America can project military power from lots of places in the world. The absence of a couple thousand soldiers on the ground in Syria in no way materially diminishes the capacity of the United States of America and our amazing Armed Forces to deliver American power to accomplish our objectives anywhere in the world. That certainly includes in Syria. It certainly includes into Iran, if need be. We still have those tools. American diplomats still have that leverage and that power standing behind them. I am very confident in our military capabilities here in the Middle East.

QUESTION: So by that, are you saying that having U.S. troops in nearby Iraq will fill any kind of vacuum left by pulling out of Syria?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Margaret, we have lots of tools in the arsenal. I was out visiting some amazing warriors out at NAVCENT yesterday in Bahrain. We have an enormous amount of American military capacity. Our ability to achieve what we need to do militarily is there. My task as America's Secretary of State is to make sure that we don't have to use that tool, that we get the diplomatic outcomes to secure the Middle East and keep it stable and protect the American people as well.

QUESTION: When it comes to Iran, the Trump administration has taken some confrontational tactics here – pulling out of the nuclear accord, saying that Iranian threats would be matched here. But we saw this week another American, a Navy vet, Michael White, has been behind Iranian bars since July. So the Trump administration is not stopping Iran from taking Americans hostage. What is happening with this American?

SECRETARY POMPEO: This administration is proud of the work that we've done to get Americans released all across the world. With respect to the Michael

White case in particular, I can't say much. It's an ongoing consular matter. But the American people should know we take the security of every American, wherever they are traveling in the world, as one of our foremost priorities. We will continue to work to get each of them back.

And your point, your point about the Islamic Republic of Iran, is spot on. It's why the JCPOA was such a horrible idea. Many Americans are being held there today that were taken by the Iranian regime. These are a group of people who are among the worst terrorists in the world and who have the least respect for human rights in the world, and it's why this administration has taken the very hard line you just described against Iran.

QUESTION: Is the Trump administration open to a prisoner swap with Iran?

SECRETARY POMPEO: I'm not going to talk about something like that.

QUESTION: Well, I ask you because Michael White's mother spoke to CBS, and she said she would like the administration to negotiate for her son. She said, "What is a human life worth? I would like the U.S. to negotiate. I want him home." What can you tell her you're doing to bring her son home?

SECRETARY POMPEO: I have great sympathy for the families of those Americans who are wrongfully detained all across the world, and we do everything we can every day to get their return. We use our diplomatic tools in every corner of the world to reach out to these places, to get these young men and women home. We are intent to do that in Iran. We are intent to do that all across the world. We take this obligation as a solemn one, and this administration has had quite a few successes. I hope we have more.

QUESTION: Potentially open to negotiations then?

SECRETARY POMPEO: We're using every tool that we have in our arsenal to get these Americans back home wherever we find them.

QUESTION: Ambassador Bolton said the next summit with Kim Jong-un would be in January or February. We're in that window. When will we see President Trump sit down with the North Korean leader?

SECRETARY POMPEO: We're working out the details, Margaret. You will be among the first to know.

QUESTION: I know, sir, you're at the end of this trip. You will be headed to Saudi Arabia. It has been about a hundred days since *Washington Post* journalist Jamal Khashoggi was brutally murdered. Will you raise this issue with Mohammed bin Salman, the crown prince?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Of course.

QUESTION: And what will you say?

SECRETARY POMPEO: I'll say what – Margaret, I'll say what we have said consistently. America's position both privately and publicly is the same. This was an outrageous act, an unacceptable murder. Those who were

responsible will be held accountable by the United States of America. We're determined to do that. We're determined to get at the facts just as quickly and as comprehensively as we can.

We have had a policy that's been remarkably consistent with respect to this. We, like the rest of the world, value human rights all across the globe, and the murder of Jamal Khashoggi was outrageous, and we'll hold those responsible accountable.

And then we'll talk about all the important things we do with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and all the support they provide to keep Americans in Kansas and Colorado and California and in Washington, D.C., safe.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, thank you very much for your time. Safe travels.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Margaret, thank you very much. You have a great day.

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[Press Releases: Secretary Pompeo's Meeting With Qatari Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani](#)

Readout
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
January 13, 2019

The below is attributable to Deputy Spokesperson Robert Palladino:

Secretary Michael R. Pompeo met today with Qatari Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani in Doha. The Secretary thanked the Amir for Qatar's longtime

friendship and strategic partnership with the United States. The Secretary and the Amir discussed progress on several regional issues, including combatting terror, achieving lasting peace in Afghanistan and Syria, and on the Middle East Strategic Alliance. The Secretary emphasized the importance of a united Gulf Cooperation Council in standing against the Iranian regime's destabilizing activity and ensuring the success of the alliance in advancing prosperity, security, and stability in the region. The Secretary thanked the Amir for hosting the second U.S.-Qatar Strategic Dialogue in Doha. The Secretary and the Amir look forward to implementing the many new areas of U.S.-Qatar cooperation produced by the Strategic Dialogue.

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[Press Releases: Remarks With Qatari Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani at a Press Availability](#)

Remarks

Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Dukhan Hall

Doha, Qatar

January 13, 2019

FOREIGN MINISTER AL THANI: (Via interpreter) In the name of God, most gracious, most compassionate, at the outset I would like to thank His Excellency the Secretary of State Mr. Mike Pompeo for visiting Doha, and I would like to welcome him on his first visit as a secretary of state. We are

looking forward towards further such visits. We highly value and appreciate his partaking in the second U.S.-Qatari Strategic Dialogue, which reflects the excellent historical relations between our two countries and the alliance that was built in the last decades.

Today we are here to build on the outputs of the first Strategic Dialogue, and during our conversation, seven sessions are being held for further expanded discussions on different sectors: commercial, business, education, defense, security, and others. Our partnership with United States is a strong partnership based on very strong premises, based on an understanding and – mutual understanding and interests. We have signed three agreements today on education, culture, and an MOU for supporting defense activities in Al Udeid Air Base, and we are looking forward towards the tangible results of this dialogue for our strategic relations to witness a quality bond, a quality progress.

I've had – we have had a bilateral meeting with the Secretary of State, and we've discussed all the issues of interest for our countries, regional issues, regional security issues starting with the Gulf Cooperation Council and the peace process in the Middle East, as well as the reconciliation in Afghanistan, along with other issues such as Syria and counterterrorism. We are looking forward to the outputs of this meeting to be the foundation of a stronger future phase of relations between our two countries, and we hope that further political coordination continues on all issues of regional security of interest to both our countries.

Thank you, Your Excellency, for your attendance, and thank you for participating with this important Strategic Dialogue and this visit.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you. Thank you, Foreign Minister Al Thani. Thanks for hosting the team here today in Doha. It was an honor to participate in the Strategic Dialogue. I know our teams did great work as well. Your country has been a great friend to the United States in many ways, and we're deeply appreciative of that.

As President Trump noted when he hosted His Highness the emir at the White House last year, great things are happening in the relationship, and that's certainly still true. Both of our governments have taken concrete steps to implement agreements signed at last year's inaugural Strategic Dialogue in Washington, including in the fields of counterterrorism, combating trafficking in persons, cybersecurity, nuclear safeguards, and energy cooperation. Today we reached a few new agreements that will grow and make our relationship even more robust.

We focused first and foremost on security and defense partnership. We signed a new MOU on the expansion of our presence at Al Udeid. As the host of hundreds – excuse me, as the host of thousands of U.S. military personnel and the CENTCOM forward headquarters, this base is key to American security and our shared efforts to promote regional stability. We thank Qatar for its dedication to improving and modernizing it.

Today in our conversations I stressed the importance of unity among the Gulf

Cooperation Council members. President Trump and I both believe the ongoing dispute in the region has dragged on for too long and the dispute benefits adversaries and harms our mutual interests. Our nations do important work and we have important work to continue to do together, and the United States hopes the parties involved will see once again the benefits of cooperation and take actions necessary to rebuild unity in their ranks.

A united GCC is essential to the success of the Middle East Strategic Alliance, which we hope will include the GCC, Egypt, and Jordan. The United States has continued to advance discussions on this alliance since the initial meeting of the GCC+2 at the UN General Assembly back in the fall in September, and I raised this topic again with Minister Al Thani and will do so with His Highness as well.

But in addition to defense and security partnership, we also discussed our steadily expanding trade and investment relationship. We are proud to have more than 120 of our companies operating here, creating opportunities for our people and yours. I know there's more to follow. Your impressive efforts to improve labor regulations, to promote transparency, and to protect the dignity of over 2 million foreign workers here was also a focus of our efforts today.

We had several other agreements that the dialogue yielded. On education, we've agreed to share best practices and expertise with each other. This cooperation will help enrich, strengthen – and strengthen educational practices, and we will conduct exchange programs to promote educational opportunity and development.

We also signed a statement of intent to promote our cultural ties. You can expect to see new events, youth engagement exchanges for rising leaders in a variety of fields, and relationships between cultural institutions that will allow Americans and Qataris to learn more about each other.

Our growing partnership with Qatar continues America's long record of helping Middle East nations live in peace and prosperity. The United States looks forward to building on this momentum, strengthening our ties, and promoting our sustained cooperation. Thank you very much, Foreign Minister, for hosting me and my team here today.

QUESTION: (Via interpreter) My question to Your Excellency: Anthony Zinni's resignation, does it mean that the United States is no longer focused on the Middle East? And what has the U.S. done regarding the humanitarian issue when it comes to the GCC crisis with families being separated forcefully?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So two questions there. The first question is the departure of Mr. Zinni in no way reflects any change in America's Middle East efforts, our strategy, or our ongoing commitment to the region. It was a time when it was time for change. He made this decision to move on, but America's commitment remains unchanged. We will continue to have a robust set of dialogue around the very issues that he was handling on our – on the United States' behalf.

And with respect to humanitarian issues here and elsewhere in the region, I think the United States stands second to none in the – not only the amount, the dollars that we have committed to avoiding humanitarian crises in the region, but also our personal commitment, the things that my team on the ground here in Doha and throughout the region does to make sure that we're responding to humanitarian challenges wherever we find them.

QUESTION: (Via interpreter) Said Boukhafa from Al Jazeera. My first question is to Mr. Al Thani. We've recently saw a lot of Qatari diplomacy being active, starting with the Doha Forum that has hosted a number of high-level officials, mainly the UN secretary-general. Is Qatar still concerned with the issues of mediation that it had led before?

My second question is to the Secretary of State, Mr. Pompeo. You've announced that the United States is currently working on preparing an international conference to discuss Middle Eastern issues in Poland. I would like to ask the Secretary of State what are the chances of success of such a summit while a lot of crises are ongoing in the region. Thank you.

FOREIGN MINISTER AL THANI: (Via interpreter) Now for the Qatari diplomatic activity, it's continuous and it hasn't stopped. Be it through conferences or through the Qatari diplomacy endeavors on many issues, Qatar supports the efforts of reconciliation and mediation in many regions, mainly the Darfur issue, which still continues under Qatari mediation, and we have called on other parties to join the Doha agreement. Furthermore, Qatar is actively partaking in the Afghanistan reconciliation process. We hosted the political bureau of Taliban, and we are working together with our partners, the United States, in order to establish peace in Afghanistan.

Furthermore, there are other files that we are working on and we are constantly consulting with the United States over with a number of other parties involved, be it the issue of Syria, the peace process in the Middle East. So we look – we always look for the diplomacy to be the solution for such crises and to end the humanitarian crisis and hardships of our peoples, and this is considered to be as a common denominator in the U.S. and Qatari policies.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Your question to me was about the ministerial that will be held in the middle of February in Warsaw. One of our objectives – they're manifold. One of the things I think the world will see as we come together is the enormous coalition that is prepared to assist in creating stability and peace here in the Middle East. And so we will gather around a number of different topics. Certainly, the coalition that continues to fight ISIS around the world will be part of that. We'll have conversations about counterterrorism and how the whole globe – there'll be countries at this from Asia, from Africa, from all across the world. It won't be confined to the United States and Europe and the Middle East. There'll be a broad coalition of countries present, and we'll work on many issues, including how it is we can get the Islamic Republic of Iran to behave more like a normal nation.

So there'll be many topics discussed by this broad coalition, and we hope to have a set of deliverables that come out of it that are important as we move

forward in 2019.

MR PALLADINO: Francesco Fontemaggi from AFP.

QUESTION: Thank you. Mr. Secretary, how does that dispute between Qatar and Saudi undermines this effort to counter Iran? And also, can you tell us what you expect to ask to – in Riyadh to Mohammed bin Salman about the killing of Jamal Khashoggi?

And just a very last quick one: Can you confirm that the White House asked in September to provide military options to strike Iran? Thank you.

SECRETARY POMPEO: With respect to your third question, I don't have any comment.

With respect to your second question, we will continue to have conversation with the crown prince and the Saudis about ensuring that the accountability is full and complete with respect to the unacceptable murder of Jamal Khashoggi, so we'll continue to talk about that and make sure we have all the facts so that they are held accountable, certainly by the Saudis but by the United States as well where appropriate.

And as for the GCC, in my statement I made clear we're all more powerful when we're working together, when disputes are limited, and when we have common challenges in the region and around the world, disputes between countries that have a shared objective are never helpful. They never permit you to have as robust a and powerful a response to common adversaries or common challenges as if – as you might when countries have a dispute between them. We see this all the time. We have lots of places where we're building out coalitions and there are challenges between different parts of the coalition. It's something we work through, work around, and we're hopeful that the unity of the GCC will increase in the days and weeks and months ahead.

MR PALLADINO: That concludes our press conference.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you.

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Press Releases: Remarks at the Opening Ceremony of the U.S.-Qatar Strategic Dialogue

Remarks
Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Salwa Room, Sheraton Doha
Doha, Qatar
January 13, 2019

FOREIGN MINISTER AL THANI: (Via interpreter, in progress) that link our two countries in order to reinforce a deep partnership and cooperation in all aspects economic and also military relations, which are the most important pillars of such a relationship and that effectively contribute to the reinforcement of international and regional stability. We aspire that this dialogue is going to lead to the discussion of joint efforts with regard to the support of the situation in the Middle East and also mediation in Afghanistan and also dealing with the crisis in the region, particularly the crisis in Iraq, Syria, and Libya, and also combating terrorism.

I do reinforce the commitment of the state of Qatar, the strategic relationship with the United States of America, and also the continuation of dialogue in keeping with the interests of our two countries. And at the end, I would like to reiterate my welcome to you here in the state of Qatar. Thank you so much.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you. Thank you for welcoming me so kindly, Foreign Minister Al Thani, and thank you for welcoming me on what is my first trip to this country as Secretary of State. I've been here before but not in this current role, and I wanted you to know President Trump sends his best wishes to the – his highness the emir and all of the Qatari people, so thank you.

It's an honor for me to participate in the second U.S.-Qatar Strategic Dialogue, the first one to be hosted here in Doha. Our strategic partnership spans many areas and continues to grow, as demonstrated by the sheer number of topics we will discuss here today amongst our two teams. Defense and security, counterterrorism, labor, trade and investment, energy, education, and culture are all on the agenda and all important parts of our relationship.

The United States and Qatar are working together to address a number of regional security challenges, including in Afghanistan and Iraq. Our defense relationship is extensive, important, and growing. Qatar is host to 13,000 U.S. and coalition service members at Al Udeid Air Base, and has served as the primary staging area for our coalition to defeat ISIS. Thank you for the support you provide us with the airbase. You should know that I speak for the American people when I say we are grateful for your country's willingness to make sure that the airbase can meet the needs of the U.S. military for decades to come.

We look forward to signing these new agreements today greatly because your country has also moved decisively to implement critical enhancements to our bilateral counterterrorism cooperation. Our relationship with Qatari law enforcement has never been better, and we look forward to further engagement as Qatar prepares for the 2022 World Cup.

But military and security cooperation is not the only two – are not the only two ways our countries are growing closer. Our commercial relationship continues to thrive, with robust trade and expanding investments in both of our countries. The sheer number and diversity of U.S. companies that are here today for parallel discussions demonstrates the strength and potential of our commercial relationship. I'm excited to sign new agreements on education and cultural exchanges as well. The people-to-people ties between our two countries have played a key role in America's strong bilateral relationship with your country, and we look forward to growing our academic exchanges, scholarships, language learning, and study abroad opportunities, among many others.

Let's make 2019 a year of advancements on security, commerce, energy, labor, reform, and other topics. Thank you again for hosting me here today and thanks for hosting our entire delegation as well.

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