

# Press Releases: Interview With Mohannad Al Khatib of Sky News Arabia

Interview  
Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Fairmont Hotel  
Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates  
July 10, 2018

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**QUESTION:** Mr. Secretary, thank you so much for being with us on Sky News. How are you doing

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** It's wonderful to be with you.

**QUESTION:** Thank you. The United States is reinforcing various sanctions on Iran. We've heard statements over the last few days coming from Tehran that basically amount to threats, (inaudible) in the region, that – some went as far as threatening to close the Strait of Hormuz. How would the United States respond (inaudible) such threat?

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** Well, it all starts with Iranian bad behavior, the kinds of things that threaten the people here in the Emirates – missiles being launched from Yemen that strike real risk to the people of all of the Gulf states. And so American policy is aimed to deter that.

I've seen these remarks about their threats. The world should know that America is committed to keeping sea lanes open, to keep transit of oil available for the entire world. That's the commitment we've had for decades. We continue to honor that commitment.

**QUESTION:** Aside from the nuclear issue with Iran, Iran is involved (inaudible) in many destabilizing activities in several countries in the hemisphere: Yemen (inaudible), Syria. What will the United States do in order to limit these activities?

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** Well, one of the great things is we have wonderful partners like the Emirates, the Saudis, many countries, the Bahrainis are all working alongside of us to push back against Iranian malign behavior, whether it's their activity underwriting the Houthis in Yemen, Hizballah in Syria and in Lebanon, in Iraq and Syria Shia militias that are inflicting real harm on ordinary citizens.

So we intend to do a number of things, though one that we are most focused on today is ensuring that we deny Iran the financial capacity to continue this bad behavior. So it's a broad range, a series of sanctions aimed not at the Iranian people, but rather aimed at the singular mission of convincing the Iranian regime that its malign behavior is unacceptable and has a real high cost for them.

**QUESTION:** Iran has said several times that they intend to stay in Syria for the long term. How does the United States view this?

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** Well, Iran needs to get out of Syria. They have no business there. There's no reason for them to be there. There's been Iranian influence there for a long time. Iranian forces, Iranian militias must leave the country.

**QUESTION:** Also on the issue of the Syrian (inaudible), there is a big (inaudible) going on south of Syria today. The armed groups that were supported at one time by the United States are losing ground. How are you looking at this?

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** It's a very difficult situation. From the United States perspective, we need to achieve a political solution in Syria, one that reflects the diversity of the Syrian nation. We are aiming to set the conditions for a political resolution. We're prepared to continue the conversations often led by the UN in a way that takes down the violence, de-escalates the threats to the people of Syria, allows the some six million displaced persons from Syria to begin to return and to rebuild, and that ultimately achieves a constitution and a political resolution that's consistent with what the Syrian people truly want and deserve.

**QUESTION:** Are you in agreement with the Russians on what's going on in the south of Syria today

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** No, we had an agreement with the Russians that they would not move in the south. There was a de-escalation zone that the Russians had agreed to. They now have clearly violated that and we are working with all parties concerned to get each party – the Russians, the Syrians, the Iranians, everyone to honor the commitments that they've made in the various political processes that have been undertaken with respect to Syria.

**QUESTION:** You had a tweet a few days ago saying that Iran's activities in Yemen, the – (inaudible) the prolonged suffering of the Yemeni people will not be tolerated. What will Washington do in order to (inaudible)?

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** Well, we've done a lot of things. We've done work to push back against the threat of al-Qaida in Yemen. We've worked with the Saudis and with the Emiratis to reduce the risk from the Iranian threat there in Yemen through identifying transit of weapons that are moving in and around the region so that the Houthis don't have the material to conduct these threats. We think it's important that every place Iran attempts to use its force we raise the cost for them such that the Iranian people will ultimately reject that use of force.

**QUESTION:** The U.S. allies in Europe that were part of the 5+1 agreement with Iran are in talks with Iran right now in order to salvage what's left of this agreement. How are you hoping talking to the Europeans about this and how are they responding?

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** Yeah, it's a great question. I'll actually leave here and headed for Brussels. I'll meet with my European counterparts to talk about exactly this set of issues. Frankly, we agree in large part. The Europeans understand the threat that Iran poses. Indeed, just this past week, there were Iranians arrested in Europe who were preparing to conduct a terror plot in Paris, France. We've seen this malign behavior in Europe. The Europeans understand the threat. We are working through a difference. The American people concluded that the JCPOA made no sense, that it was truly a pathway for Iran to have a nuclear weapon. So we are attempting to stop that. We're working now with the Europeans to develop a plan and a path forward to continue to stop Iran from its nuclear program, but also to push back against its missile system and its terrorist behavior.

**QUESTION:** Some countries in Europe and in other parts of the world intend to keep on getting oil from Iran even after the sanctions are imposed. How would you look at this?

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** Well, that will violate the sanctions that we put in place. Come November 4th, there will be a U.S. sanction that prevents crude oil from passing from Iran to other countries. It will be sanctionable activity. We will enforce those sanctions. There will be a handful of countries that come to the United States and ask for relief from that. We'll consider it. But make no mistake about it, we are determined to convince the Iranian leadership that this malign behavior won't be rewarded and that the economic situation in their country will not be permitted to be rectified until such time as they become a more normal nation.

**QUESTION:** There is an upcoming summit between President Trump and President Putin in Helsinki soon. Will Syria be a major topic to be discussed?

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** Oh, I'm confident that there will be a broad range of issues discussed. The issues in Ukraine with the Russians and this topic of Russian involvement in Syria will also be part of the conversation between the two leaders.

**QUESTION:** Mr. Secretary, thank you so much for your (inaudible).

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** Thank you, sir. Thank you. Thank you very much for your time today.

**QUESTION:** Thank you.

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## **Press Releases: State Department** **Terrorist Designation of al-Ashtar** **Brigades (AAB)**

Media Note  
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC  
July 10, 2018

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The Department of State has designated al-Ashtar Brigades (AAB) – an Iran-backed terrorist group in Bahrain – as a Foreign Terrorist Organization under section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act. The Department has also designated AAB as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT) under section 1(b) of Executive Order (E.O.) 13224. The Department also designated two AAB-affiliated individuals ([Ahmad Hasan Yusuf and Alsayed Murtadha Majeed Ramadhan Alawi, AKA Mortada Majid Al-Sanadi](#)) as SDGTs in March 2017.

Today's designations seek to deny AAB the resources to plan and carry out terrorist attacks. Among other consequences, all of its property and interests in property subject to U.S. jurisdiction are blocked, and U.S. persons are generally prohibited from engaging in any transactions with this organization. In addition, it is a crime to knowingly provide, or attempt or conspire to provide, material support or resources to the organization. These designations support a larger campaign to deter Iran's malign behavior and stop its support for terrorists around the world.

In announcing these designations, Coordinator for Counterterrorism Nathan A. Sales emphasized that, "From Africa, Europe, North America, Asia, and the Gulf, Iran is using terrorist proxies to extend its malevolent influence and upend international peace and stability. Al-Ashtar is yet another in a long line of Iranian sponsored terrorists who kill on behalf of a corrupt regime. Today's designation serves notice that the United States sees plainly what Iran is trying to do to Bahrain through its proxy, the terrorist group Al-

Ashtar.”

Established in 2013, AAB is an Iran-backed terrorist organization aimed at overthrowing the Bahraini government. AAB has claimed responsibility for numerous terrorist attacks against police and security targets in Bahrain. In March 2014, AAB conducted a bomb attack that killed two local police officers and an officer from the United Arab Emirates. In January 2017, AAB shot and killed a local police officer. AAB has also called for violence against the Bahraini, British, Saudi Arabian, and U.S. governments on social media.

In January 2018, AAB formally adopted Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) branding and reaffirmed its loyalty to Tehran to reflect its role in an Iranian network of state and non-state actors that operates against the United States and its allies in the region. Additionally, AAB members have received weapons and explosives from Iran, training at IRGC-funded camps in Iraq, and senior AAB members have taken refuge in Iran to evade prosecution by Bahraini authorities.

Today’s action notifies the U.S. public and the international community that AAB is a terrorist organization and has committed or poses a significant risk of committing acts of terrorism. Terrorism designations expose and isolate organizations and individuals, and deny them access to the U.S. financial system. Moreover, designations can assist the law enforcement activities of U.S. agencies and other governments. A list of State Department-designated FTOs and SDGTs is available here: <http://www.state.gov/j/ct/list/index.htm>.

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## **[Press Releases: Eritrea and Ethiopia End War and Adopt Joint Declaration of Peace and Friendship](#)**

Press Statement  
Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Washington, DC  
July 10, 2018

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The United States welcomes the July 9 commitment to peace and security between the State of Eritrea and the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, effectively ending 20 years of conflict. We commend Prime Minister Abiy of Ethiopia and President Isaias of Eritrea for courageously leading their citizens towards peace, prosperity, and political reform. The normalization of relations and the adoption of the Joint Declaration of Peace and Friendship between Eritrea and Ethiopia will provide their peoples with the opportunity to focus on shared aspirations for closer political, economic, and social ties.

The United States stands ready to support this process, and encourages all parties to continue working with transparency and confidence in the coming days. Peace between Ethiopia and Eritrea will further the cause of stability, security, and development in the Horn of Africa and Red Sea.

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## **[Press Releases: Mongolia National Day](#)**

Press Statement  
Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Washington, DC  
July 9, 2018

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On behalf of the Government of the United States of America, I extend our best wishes to the people of Mongolia as you celebrate your 97th National Day on July 11.

The United States is proud to call Mongolia a friend and partner. We have accomplished much together based on our shared values and strategic interests, including the promotion of human rights and peace and stability in the region. The strength of our relationship is a testament to the enduring bonds between our people and our shared commitment to democracy.

The United States is committed to working with Mongolia as it continues to build a vibrant, prosperous society based on the rule of law. Mongolia is truly a model for the world, and the United States looks forward to further strengthening our partnership.

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## **Press Releases: Secretary Pompeo and Secretary of Defense Mattis Host the 2018 Australia-U.S. Ministerial (AUSMIN) Consultations in Palo Alto**

Press Statement  
Heather Nauert

Department Spokesperson

Washington, DC  
July 9, 2018

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Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo and Secretary of Defense James Mattis

will host Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs Julie Bishop and Minister for Defence Marise Payne for this year's Australia-U.S. Ministerial Consultations (AUSMIN) at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University in Palo Alto, California on July 23-24, 2018.

This AUSMIN celebrates 100 years of Mateship, marking the centenary of U.S. and Australian forces fighting side by side in battle for the first time.

The dialogue will focus on deepening our strategic alliance and developing initiatives to promote our shared vision of peace, stability, and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific and beyond. The United States and Australia have held annual strategic consultations since 1985. Foreign Minister Bishop and Defense Minister Payne last hosted the United States for these ministerial talks in Sydney, Australia, on June 5, 2017.

We will provide a more detailed schedule prior to the ministerial.

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