

[Press Releases: On the Occasion of Christmas](#)

Press Statement
Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Washington, DC
December 25, 2018

On behalf of the Department of State, I would like to wish a Merry Christmas to all those celebrating today, together with Orthodox Christians celebrating in early January.

This joyful occasion brings Christian communities together to rejoice in the birth of Jesus. In addition to celebrating and spending time with loved ones, the spirit of Christmas reminds us of Jesus' message of hope, mercy, and love of neighbor. This season reminds us to care for the less fortunate, including those communities around the world today who are not able to observe this holiday freely due to persecution or instability.

Again, a very Merry Christmas to those celebrating around the world. May you be surrounded by family, friends, and neighbors during this festive season.

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[Press Releases: Venezuelan Navy](#)

[Actions in Guyana](#)

Press Statement
Robert Palladino

Deputy Spokesperson

Washington, DC
December 23, 2018

On December 22, the Venezuelan Navy aggressively stopped ExxonMobil contracted vessels operating under an oil exploration agreement with the Cooperative Republic of Guyana in its Exclusive Economic Zone.

We underscore that Guyana has the sovereign right to explore and exploit resources in its Exclusive Economic Zone. We call on Venezuela to respect international law and the rights of its neighbors.

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[Press Releases: Tsunami in West Java and Southern Sumatra, Indonesia](#)

Press Statement
Robert Palladino

Deputy Spokesperson

Washington, DC
December 23, 2018

The United States conveys our deepest condolences for the loss of life and destruction from the tsunami that struck West Java and southern Sumatra, Indonesia, on December 22. We continue to monitor the situation closely and are in close communication with Indonesian authorities. Our thoughts and prayers are with all those in Indonesia affected by the natural disaster. We are currently not aware of any U.S. citizens directly affected, but stand ready to assist as needed.

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[Press Releases: Increasing U.S. Security Assistance to Ukraine's Navy](#)

Press Statement
Robert Palladino

Deputy Spokesperson

Washington, DC
December 21, 2018

In response to Russia's dangerous escalation and unjustified November 25 attack on three Ukrainian naval vessels near the Kerch Strait, the Department of State, subject to Congressional approval, will provide an additional \$10 million in Foreign Military Financing to further build Ukraine's naval capabilities. We do so in solidarity with Lithuania and the United Kingdom, also planning to increase their security assistance to Ukraine. The United States calls on Russia to immediately return to Ukraine the seized vessels and detained Ukrainian crews, to keep the Kerch Strait and the Sea of Azov

open to ships transiting to and from Ukrainian ports, and to respect Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders, extending to its territorial waters.

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Press Releases: Joint Statement on the Government of Nicaragua's Cancellation of the Legal Standing of Civil Society Organizations

Media Note
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
December 21, 2018

The text of the following statement on Nicaragua was released by the Governments of Australia, Chile, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Norway, the Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, pursuant to their collective commitment to the defense of civil society organizations around the world.

Begin Text:

The Foreign Ministries of Australia, Chile, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America, in support of our civil society partners, strongly condemn the recent actions taken by the government of Nicaragua to cancel the legal registration of Nicaraguan civil society organizations working on a range of democratic governance and human

rights issues, including: the Institute of Strategic Studies and Public Policies (IEEPP), the Center for Information and Advice on Health Services (CISAS), Hagamos Democracia, the Nicaraguan Center for Human Rights (CENIDH), the Institute for the Development of Democracy (IPADE), the Nicaraguan Center for Communication (CINCO), Popol Na, the Segovias Leadership Institute and the Rio Foundation.

The arbitrary cancelation of the legal standing of these civil society organizations (CSOs) and subsequent ransacking of several offices by National Police are a direct attack on the fundamental freedoms of the Nicaraguan people. The work of these organizations is essential to account for the ongoing human rights abuses and violations in Nicaragua. We urge the government of Nicaragua to reinstate the legal standing of these CSOs immediately, to cease all threats and attacks against Nicaraguan civil society and to uphold the fundamental freedoms in accordance with its international human rights law obligations.

End Text

In addition to the above statement, the United States underscores the serious and negative impact on all Nicaraguan CSOs of the Ortega/Murillo regime's December 19 expulsion of experts investigating human rights abuses in Nicaragua. The expulsions of human rights experts and the cancelation of legal standing of CSOs cannot hide the extensive, systematic human rights violations and abuses committed by the Ortega/Murillo regime.

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