

Press Releases: Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo And Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi At a Press Availability

Remarks

Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Amman, Jordan

January 8, 2019

FOREIGN MINISTER SAFADI: (In Arabic.) It is a tremendous pleasure – (in Arabic) – it’s a tremendous pleasure to welcome my dear friend, the Secretary, here in Jordan. If I may, I’ll speak in Arabic, and there is going to be translation.

(In Arabic.)

(Via interpreter) Welcome, Mike, to Jordan, which comes at a very important time, your visit, not to mention a deep conversation on important pivotal regional aspects to achieve prosperity in the region. You have already conducted fruitful conversations on informing – enforcing our mutual relationship on all aspects – security, defense, et cetera. Not to mention we're adamant to reinforce this cooperation with the USA, which is an ally and a friend. We appreciate their support, not to mention or particularly the five-year program and the first to be endorsed by the Trump administration that participated to a great extent in helping us to face our economic (inaudible) support.

There is a huge expanse, or we are going to focus on the Palestinian aspects, not to mention attaining the comprehensive peace, and freezing the process is a very grievance. We have to have horizons of cooperation, meaning the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan's going to go on its cooperation with international cooperation and the USA to achieve a comprehensive resolution with two states, independent Palestinian states, as per the resolution with the Eastern Jerusalem as a capital and to live in peace vis-a-vis the Israeli country and in peace and understanding.

I have conducted also political relationships in the Syrian crisis, not to mention we have a thorough conversation on future coordination in light of the U.S. decision to withdraw U.S. forces from Syria bilaterally and through the small group. We will continue to consult on how to achieve progress towards a political solution on the basis of UNC – United Nations Security Council Resolution 2254, that preserves territorial integrity and sovereignty of Syria, that Syria accepts and that restores to Syria its security, stability that leads to the departure of all the foreign forces from Syria and allows for the return of the refugees. In light of the U.S. decision to withdraw troops from Syria, we discussed the area of Tanf, and with a view of ensuring arrangement that that will ensure security of the border and deal with the Rukban* encampments, which we believe must be de-established.

Trilateral Jordanian-U.S.-Russian agreements is necessary to achieve these objectives. The enduring defeat of Daesh in Syria is a key common objective. The U.S.-led coalition has made great progress towards defeating the evil. Jordan and the U.S. have fought side-by-side against terrorism, not to mention we've strengthened this partnership. His Majesty King Abdullah II had repeatedly emphasized the need for a holistic approach against terrorists and their ideology of hate, which is outside our common humanity and has nothing to do with our Islamic faith and its values of peace and respect for the other. This is a strategy to which we remain committed.

Mr. Secretary, we look forward to continuing to work together as solid allies and partners in pursuit of a Middle East free from crises and full of opportunities where peace and cooperation prevail and where regional relations are based on non-interference in the international affairs of others, and are in conformity with international law. Once again, I welcome you to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Welcome to you, and the floor is yours, sir.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you, Foreign Minister. Thank you, Foreign Minister

Safadi. It's an honor to meet with you today. I'm looking forward to meeting with His Majesty King Abdullah in just a little bit. I'm very pleased to be back here in Jordan, especially as our countries celebrate our 70th anniversary this year of diplomatic relations. I was here – I was here in this room on my very first trip as Secretary of State. I came here before I went to my office in Washington.

FOREIGN MINISTER SAFADI: That's true.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Indeed. It's an indication, too, as my first stop on a multi-country trip, of the importance of the relationship between our two countries. Jordan is one of the United States' enduring strategic partners in the region. It's one of the many reasons we're proud to help support you through the five-year foreign assistance MOU, of which you spoke. It's worth over \$6 billion, and it will be an important part of strengthening our relationship for the years ahead. Your nation plays a critical role in regional security and stability, including through its efforts to peacefully resolve the Syrian conflict, fight the spread of radical Islamic terrorism, and countering the Iranian regime's malign activities in the region and the world.

We had a good conversation today. I reaffirmed our commitment under President Trump to working with King Abdullah's government on many of our shared priorities. The United States remains firmly committed to Jordan's domestic stability and security, and we will undertake that work in a true spirit of partnership. Just last year, our nations unveiled a new counterterrorism training center less than 50 miles south of where we stand even as I speak. The State Department, too, was proud to fund and construct that facility through our Antiterrorism Assistance Program. It is sharpening our terror-fighting tools and helping Jordan build its already strong capacity to fight terrorism.

We also look forward to working continually to counter Tehran's malign influence in the region. Jordan made a powerful statement by recalling its ambassador to Tehran last year in protest of the Iranian regime's flagrant transgressions of security and sovereignty. I also want to thank the Government of Jordan for its helping in – help to combat Iran's attempt to evade sanctions.

And finally, I also expressed today my deep gratitude for King Abdullah's leadership. He has continued to establish Jordan as a durable partner and leader in the region. We're pleased to see your prime minister recently visit Iraq, as well as Iraqi President Salih's visit to Jordan in November. We welcome this kind of engagement between nations of the region and we hope to see it replicated elsewhere.

His majesty the king is also undertaking important domestic initiatives, including economic reforms and protection of religious rights. And we know Jordan is also hosting over 650,000 thousand Syrian refugees, and we thank you and your people for their generosity.

On behalf of President Trump, we look forward to maintaining our joint

efforts here in the Middle East, and I want to thank you again for hosting me here today. It's great to be back.

FOREIGN MINISTER SAFADI: Thank you, Mike. It's a pleasure to have you. We have a very short time, as the Secretary and I are heading for a meeting with his majesty, so we'll take two questions. The first question is to Amar Rajah from Jordan TV. Amar.

QUESTION: (Via interpreter) Amar Rajah from the Jordan Television. You spoke about the importance of deriving at a political solution to the Syrian crisis. What are the necessary steps to achieve that?

FOREIGN MINISTER SAFADI: (Via interpreter) As I said, to resolve the Syrian crisis is a strategic goal on which we both agree. Undoubtedly, we need a political solution, which calls for working jointly. We – I spoke about an international role, not to mention coordination. We are also coordinating with the Russia and the international community. Undoubtedly, there has to be an Arab role to participate in the solution deriving (inaudible) of the area within an Arab matrix.

As for Rukban, we discussed it at length with His Excellency the Secretary, not to mention the importance of ensuring the security of those areas, Tanf and Rukban, not to mention the return of their citizens in order to ensure appropriate administration at the border. We are (inaudible) with our allies, the U.S., not to mention coordinating with Russia, deriving at tri-parted discussions (inaudible).

Next question, *LA Times*.

QUESTION: Yes, hi, thank you. You both have spoken here about Syria, and so I'd like to ask a little bit about how we see that crisis, that situation continuing in the weeks and months to come. Minister – Secretary Pompeo, how do you intend – think you can – or intend to maintain the anti-Iran coalition with your allies here in the region, even as these same allies are welcoming Syria back into the fold, back into the Arab League and such? And at the same time, you are receiving pretty significant pushback from Turkey, which is another key player in this.

And Mr. – Minister Safadi, you spoke a little bit about the role of Jordan that you see in here, as the Americans leave. How do you see that? Are you worried about their departure? Is it premature? Do you see Jordanian troops having a role in this?

And then separately, you spoke about the Palestinian peace process. You mentioned the – East Jerusalem as a capital and a two-state solution, neither of which this administration has very wholeheartedly embraced. So now the – all eyes turn to the Golan Heights, where Bibi Netanyahu is asking for U.S. recognition of their sovereignty over that. What do you think should happen with the Golan Heights? Thanks.

SECRETARY POMPEO: I'm going to try to take the first question first if that's okay. The counter-Iran revolution is – our coalition is as effective today as

it was yesterday, and I'm very hopeful it will continue to be effective and even more effective tomorrow. This is not just about a particular tactic that we take amongst the coalition. This is about a combined understanding that the most significant threat to the region is Daesh and the Islamist revolution, and their revolutionary efforts in the region. There is – I won't speak for Foreign Minister Safadi, but there is enormous agreement on the risk that that poses to Jordan and to other countries in the neighborhood, and that battle continues.

Our – the President's decision to withdraw folks from Syria in no way impacts our capacity to deliver on that, and you'll see in the coming days and weeks, we are – are we doubling not only our diplomatic but our commercial efforts to put real pressure on Iran to achieve what it is we set out for them back in May. And these are simple asks we ask of the Islamic Republic of Iran, to behave like a normal nation, and the coalition is just as committed to it today as it was yesterday.

FOREIGN MINISTER SAFADI: Thank you, Secretary.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Go ahead.

FOREIGN MINISTER SAFADI: You're done?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yeah, go ahead.

FOREIGN MINISTER SAFADI: Let me just say something on Iran. We all have problems with Iran's expansionist policies in the region. We all want to make sure that whatever threat there is mitigated. All Arab countries, and I think the United States too, would want healthy relations based on the principle of nonintervention in the internal affairs of the other, and respecting the sovereignty of other countries. If that is achieved, if everybody abides by international norms of behavior, then there'll be no problem. So far as long as there are policies that are counter to these principles, then we will continue to have issues with their policy.

On the withdrawal, I just have to say that the United States and Jordan have always been strong allies. We've always coordinated and we trust that we'll continue to coordinate, and our security is something that has always been taken into account by our allies in Washington, and we trust that we'll be – we'll continue to have this kind of relationship.

This is a solid partnership, particularly when it comes to defense and security against Daesh, against ISIS. We (inaudible) side by side, we'll continue to do that, and we're fully confident that our allies and us will be able to address whatever new developments in a way that is mutually beneficial for both of us.

On the peace process, look, I mean, Jordan has been consistent all through. His majesty has been more than clear that the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is the key conflict in the region, and its resolution is the only path to comprehensive peace, which we all want. All Arab states, Jordan included, have said we wanted comprehensive and lasting peace with Israel, but we also

said in order for that to happen, the legitimate rights of the Palestinians, but particularly their right to statehood and freedom on June 4, 1967, with East Jerusalem as capital, is a must. So we're going to continue to do that, and again, as friends, as allies, we might have agreements and disagreements, but you can count on us always having frank and open and thorough discussion too as to see how we can overcome differences and move collectively in an effective manner towards our common goal of global peace and stability.

The Golan Heights is in occupied Syrian territory. International law is clear on that. It has to be treated as such, and therefore our position is that Israel needs to withdraw from that territory, again, within the framework of a peace agreement that will deliver the comprehensive peace that we want. The Arab Peace Initiative has been on the table since 2002 as an offer, as an invitation for Israel to come and sit on the table with a view to reaching a comprehensive peace that will also address Israel's rights to security and acceptance and normal ties with the Arab world. This is our position and we continue to stand by it because we believe it's the only way to achieve the comprehensive peace that we all want.

I want to thank you so much. We've got to run. We have a meeting with his majesty now, so thank you all and (ends in progress).

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Press Releases: Remarks to Press

Remarks

Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

En Route to Shannon, Ireland

January 7, 2019

SECRETARY POMPEO: We've got a good trip, a lengthy trip, to the Middle East. I've been to the Middle East probably as much as any Secretary of State in the beginning of their tour. I went there in my previous role quite a bit as well. They're an important set of relationships, especially for this administration as we continue to build out the coalition that's pushing back against the world's largest state sponsor of terror, Iran.

So that'll be a significant piece of what I do, but it's also the case that I haven't had a chance, although I talk to them on the phone with some frequency, to see them for a number of weeks and to come back and make sure everybody's clear about the fact that the United States is still committed to all the missions that we signed up for with them over the past two years. The counter-ISIS campaign continues, the effort – the counter-Iran campaign absolutely continues, and our commitment to support Middle East stability is still full throttle.

QUESTION: And so the Syria withdrawal does not impact at all your commitment to Middle East?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Nope.

QUESTION: Will you have sort of a – give sort of a timeline for what the – it looks like now and how many troops this is?

SECRETARY POMPEO: We don't talk about timelines.

QUESTION: Do you talk with your allies?

SECRETARY POMPEO: We don't talk about timelines. The President's made a commitment. We're going to withdraw our uniformed personnel, uniformed guys, 2,000 roughly folks on the ground. We're going to withdraw them from Syria.

QUESTION: But will you talk about timelines with your allies? Because they have a lot of questions about your strategy now that you're withdrawing.

SECRETARY POMPEO: I've actually spoken to them all. Tell me what your source is for the fact that they have lots of questions.

QUESTION: Well, I am French. The French concerns.

SECRETARY POMPEO: I've spoken to the French. I've spoken to the French.

QUESTION: (Inaudible.)

SECRETARY POMPEO: They know precisely what our intentions are and what we're doing.

QUESTION: (Inaudible.)

SECRETARY POMPEO: I mean, look, we've had lots of conversations with them. We've briefed them fully. We'll continue to talk to them. We'll continue to stay in contact with them. We'll – if it's not going perfectly, we'll work to make it better. We'll make sure we address concerns that they have. But

everyone's got – everyone's been communicated with, all the countries I'm going to visit. We've communicated with all of our European allies. I think everyone understands what the United States is doing. At least the senior leaders in their governments do.

QUESTION: When you talk of Iran, can you tell us a little bit about the nature of what these conversations are going to be like amid Iran still in Syria, in Lebanon; concerns the Israelis have, certainly?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yeah. We took over for an administration that had let Iran run loose. It is a big effort to push back against them, make no mistake about it. The United States policy was to work closely alongside Iran, and 24 months in now we have absolutely made progress. I hear lots of talk about the fact that U.S. sanctions alone don't work. We should all go see what the value of the rial is to see if there's any truth to that. I'll let others evaluate it. But make no mistake, we're committed. They're the world largest state sponsor of terror. They continue an assassination campaign in Europe. Hizballah continues to threaten not only Lebanon but Israel.

These are things that there is an enormous coalition that we have built and which we will continue to expand upon that understands the threat to their countries, to the United States, and to the world, and we're going to talk to them about the modalities by which we may continue to apply pressure for the singular purpose of getting the revolutionary behavior of the Iranian regime to stop, to – I laid out the 12 things we'd like Iran not to do, and that remains unchanged.

MR PALLADINO: Tracy, do you have a question?

QUESTION: Yeah, but you understand the confusion –

SECRETARY POMPEO: I'm sorry?

QUESTION: You understand the confusion when the President says one thing and Bolton says another thing. How do we interpret all of this? How do we – the contradictions about Syria?

SECRETARY POMPEO: I think they've both said the same thing.

QUESTION: Well, not exactly. Withdrawal immediately, withdrawal –

SECRETARY POMPEO: They've both said we're going to get out.

QUESTION: Yeah.

SECRETARY POMPEO: The President said we're going to do it in an orderly fashion that achieves our objective, and that the – our mission set in the region remains unchanged. Those seems pretty – it seemed pretty consistent to me.

QUESTION: But don't you lose some sort of leverage by no longer having U.S. troops in Syria? At some point, when you talk about wanting to protect the Kurds or push back on the Iranian influence, is that lessened by the fact

that you don't have a military presence there?

SECRETARY POMPEO: We will accomplish our mission. I am very confident of that. The decisions about how to do that, right, we've got our – as an example, we counter ISIS in lots of places in the world, right? Many, many, in West Africa, in Asia, Southeast Asia. There are lots of places that we've got real counter-ISIS campaigns ongoing and underway. In some of them we have uniformed soldiers, and in some of them we don't. These are tactical, and our mission set is how do we best use the tool set that we have – coalition building, our own American power – to achieve that end, and this is what we're doing in Syria and in Iraq and all throughout the Middle East.

QUESTION: Do you want Arab troops then to maybe take that role on in northern Syria?

SECRETARY POMPEO: We're going to talk a lot about how to make sure we're doing everything we can – we the broader we, the collective we, not just the United States is doing and how we make sure that – now look, we've taken down 99 percent of the caliphate, 99 percent of the caliphate. That should be the first sentence in every story, right? Everybody agree? Anybody disagree with the facts? This has been an enormously successful campaign, and we've had lots of good partners doing that. The United States had an important role, but lots of folks have helped us achieve that, and I am confident we will continue to ensure that the kind of rise that ISIS had under the Obama administration doesn't occur again.

QUESTION: That ensuring – sorry, that enduring defeat of ISIS is still the –

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yes, (inaudible). And we know these are longtime challenges, right? The threat from radical Islamic terrorism is going to be with us for a while, and we're determined to stay at it and continue to make sure that the resurgence of large land-based caliphates like ISIS don't happen on our watch.

QUESTION: Has the withdrawal started already or not?

SECRETARY POMPEO: I'm not going to talk about that. I'll leave the (inaudible).

QUESTION: What about (inaudible) – how about the diplomatic personnel, diplomatic personnel?

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

QUESTION: And Israel-Palestine, do we – are you expecting to be raising anything of that about the U.S. peace plan and –

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yes, we will absolutely talk about that. We'll talk about how it is that we can achieve that part of our mission statement as well. We probably won't get into a great deal of detail about the to and fro, but we will absolutely make that part of our conversations. It's an important part of this administration's plans for how you get stability in the Middle East.

QUESTION: But is that being held off until the elections, the Israeli elections?

SECRETARY POMPEO: We're trying to (inaudible) make sure that Israel and the Palestinians find a peaceful way forward.

QUESTION: What are the biggest specific short-term deliverables you're looking to get from your counterparts on Syria and on Iran?

SECRETARY POMPEO: I'm not going to talk about the details of the conversations that we're going to have, but –

QUESTION: But anything you're looking to do or get to advance – to advance these goals (inaudible)?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yeah, lots of things, but I'm not going to share them with you. Yeah. Look, it should be noticed, right, we have built out a coalition that is unequalled in the Middle East, right? We have countries working together that for a long time were at cross-purposes. My first stop in Amman, they're working closely with other partners that they haven't always worked with, and we will – we'll go on to Cairo. They too are working on projects that are of a nature and scope that are unprecedented.

This is a coalition that understands that the largest threats – terrorism and the Islamic Republic of Iran – are things that we ought to work on jointly, and we'll be marshalling all of the resources – theirs and ours – to achieve them. But I would say too we'll have an opportunity to make sure that we include the Europeans in this. They want to be part of this counter-ISIS campaign in an important way just as they have been, and we have every expectation they'll continue to be.

QUESTION: So what's the course correction that you're trying to make from the last administration and this one in broad strokes in terms of U.S. Middle East policy?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yeah, we're actually going to set a policy that's actually going to stop Iran from getting nuclear weapons. That's probably the most important thing that we're expecting to achieve.

Do you have one more?

QUESTION: Yeah, I have one more. I understand there's going to be a speech in Cairo. Is there any desire to preview it a little bit for us?

SECRETARY POMPEO: I'll give lots of remarks during my time here to you all on the plane, and otherwise I will give a set of remarks in Cairo as well. We'll give you a little heads-up before it gets out and rolled out. So yeah, a sense of the structure.

QUESTION: Okay, thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you, sir.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you all.

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Press Releases: Secretary Pompeo's Meeting With Gudlaugur Thor Thordarson, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iceland

Media Note
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
January 7, 2019

Michael R. Pompeo, Secretary of State of the United States, and Gudlaugur Thor Thordarson, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iceland, met in Washington, DC, on January 7, 2019, and issued the following joint statement:

Begin text:

The United States and Iceland have for decades enjoyed a very close relationship including in security and defense, Arctic affairs, trade and investment, culture, education, and people-to-people connections. This has contributed to stability and prosperity in the North Atlantic region.

The changing strategic environment in the North Atlantic and the Arctic reinforces the importance of the longstanding security relationship between the United States and Iceland. Accordingly, we will enhance our consultations and cooperation within NATO and in maintaining the bilateral Defense Agreement.

The United States has become Iceland's largest bilateral trading partner, and U.S. travelers are the single largest group of visitors to Iceland. There is, however, still unrealized potential for trade in our commercial relationship, and the United States and Iceland will explore possibilities for improving conditions for bilateral trade and investment.

Iceland will shortly assume the chairmanship of the Arctic Council and will work closely with the United States and other member states in furthering cooperation in the region.

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[Press Releases: Interview With Wilfred Frost of CNBC](#)

Interview
Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Washington, DC
January 7, 2019

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, thank you for having me. It's a privilege to be with you today.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Wilfred, great to see you again.

QUESTION: So you're traveling off to the Middle East this afternoon to give reassurance to your allies in the region. Reassurance about what specifically?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Well, it's not so much reassurance. We're traveling, we'll visit eight or nine countries along the way to share with them a couple

ideas. First – and they know this: America is there. We're there to continue to do the things that need to be done to protect the American people and to ensure Middle East stability.

Second: There's been a lot of noise about this withdrawal from Syria, and we want to make sure they understand completely what that means. There's no change in our commitment to the defeat of the caliphate or of ISIS globally. There's no change in our counter-Iran strategy. America is still committed to taking down the malign influence that the Islamic of Iran – that those activities – the risks that those activities present to the world. There's no change. It's a change in tactics – we're going to withdraw our 2,000 soldiers from Syria – but the mission, the purpose for which we have been involved for the 24 months in the administration, remains in full. That's why we're heading there. We're going to continue to build up the alliances with those partners in ways that are very important for the security of the American people.

QUESTION: I guess some of your allies in the region are a little more nervous than others. How sure are you – to use your own words, sir – that the Turks won't slaughter the Kurds?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Well, President Erdogan made a commitment to President Trump as the two of them were discussing what this ought to look like; that the Turks would continue the counter-ISIS campaign after our departure, and that the Turks would ensure that the folks that we'd fought with, that had assisted us in the counter-ISIS campaign would be protected. That's why Ambassador Bolton is there later today or tomorrow, to have a conversation with the Turks about how we will effectuate that in light of the U.S. withdrawal.

QUESTION: Do you trust President Erdogan personally? It seems that President Trump has gone from considering him friend to foe back to friend again in fairly quick succession.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Look, my sense in all of these things in my world internationally is it's about acts on the ground, it's about actions, it's what we actually do. Commitments are important and then making sure that we follow through on those commitments matters an awful lot. That's true for lots of parties, including our NATO ally, Turkey.

QUESTION: You mentioned you're visiting lots of countries – Jordan, Egypt, Bahrain, UAE, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Kuwait. Is this the anti-Iran tour?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So again, it – we want great things for the Iranian people. That's been the mission of President Trump's administration. We want the Iranian people to have a voice and to be able to control their own leadership, to take the revolutionary activity of Iran and stop the risk associated with it – the risk to the world and, frankly, the risk that comes with all the money and lives that have been spent by the Iranian people to effectuate these policies that we don't think are in line with what the Iranian people really want.

And so an element of this trip is absolutely to continue to build up the coalition – the coalition that includes Gulf states, the coalition that includes Israel, the coalition that includes European countries and Asian countries all around the world that understand that the world’s largest state sponsor of terrorism needs to cease that activity.

QUESTION: Would you like to see your European allies back your hardline on Iran more vociferously than they have?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Absolutely. I’d like to see everyone in the world continue to assist the United States and the Gulf states and Israel in this effort. It’s an important campaign and the revolutionary nature of the Iranian regime presents a real risk to the entire world.

QUESTION: I want to move on and talk about China. Mr. Secretary, has the trade war with China impacted your job, made it harder? Has it hurt diplomacy?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Trade is an element of what it is that we do. So we have many challenges that were identified in the President’s National Security Strategy on China. Trade is certainly amongst them, but we’re making progress there. I hope we continue to make progress, and I hope too that we’ll make progress on all of the other places where China is not behaving in the way we wish it would, whether that’s their cyber activity that has had a real impact, whether that’s the theft of intellectual property, which has hurt American businesses. All of these things and trade on top of it are part of what U.S. diplomats are confronted with each day, and so it’s been a part of our conversation for our entire time in office.

QUESTION: Is China’s cyber capability stronger than the U.S.’s?

SECRETARY POMPEO: I don’t think there’s anyone that rivals U.S. capacity to deliver whatever dimension of global power is needed. That’s certainly the case in cyber as well.

QUESTION: And when it comes to North Korea, is full denuclearization possible before the trade dispute is settled, or are those two issues linked together?

SECRETARY POMPEO: The Chinese have been very clear to us that these are separate issues. Their behavior has demonstrated that as well, and we appreciate that. China has actually been a good partner in our effort to reduce the risk to the world from North Korea’s nuclear capability. I expect they will continue to do so.

QUESTION: I wanted to move on and talk about Brexit. Your ambassador to London last week, Ambassador Johnson, said that the UK was, quote, “in need of leadership” on Brexit. Is that the official State Department view of Theresa May’s handling of Brexit?

SECRETARY POMPEO: We’ve been pretty clear from the beginning the UK people made a sovereign decision with respect to Brexit. We respect that. We do hope that between – as between the EU and the UK, they can come to an agreement so that there aren’t negative ramifications that flow. Negative ramifications

from a hard Brexit related to not only commerce and trade, but importantly to the national security issues that we have with the British as well as with the European Union. Those are important national security concerns, and so I'm hopeful that all the leaders – the leaders in the EU, the leaders in the United Kingdom – will find a way to come together to make sure that this transition is effective.

QUESTION: You made a speech to Brussels – in Brussels 4th of December. And you said, quote, “Our mission is to reassert our sovereignty... we want our friends to help us and to exert their sovereignty as well.” As I said, a speech to Brussels no less. Does that suggest that a fuller version of Brexit is something you think is sensible for the UK?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So the speech wasn't aimed at any particular action. Brexit was a small part of the remarks that I gave. What was really important about that is we do think it's an absolute imperative that multilateral organizations – whether that's the United Nations or the International Criminal Courts – are effective at delivering what their stated missions were. That goes for all of these organizations, the EU included. They need to be sure in every instance that the purpose for which they were intended, taking care of the people that they are deemed – that they have been entrusted to protect and to serve are actually protected and served by those entities. That's what the remarks were about. It is about making sure that nation-states exercise their sovereignty for the good of their own people.

QUESTION: I just wanted to touch back in the Middle East and ask about Saudi Arabia, and whether or not oil prices being low has affected the sort of level of rebuke you've placed on Saudi Arabia for the Khashoggi murder. If oil prices rose again, would you and the President up the ante somewhat?

SECRETARY POMPEO: They're disconnected. We've taken a very clear message to the world with respect to the murder of Jamal Khashoggi. This was a heinous act, it's unacceptable, it's inconsistent with the way nations ought to behave around the world. We've told the Saudis that. We've held Saudi citizens accountable for the murder of Jamal Khashoggi. We will continue to do so as new facts arise. And at the same time, we're going to continue to do the things that protect the American people, and that includes a deep and lasting relationship with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

QUESTION: Just to round things off, Mr. Secretary – I mean, has the shutdown made your job a lot harder?

SECRETARY POMPEO: No. No. Look, the State Department operates in difficult conditions all around the world. I hope the shutdown will end because I just think it's better, but we have an important goal there, the administration has an important goal there that the President's trying to achieve. But the State Department will continue to perform its functions around the world in a way that keeps the American citizens safe and performs its diplomatic function. We'll do that no matter what's thrown at us.

QUESTION: And just – I mean, with the shutdown itself, with the Democrats taking control of the House, the departures of the likes of General Kelly and

General Mattis, has there been a sense of pressure in the administration? Has it been the toughest couple of months yet since you've been in your role?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Every day is tough. (Laughter.) And I expect every day going forward will be difficult as well. It's a complicated world. America is an important player all across the globe. We're doing well, we're performing our mission, and the team here at the State Department is prepared to continue to do that throughout 2019.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, I appreciate your time. Thank you very much.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you very much, Wilfred. Wonderful to be with you.

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[Press Releases: Swearing in of Venezuela's New National Assembly President](#)

Press Statement
Robert Palladino

Deputy Spokesperson

Washington, DC
January 5, 2019

Today the United States celebrates the swearing-in of the new Executive Board of Venezuela's National Assembly led by Deputy Juan Guaidó as its President. Chargé d'Affaires James Story attended this important event. The National Assembly is the only legitimate and last remaining democratically elected institution that truly represents the will of the Venezuelan people. This democratic transition is a powerful confirmation of the National Assembly's

unity and commitment to the Venezuelan people above all personal and political concerns.

The National Assembly should inspire hope in the Venezuelan people for a peaceful, prosperous, and democratic future, even as the corrupt and authoritarian Maduro regime and its allies seek to deny Venezuelans that right. The United States stands with the National Assembly and all democratic actors in Venezuela in their commitment to defend democracy, human rights, and the 1999 Constitution. We join their call for a democratic solution that returns Venezuela to democracy, stability, and prosperity.

We thank all those nations that have stepped forward to applaud the National Assembly's peaceful transition and rebuke Nicolas Maduro and his brutal regime through economic and diplomatic initiatives. Every nation must take strong action to help the Venezuelan people reclaim their democracy.

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