

Press Releases: Secretary Pompeo's Meeting With Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga

Readout
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
May 9, 2019

The below is attributable to Spokesperson Morgan Ortagus:□

Secretary Michael R. Pompeo met today with Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga in Washington to discuss our close alliance and cooperation on pressing regional and security issues. Secretary Pompeo and Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga reaffirmed our commitment to the final, fully verified denuclearization of the DPRK, our mutual commitment to regional security, and to continue working closely together to address common challenges in the Indo-Pacific.

The Office of Website Management, Bureau of Public Affairs, manages this site as a portal for information from the U.S. State Department. External links to other Internet sites should not be construed as an endorsement of the views or privacy policies contained therein.

Press Releases: Interview With Tuomas Niskakangas of Helsingin Sanomat

Interview
Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Lappi Arena
Rovaniemi, Finland
May 6, 2019

QUESTION: Secretary Pompeo, it's – those were some pretty frank words about China's arctic policies. Why did you decide to be so frank on the speech you just gave?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Well, first of all, I'm always frank. It's my duty to do so, not only my duty as the Secretary of State, but it's an obligation as a participant on the Arctic Council to be straightforward and candid about things you see and observe. And that's all I did today was lay down some basic facts that are indisputable about Chinese activities, Chinese history, Chinese practices, and share them and present them as something that we ought to have conversations about how to make sure that China's participation in this region is appropriate and lawful.

QUESTION: Yes. And also from your speech, you talked about the environment without mentioning climate change. Is that something you hope to do also tomorrow when it comes to the policy statement from this meeting, that we should care about the environment but not to put too much weight on climate change?

SECRETARY POMPEO: My view on this and President Trump's view on this is what we should put all our emphasis on is outcomes. And we can call it whatever we like, but I shared some of the data in the speech. The United States is kicking it when it comes to getting its CO₂ down. I mean, compare it to China, compare it to Russia, compare it – frankly – to many European nations, each of whom signed the Paris agreement.

And I'm sure it was a good party. I'm sure it felt good to sign the agreement. But at the end of the day, what matters to human health, what matters to the citizens of the world, is that we actually have an impact on improving health. And our technology, our innovation, the R&D we put in in the United States, that's what will drive better climatic outcomes, that's what will create cleaner air and safer drinking water, and that's what I hope the whole world will focus on.

QUESTION: Okay, I want to talk briefly about your bilateral meeting with Minister Lavrov.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yes.

QUESTION: And obviously, you're going to talk about Venezuela. What's your plan? What's your plan to solve the situation in Venezuela, and what's your main message to Minister Lavrov?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yeah. So the plan in Venezuela is really straightforward.

We want the Venezuelan people to have an opportunity for democracy, free and fair elections. That can't be done with Maduro in power. The Venezuelan people know that. Fifty-four nations have signed up for that as well. They understand too that Juan Guaido is the duly elected leader there in Venezuela.

And so our mission set is to support the Venezuelan people in every way we can, work with our partners in the region, and get the outcome that the Venezuelan people demand. You have starving children. You have children that can't get medicine. And you have food and medicine sitting on the border, and Maduro won't let it in.

And so any country that's involved in Venezuela, whether that's Cuba or China or the Iranians, needs to get out of the way, needs to cease that activity, needs to allow the Venezuelan people to begin to rebuild and reconstruct their country. This is an imperative, and the United States is prepared to continue to support that. And I'll share that with Foreign Minister Lavrov or anyone else who asks.

QUESTION: Yes. But Venezuela has put a strain on your relationship with Russia and there is also Ukraine. That's still unsolved. What's your plan to deal with these tensions? It's something that we're always interested in Finland for historical reasons the tensions between Russia and Western powers like yourself.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Sure, yes. You forgot the larger tension of the large nuclear arsenal aimed directly at Europe, right? So the tension is certainly felt by countries here. We're further away.

Look, our mission set is to try and find paths forward. What I'm hoping to do today is to continue my efforts. I met with Foreign Minister Lavrov before. I met with my counterparts when I was at CIA to find places where we have overlapping interests where we can make progress together. That's what I hope we can achieve. It may be that we can't do that. We'll see.

QUESTION: Okay. START Treaty, the New START, you've had some reservations. President Trump has voiced his reservations about the treaty, but I think they had a constructive discussion with President Putin. When it comes to START Treaty, how has your thinking evolved, and how do you see the path going forward in renewing that treaty?

SECRETARY POMPEO: That's a good question. The conversation that President Trump had with President Putin was a good one. I think it provides a basis for us to begin to build out teams to move forward. President Trump is deeply aware that you need two partners who are prepared to comply with a treaty, so we need to make sure that unlike the INF, that we have a incentive system that will cause countries to actually comply.

President Trump also knows that we now have a third entrant. These treaties were decades past, when China was in a different place. It now presents a geostrategic threat as well. And so President Trump would very much like China to be part of any agreement that's reached, and so we'll endeavor to do

that.

QUESTION: Yeah. I was going to ask you about the multilateral arms control agreement, but do you think that's realistic in any time near future, or should you just focus on first getting the bilateral treaty renewed?

SECRETARY POMPEO: I hope we can begin to have a conversation about the broader opportunity. It may be that that is too ambitious in the short term. There's just a couple years left before New START expires. It may be that we have to do that on a bilateral basis, but I would hope that we would be well along in our discussions to see if there isn't a way we could do this with all three countries. That's what the world would benefit most from, and so it's the outcome we're going to drive towards.

QUESTION: Okay. You're one of the few key members or few key people who've been with President Trump the whole term. What's your secret in having such a good working relationship with President Trump? Does it have to do with personality or policy?

SECRETARY POMPEO: No secret: Work hard, deliver value; be candid, straightforward, honest; and then when you're given guidance and direction, go execute it with all the energy you can possibly muster.

QUESTION: And what are your personal goals for the remainder of your term? What do you hope to achieve? You've got at least a year left unless something comes up.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yes, unless something happens – yes, of course. Look, I want to continue to build out the State Department. It's taken a little while to get our team on the field. I want to make sure that we've got the team fully engaged. We're working on some training issues inside the State Department as well.

As for the goals around the world, you can see the missions we're working on. We continue to believe there is an opportunity in North Korea to denuclearize in a way that is fully verified. We want to resolve the situation in Venezuela. We are convinced that we have improved Middle East stability as a result of our policies with respect to the Islamic Republic of Iran. I'm not sure – there's a whole handful. I'm not sure we have time for the whole list.

QUESTION: Okay. One more thing I'd like to go back to if we have time for one final question is you have your hands full both with Russia and China, as we heard from the speech, and there are so many things going on. There's obviously the trade war and the situation of Taiwan and them. What's the main difference when it comes to solving these tensions between these two powers, Russia and China? How do you view them? What do you – how do they differ strategically, and how do you look at those two different tensions?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So that's a fair question, but they're very different. Russia is a historical power, one with which the world has engaged in conflict now twice over the last century. Russia is also now the 15th largest

economy in the world, so an economy that is not growing in the same way.

China has 1.5 billion people. They have a million ethnic minorities that they've put into re-education camps. That is a humanitarian crisis of epic proportions. We haven't seen things like that since the 1930s. But it's a growing country in which we are deeply engaged economically. We have huge economic relationships between businesses in our two countries. So the problem set is different, but the expectation is the same.

All we want from each of those two countries is for them to participate in free and open economies, compete using the rule of law, not use their military power to close off places like the South China Sea. Those are the kind of things we ask from them. They're the things we ask Finland to do. And in that sense, they present an identical challenge.

QUESTION: Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you for your time.

The Office of Website Management, Bureau of Public Affairs, manages this site as a portal for information from the U.S. State Department. External links to other Internet sites should not be construed as an endorsement of the views or privacy policies contained therein.

[Press Releases: Interview With Pirkko Pontinen of YLE TV1](#)

Interview
Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Lappi Arena
Rovaniemi, Finland
May 6, 2019

QUESTION: Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, thank you for this opportunity to

meet and make an interview with the Finnish Broadcasting Company.

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

QUESTION: Thank you so much. The last time you were in Finland, it was last July for a summit for President Trump and Putin. And that time you also met your Russian counterpart, Sergey Lavrov. It was the first time, but is it right it will be the second time now when you will meet him face to face?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yeah, I think I've run into him in other forums before, but this will be the second time that we've had the opportunity to meet here in Finland.

QUESTION: How do you describe your personal relationship to Mr. Lavrov when you keep in mind that the current tensions between your country and Russia? How is it working with him?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Well, we talk often on the phone. I'd say we've met a handful of times. The conversations are always very direct, they're very professional, each of us doing our level best to represent what our leaders are asking us to do. Our relationship is just fine.

QUESTION: And you have a lot of topics to talk about. Just in your talk just moments ago, you talked about Arctic waters and area, and about the commercial purposes and also the military purposes. And you had very strong words towards especially China, but also towards Russia, now when Russia is under international sanctions and basically there is no cooperation between your country and Russia anymore. So how do you – being – the U.S. can be aware of what Russia is doing on Arctic area now when the relations are very tense?

SECRETARY POMPEO: I think we have a deep understanding of what Russia's doing here. It's visible; you can see it. Our presence here, we see the actions they're taking. Our national security team makes sure that we do the work to track their actions here as well. We want every nation to have the opportunity to participate in the great things that can be here in the Arctic region. We want fair and open markets, we want free transit, we want the rule of law. Each of those are things we want. What we don't want is countries like Russia using military power to deny passage for ships that have a right to pass, and to ban things that are inconsistent with international law. If there are good neighbors here in the Arctic region and if Russia becomes one of them, we would welcome that.

QUESTION: But your words were not the same towards –

SECRETARY POMPEO: Well, you can – we can see the behavior. I mean, we should also – and when I speak with Foreign Minister Lavrov, I'll be clear about this too – we're demanding that they behave according to the rule of law. It's pretty straightforward. It's the same thing we ask Finland to do. It's no different.

QUESTION: But you didn't have the same words towards China. Actually, you were – if I understood, you were – you have very strong rules against China,

and you like to limit its presence in the Arctic waters. So you see China as a threat in this area?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Well, China is not an Arctic nation. There are many non-Arctic nations. China should receive no special status. There are Arctic nations, and non-Arctic nations. Different sets of rules necessarily will apply. You'll have entitlements under the Law of the Sea; there are lots of rules that apply to those who are in the region. But what we do want to make sure is there is free and fair and open navigation, and China is welcome to participate in that. And if they are prepared to come up here and invest commercially on a straight, transparent basis using private enterprise to do so, but not as a façade, not coming up here ostensibly as a commercial entity but creating a debt trap for countries so that they can ultimately foreclose and seize that property – those are the kind of behaviors we've seen in other parts of the world, and the Arctic is too important to let that happen.

QUESTION: So would you like a – are you saying that the United States would like to change the role of the Arctic Council from environmental issues towards these military and strategic – I'm sorry, I can't pronounce – questions, more of that – more on that side?

SECRETARY POMPEO: We can do it – we can do it all. It's not – one doesn't have to choose one over the other. Indeed, they are related, right? If we don't get this – the security piece right, then the capacity to do all the great things we want on environmental issues and other issues will all be lost. So it's not possible to simply focus on one without the other, nor is there any necessity to do so. I'm convinced we can do all of that. This Arctic Council is an important organization. It's small, it's nimble, it's eight countries. I am confident we can find ways to cooperate together for the betterment of this region.

QUESTION: One of the topics you will – if we are – we have been informed is Venezuela, which you are going to talk with Mr. Lavrov, and now Russia and United States have opposite views of who will be in the head of the country. So is it so that a solution in Venezuela is not anymore in the hands of Venezuelan people?

SECRETARY POMPEO: No, just the opposite. No, this decision is being made by the Venezuelan people each and every day. They held an election. Their constitution required that the National Assembly select an interim president when a fraudulent election was held. They did so. They elected Juan Guaido. The Venezuelan people are speaking. They're demanding democracy. They're demanding that their country not be hijacked by a socialist and by Cubans, who have destroyed their economy. You have children starving in the streets of Venezuela. That is not acceptable to Venezuelan people, and the Organization of American States, the Lima Group, 54 countries are all joined together to help that poor child that is starving. That's the mission set.

QUESTION: But anyway, that's one of the questions you will have with Mr. Lavrov. So what are you discussing about?

SECRETARY POMPEO: I'm sure we'll talk about a range – a broad range of

subjects. It won't surprise me if Venezuela comes up.

QUESTION: And the very last question, which is in – we Finns are very much interested in is concerns of the icebreakers. It is not easy for State Department, it's more for Homeland Security.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Right.

QUESTION: But does State Department support the deal to buy possibly six more new icebreakers from Finland?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Right, we have one right now –

QUESTION: Yeah, only one.

SECRETARY POMPEO: – ready to commence construction, five more to go after that, and the State Department is fully supportive. I hope we can do them quickly.

QUESTION: Can you say anything more? Is that all that's (inaudible)?

SECRETARY POMPEO: In terms of timing?

QUESTION: Mm-hmm.

SECRETARY POMPEO: No, I don't know that the timing is set for the follow-ons, but the Department of Homeland Security and the State Department are all on board with doing this just as quickly as we can. We think it's incredibly important and we want to get it done.

QUESTION: Thank you, Secretary of State.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yes, ma'am, thank you.

QUESTION: Thank you, sir.

The Office of Website Management, Bureau of Public Affairs, manages this site as a portal for information from the U.S. State Department. External links to other Internet sites should not be construed as an endorsement of the views or privacy policies contained therein.

Press Releases: Panama Elections

Press Statement

Morgan Ortagus

Department Spokesperson

Washington, DC

May 6, 2019

The people of the United States commend the people of Panama for exercising their right to vote in free and fair national elections, a sure sign of their thriving democracy. We extend our warmest congratulations to Laurentino Cortizo on his election as the next president of the Republic of Panama.

The United States and Panama share strong ties, tested by time and regional challenges, and built on respect for common values. Panama has proven to be a regional democratic leader, an economic success, and a steadfast partner. We value our deep, long-standing friendship and our shared commitments to transparency and human rights. We look forward to working with the Cortizo administration to advance our common goals.

The Office of Website Management, Bureau of Public Affairs, manages this site as a portal for information from the U.S. State Department.

External links to other Internet sites should not be construed as an endorsement of the views or privacy policies contained therein.

[Press Releases: Turkish Drilling in Cypriot-claimed Waters](#)

Press Statement

Morgan Ortagus

Department Spokesperson

Washington, DC

May 5, 2019

The United States is deeply concerned by Turkey's announced intentions to begin offshore drilling operations in an area claimed by the Republic of Cyprus as its Exclusive Economic Zone. This step is highly provocative and risks raising tensions in the region. We urge Turkish authorities to halt these operations and encourage all parties to act with restraint.

The Office of Website Management, Bureau of Public Affairs, manages this site as a portal for information from the U.S. State Department. External links to other Internet sites should not be construed as an endorsement of the views or privacy policies contained therein.