

Press Releases: Department Press Briefing – October 11, 2018

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Index for Today's Briefing

- [DEPARTMENT](#)
- [MEXICO/HONDURAS/GUATEMALA/EL SALVADOR](#)
- [AFGHANISTAN](#)
- [SAUDI ARABIA/TURKEY](#)
- [MIDDLE EAST PEACE](#)
- [IRAN/INDIA](#)
- [TURKEY](#)
- [DPRK](#)
- [AFGHANISTAN](#)
- [PAKISTAN](#)
- [SAUDI ARABIA/TURKEY](#)
- [BULGARIA](#)
- [DEPARTMENT](#)

TRANSCRIPT:

3:18 p.m. EDT

MS NAUERT: Hi, everyone. Good afternoon. A couple of announcements to start off with today, but before I get to that I'd like to say thanks to Robert Palladino for joining us here at the State Department, back at the State Department, and being the deputy spokesman here. As you know, Robert gave his first gaggle off camera yesterday and he did a terrific job. I had the pleasure of sitting in the back of the room for the first time during a briefing, and boy was it intimidating sitting all the way back there and hearing all of your questions. So had I done that before I'd taken this job, I might not have taken this job. (Laughter.) But you did a fantastic job yesterday.

QUESTION: I find that very hard to believe. (Laughter.)

MS NAUERT: You did a fantastic job yesterday. We're so proud of you and thrilled to have you back here at the State Department.

QUESTION: A-plus.

MS NAUERT: Yeah. Okay. A couple announcements, and then I'd be happy to take your questions.

I'd like to start off by talking about an event that the Secretary attended at the White House earlier today, where he congratulated two Americans who were recognized by President Trump and Secretary Pompeo for their extraordinary work to fight and combat human trafficking. It was the President's Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons. It was an annual meeting that was held at the White House. It was also attended by Ivanka Trump.

The event is typically chaired by the Secretary of State, but for the first time ever the President attended that event as well. Together, they presented the Presidential Award for Extraordinary Efforts to Combat Trafficking in Persons. Minal Patel Davis, who serves as the

mayor of Houston's special advisor on human trafficking, and William Woolf, a law enforcement officer who helped recover more than 125 victims of human trafficking, were acknowledged for the outstanding impact that they have left on their committees. The Secretary also championed an additional \$25 million that was awarded under our program to end modern slavery.

Next – and we've had a busy day here at the State Department – the Vice President was here earlier today. He was here this morning to open the Conference on Prosperity and Security in Central America. The Vice President underscored the United States has never been more committed to helping our Central American neighbors tackle the security and economic challenges driving illegal immigration and to building a more prosperous future for the region. Secretary Pompeo is cohosting the two-day event with Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen, and our Mexican partners, Foreign Secretary Videgaray, the Secretary of Government Navarrete, and we also welcomed President Hernandez of Honduras, President Morales of Guatemala, and Vice President Ortiz of El Salvador.

As Secretary Pompeo noted this morning, we must all work together to secure our borders, to protect our citizens, and increase opportunities for legitimate businesses to invest in the region. For our part, we know that if our partners in Central America are stronger, the United States will be stronger as well.

Last thing I'd like to address – and today we had a group of young Afghan girls here at the State Department. And many of you may recall last year, a little bit of a controversy with the Afghan robotics team. Eventually those gals were brought into the United States. This year they came back. In celebration of the International Day of the Girl, I'd like to welcome members of the first all-girls Afghan robotics team to the State Department today. The team received the 2018 Gamechangers Award at the Asia Society gala in New York City on Tuesday. They've spent the week meeting with several government and NGOs here in Washington. As you may remember, they earned a silver medal at the first global challenge in Washington last summer for a robot that uses solar energy to support small-scale farms in Afghanistan.

We're thrilled to see them back in Washington and want to offer our congratulations to this inspiring group of young women who represent a promising future generation of empowered Afghan girls and women, and serve as a testament to the resilience of the people of Afghanistan.

And with that, I'd be happy to take your questions.

QUESTION: Yes. Congratulations to them. I assume that they didn't have the same visa issues this time around as they did last time?

MS NAUERT: They certainly did not. We –

QUESTION: As I recall, it was the President himself who –

MS NAUERT: Who stepped in, yep.

QUESTION: – intervened and got them their visas.

MS NAUERT: We learned a lesson there.

QUESTION: Okay, good. Well, congratulations to them. Can we start with the whole Jamal Khashoggi case?

MS NAUERT: Sure.

QUESTION: One, is just generally, is there anything new that you can report to us on what your understanding of what happened to him is? And then secondly, the President, in some kind of an interview this morning, said that you guys did have investigators on the ground, and then a Turkish official came around and said no, that's not correct. Can you fill – what's the story here?

MS NAUERT: Sure. So to take the second part of your question first, whether or not there are investigators on the ground.

QUESTION: U.S.

MS NAUERT: The United States Government has offered its support to the Turkish Government to provide law enforcement assistance to the Turkish Government. In terms of whether or not we have people on the ground, that's not something that I can address here from this podium. That's not something that the State Department does. I'd have to refer you to some of our other government agencies that could or would be involved with that, such as Department of Justice and others.

QUESTION: Right. But there are regional security DS officers on the ground already.

MS NAUERT: Yeah.

QUESTION: They've been – they're always there. Do – you can't say if they're –

MS NAUERT: We do have that. Our Diplomatic Security officers, to my knowledge, don't handle those types of investigations. They handle State Department matters only.

QUESTION: And then the first part of the question. Is there anything –

MS NAUERT: Anything new on –

QUESTION: – new in terms of your understanding or lack of understanding of what happened to –

MS NAUERT: Yeah. And I think it's something that's really important to keep in perspective. As we have said from the beginning, we are not certain about what happened to Jamal Khashoggi. The Secretary released a

statement earlier this week. The Vice President has talked about this. The President has talked about this. We are all concerned about his whereabouts. We don't have any information on his whereabouts right now or what happened to him. As you can see, anytime you turn on the news or you open the newspaper there is a lot of speculation, and there are a ton of rumors out there. We are making determinations and watching this for facts. We don't have the facts yet. And so we are going to hold back on our comments until we have concrete information that the U.S. Government can share. We don't have that information at this point right now. An investigation, as our understanding is, is underway, and we're not going to get ahead of that.

QUESTION: Okay. Last two, but they're part – the same, kind of the same question. The Turks and the – Turkey has announced that they're going to join in or take part in a – some kind of working group with the Saudis to shed light on what happened. Is this something that you might be involved in or is it something that you would welcome? And then secondly, I just wanted to follow up on a question I asked Robert yesterday.

MS NAUERT: Well, let me just take that part, because we welcome a thorough and transparent investigation, and we've been extremely clear about that. I can also add another piece of information, that we have communicated with the Saudi ambassador to the United States. It's my understanding that he is on his way back to Saudi Arabia. We have said to him that we expect information upon his return to the United States. When and if we have additional information to bring you, we will bring it to you right away.

QUESTION: But he's on – is your understanding – did you tell him that he better get his –

MS NAUERT: We absolutely did not. That was not at our –

QUESTION: But you've told him not –

MS NAUERT: That was not at our direction. I can't speak on behalf of that government, but I can tell you that I'm told that he's headed back to that – to his home country, and we expect some information when he gets back.

QUESTION: Have you told him not to bother coming back unless he has an explanation?

MS NAUERT: Matt, no. No.

QUESTION: All right. And then –

MS NAUERT: I'm not going to get ahead of things. I mean, look, the U.S. Government is extremely concerned about this situation. This has the highest attention at the highest levels of the United States Government.

QUESTION: I'm not trying to make light of it. I just want to know, have

you told him that, look, when you get back here you better have a – you better have an explanation for –

MS NAUERT: We would like some information. We certainly would, and I don't think we've been shy about that.

QUESTION: All right. And then last one, and I'll shut up. Yesterday I asked Robert and other people did too about this – reports about intelligence that you guys may or may not – or reports that you did have intelligence that there would be some – there might be some harm that came to him. He gave a kind of cryptic answer at first, said that you had no advance notice of his disappearance. And then when I pushed him and said does that mean you didn't have any advance notice that anything bad might happen to him, not disappearance necessarily, he said we had no advance notice. So I just want to clarify. Does that you mean you had no advance notice of – or no intelligence or any information about anything that might or possibly could happen to him at the consulate?

MS NAUERT: Almost never do you hear us talk about matters of intelligence here at the State Department.

QUESTION: Yeah. But –

MS NAUERT: I'm not going to get into those matters of intelligence. An investigation is underway.

QUESTION: But he did yesterday.

MS NAUERT: I have nothing to add beyond what Robert said yesterday here from that podium. But we are going to let this investigation take place. The United States Government will continue to offer its support. We will provide information based on facts, based on information that we have. And when we don't have facts, we won't bring them to you. I would just be mindful of the speculation and a lot of rumors that are out there, and let's wait until we can get some solid information.

Okay. Lesley, go ahead.

QUESTION: Thank you very much. I just want to come back to the Saudi ambassador. He's gone with a message from Washington back to Riyadh? Or was he recalled?

MS NAUERT: No. And that's what I just said. My understanding is that he's on his way back there. We said when you come back we'd like to hear – get a report from you.

QUESTION: Right. And so the message from the U.S. is like – is from him – bring us what the Saudis know or the outcome of an investigation or –

MS NAUERT: I'm not going to get ahead of an investigation.

QUESTION: I'm just a little confused.

MS NAUERT: No, there's no reason to be confused about this, okay.

QUESTION: Right.

MS NAUERT: Because there is an investigation underway.

QUESTION: Correct.

MS NAUERT: We're not going to get ahead of that investigation. We will let that investigation play out. I know there are a lot of people who want answers at this point, understandably so. But we're not going to get ahead of those investigations. And so bring us whatever information you have when you return, and we'll go from there.

QUESTION: Is that above what the Secretary as well as Bolton then discussed with the crown prince yesterday?

MS NAUERT: I'm sorry. Is that "above"? What does that mean?

QUESTION: Meaning so yesterday Bolton – two institutions in the government spoke to MBS yesterday, the Crown Prince. Were they not satisfied with what they were told and therefore the ambassador's got to come back?

MS NAUERT: I wouldn't assume that at all. Look, obviously we have multiple agencies and departments in the United States Government that are paying close attention to this issue. So I would not make the assumption that we didn't get satisfactory answers and therefore required another level of communication to go in.

QUESTION: Another level, correct.

MS NAUERT: Okay. This is an – obviously an interagency effort. Okay?

Said, go right ahead.

QUESTION: I want to move on.

MS NAUERT: Okay.

QUESTION: I have another question, though.

MS NAUERT: Hold on. Okay. Goodness gracious.

QUESTION: Okay. Because I wanted to move on, they want – yeah.

MS NAUERT: Okay.

QUESTION: I want to talk about –

MS NAUERT: Look, I don't have much more for you on that, and we're not going to let this go on and on, because we're sticking to the facts here and I'm not going to speculate.

Said, I'll be happy to come right back to you. Rich, go ahead.

QUESTION: Okay. Okay. All right.

QUESTION: Heather, do you know if the Saudi ambassador left because of this incident, or was he planning on going –

MS NAUERT: Okay, third time.

QUESTION: This –

MS NAUERT: Third time. We did not request that he would go.

QUESTION: Okay, but –

MS NAUERT: He went over there – my understanding, he's going over there, but any additional information on that I'd have to refer you to the Saudi Government. We simply said: When you come back, provide us a report, provide us a readout of what you've learned.

QUESTION: And who spoke with him from State?

MS NAUERT: I don't have any information for you on that. But we've had exchanges at multiple levels at the State Department.

Hi, Abbie.

QUESTION: He asked just one part of my question, but the other question was: Reporters Without Borders requested or asked that the UN step in to have an investigation into this. Is that something that the U.S. would support?

MS NAUERT: I'm not aware of it. You're telling me about that. That's the first I'm hearing of it, so I don't have any comment on it.

QUESTION: Generally speaking do you have any comment on the UN –

MS NAUERT: I'm not going to comment. I'm just not aware of that.

Okay. Yeah.

QUESTION: Heather, just the reaction on the Hill? There have been some calls on the Hill already saying that arms assistance, for example, defense assistance should be at risk because of this. The President spoke about that today. Is it the position of the State Department that that's not on the table, that –

MS NAUERT: I think you're jumping to conclusions. This is entirely a hypothetical situation at this point. We don't know what happened. We don't have the facts of the case. We want to learn what happened. The President has said that. The Secretary of State has said that. Ambassador Bolton has said that as well. So let's not get ahead of ourselves. Understandably, it – it's understandable that Congress and others are concerned, but let's not get ahead of ourselves on that

point. Okay?

Okay, Barbara.

QUESTION: But it's not entirely hypothetical. I mean the guy's missing.

QUESTION: So the Senators yesterday –

MS NAUERT: No, absolutely. We don't know what happened, okay. Let's wait and determine what happened.

Barbara, go ahead.

QUESTION: Also about the Hill. Republican senators yesterday were going and looking at U.S. intelligence related to this case, and Bob Corker said it looked – it made the Turkish accounts look quite convincing. So –

MS NAUERT: Barbara, I wouldn't have – I would not have anything on that. We don't do intelligence.

QUESTION: So – no. No. I'm just – I'm wondering if Secretary Pompeo has seen the same –

MS NAUERT: Pardon me?

QUESTION: Has Secretary Pompeo seen the same intelligence?

MS NAUERT: Barbara, we don't do intelligence out of this building. We do diplomacy.

Okay, Said, go right ahead.

QUESTION: Can I just ask you one more question on –

QUESTION: But intelligent diplomacy.

MS NAUERT: Intelligent – we try to do intelligent diplomacy.

QUESTION: Which is one clarifying question as well. There's been a lot of speculation or reporting on what Mr. Khashoggi's immigration status is. Can you clarify at all whether or not he's a lawful permanent resident, if he's on a visa, anything like that?

MS NAUERT: I think – well, we don't discuss visa applications. I don't have anything additional for you beyond what we've already discussed on this on his status.

Okay, Said, go right ahead.

QUESTION: Okay, great. Very quickly on the Palestinian issue. Yesterday, Secretary Pompeo at the award dinner said that, "Israel is everything we want the entire Middle East to look like going forward." What does that mean?

MS NAUERT: Well, I think it means a lot of things.

QUESTION: Yeah, what is it?

MS NAUERT: One, recognizing that we have a strong partner that is a democracy, that is prosperous. It is a country that desires peace. Something that you all will appreciate, they have a free press and a very vibrant press at that, and a free market economy. Those are all good things that we look to when we see other nations around the world that are stable that we look to as sort of a beacon of hope in that sense. And I think that's exactly what the Secretary was referring to in his speech.

QUESTION: But Israel occupies another people –

MS NAUERT: Pardon me?

QUESTION: It occupies another people. It imprisons them. It has checkpoints all over whole territory. It imprisons journalists. It does all kinds of terrible things – confiscates land, does all kind of things. You are telling the –

MS NAUERT: It is a fact that it is a democratic.

QUESTION: Right.

MS NAUERT: It is a fact that it is prosperous.

QUESTION: Right.

MS NAUERT: It is a fact that they have a free press. It is a fact that they have a free market economy that is strong. Those are all good things. Every nation on this globe has issues and areas where they could do a lot better. The United States included in that, okay.

QUESTION: So you would like to see, let's say, Lebanon sort of duplicate what Israel is? Okay.

MS NAUERT: I think – I think Israel is a strong model in that regard.

QUESTION: Couple – couple more things. Couple more things. Is there any news regarding Lara Alqasem? Is there anything on that?

MS NAUERT: I believe she has a hearing that's scheduled tomorrow. You're referring to the American citizen.

QUESTION: Right.

MS NAUERT: She has a hearing that is scheduled for tomorrow. We provide consular services to American citizens elsewhere. My understanding is that we will have someone either accompany her or be present at that hearing. Beyond that, I don't have anything more for you.

QUESTION: And I promise lastly, yesterday at the closure of the PLO

office, the community was out there and their concern is that they have – as American citizens, they also are Palestinians, and they have issues of deeds, land, and so on that they used to do through this PLO office. Now they don't know what to do about it, how they claim their land, how to get permits, how to do all kinds of things. Does the State Department – you don't have to answer me now, but if you have an answer to this issue that where they should turn to. Like, is it a third country that the PLO can name or you can name?

MS NAUERT: So the operations were required to cease by October the 10th. That is accurate. We're not in a position to speak about where those individuals should go to seek that advice about their deeds, their properties back home. The Palestinian Authority has – perhaps has that information, and I would encourage people to contact the Palestinian Authority.

QUESTION: Heather?

MS NAUERT: Hi, Laurie.

QUESTION: Hi. On the Iranian sanctions, there's a new round set to take effect in November, and Iraq has been asking for a waiver. What is your position on that?

MS NAUERT: Well, overall with regard to those sanctions that will take effect on November 4th – and you're referring to the oil sanctions for Iran and countries that choose to continue purchasing oil from Iran – we have conversations with many partners and allies around the world about those sanctions. We make our policies very clear to those countries. We continue to have conversations with the Government of Iraq about that particular issue and the implications for the reimposition of sanctions that were previously lifted or even waived under the JCPOA.

We've given the same message to all countries around the world, and the President has said, and that's that the United States is committed to re-enforcing all of our sanctions. We believe that countries coming together and recognizing the malign influence that Iran has had around the world is important. We know that Iran and the Government of Iran has taken the benefits that it received under the JCPOA and they've poured that money not into their own population, not into the good of the people, not into its medical hospitals and things of that nature, but rather they've used it for its own nefarious programs.

QUESTION: That sounds like you're saying no to the Iraqis. Is that –

MS NAUERT: I'm not forecasting anything. You know we don't forecast that kind of stuff anyway. Okay.

QUESTION: Can I have a quick follow-up on that?

MS NAUERT: Hold on, let's move on.

QUESTION: I have a follow-up on that.

MS NAUERT: Yes, go right ahead.

QUESTION: Yes. So what is your stand with India placing fresh orders now despite the threat of these U.S. sanctions? And the U.S. has – you have said from this that you are trying to find alternative suppliers for them and all that. Because on Monday the oil minister said that the two state refineries, not the private ones, have placed orders for importing crude oil from Iran in next month.

MS NAUERT: I've seen that report. As you all know, we were recently in India where that was a topic of conversation with the Indian Government. The President had addressed it – I believe it was just earlier today – which he was asked about that question about whether or not India would buy oil from Iran after sanctions are reimposed. And the President said – and I'm not going to get ahead of the President, certainly – but he said we'll take care of that. He was asked also about CAATSA sanctions and the imposition of – possible imposition of CAATSA sanctions. And he said, you know, India is going to find out. And India will find out. We'll see. So I'm not going to get ahead of him, but certainly when we hear about things such as purchasing oil or purchasing of the S-400 systems, it's not helpful. The United States Government just reviews that very carefully.

QUESTION: I would like you to find what – or explain what the President was saying. But when he said India will find out, or we will take care of it, do you see a threat? Do you see a friendly, like, okay, we'll let them do it or we will take care of it?

MS NAUERT: Well, the President doesn't like to forecast his actions. I can't speak for the President. I'd just have to refer you back to the White House.

QUESTION: Really?

MS NAUERT: Pardon?

QUESTION: He pretty much has done everything that he said he was going to do on the campaign. (Laughter.)

MS NAUERT: Hi, Cindy. How are you?

QUESTION: Heather, a question on – please, forgive me, but –

MS NAUERT: On this in particular?

QUESTION: This – no, this is another major news headline of the day.

MS NAUERT: Okay, hold –

QUESTION: And it's Brunson.

MS NAUERT: I will come back to you.

QUESTION: And I think we need to address that.

MS NAUERT: Hold on. I'd be more than happy to, of course.

QUESTION: Thank you.

MS NAUERT: Lesley, I've already come to you. Let me try to make it around the room.

QUESTION: I know.

MS NAUERT: And I promise you I will come back to you.

QUESTION: Thank you. We need to get to those.

MS NAUERT: Okay, let me go to Cindy with VOA.

QUESTION: I can't ask about –

MS NAUERT: She has not had a question yet today.

QUESTION: Go for it. Please.

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

MS NAUERT: Oh my goodness. (Laughter.)

QUESTION: Yes, thank you. I was also going to ask about –

MS NAUERT: Let's share. Let's share, kids.

QUESTION: Right.

MS NAUERT: Okay. Cindy, go right ahead.

QUESTION: Any updates on Pastor Brunson?

MS NAUERT: Oh, Lesley, she stole your question. (Laughter.) Oh, I'm so sorry.

QUESTION: She saw my page.

MS NAUERT: In all seriousness, as you all know, this is a case that the entire U.S. Government has followed very, very closely. Pastor Brunson has been under house arrest and prior to that imprisonment for far too long. The Secretary gave a speech last evening in which he spoke about Pastor Brunson's case. As many of you are well aware, Pastor Brunson has a hearing that's scheduled for tomorrow. Our folks from our embassy in Turkey have been very engaged in this case, have been providing assistance and support in any way that we can for Pastor Brunson and his family.

Let me also take this opportunity to remind you that we have locally employed staff who have also been detained, in addition to the NASA

scientist who is still in Turkey as well, who is an American citizen. All of those cases have our – the United States Government's tremendous concern and we are watching those carefully.

Now, Pastor Brunson's case happens to be tomorrow. We don't have any further information on it other than that the Secretary spoke yesterday, and he said it's the right thing for them to do to release Pastor Brunson. It's the humanitarian thing to do for Turkey to release him. I'm hopeful that before too long he and his wife will be able to return to the United States. That would be an important step forward for the U.S. and Turkish relationship.

I don't have anything for you other than that, but we look forward to watching the case very carefully tomorrow.

QUESTION: But can you – can you either confirm or knock down a report from NBC that there is a deal?

MS NAUERT: Yeah, I am not aware of any such deal. I'm not aware of any such deal that has been reported by NBC News.

QUESTION: Thank you.

MS NAUERT: Okay.

QUESTION: Well whether you're aware of it or not, is it possible there is one?

MS NAUERT: I'm not aware of anything. That's all – I can only speak about what I'm aware of and what we do out of this building. We are not aware of anything. There is a hearing that takes place tomorrow. There is a legal process that still plays out. We'll be there in support of Pastor Brunson and his family at that hearing.

QUESTION: Are you aware of the – if the Secretary has spoken to his Turkish counterpart today or plans to?

MS NAUERT: I do not have any information on whether or not the Secretary has any calls of that nature. We have engaged with the Turkish Government on many levels in the past about this case and we're watching it carefully, but I don't have any call lists for the Secretary. Okay.

QUESTION: Heather?

MS NAUERT: Hi, Janne.

QUESTION: Hi. Thank you, Heather. Maybe you can answer or not these issues – I hope. It is reported that North Korean Kim Jong-un rejected – heavily rejected the U.S. interpreter at Secretary Pompeo and North Korea Kim Jong-un's official meeting at the Pyongyang.

MS NAUERT: Could I – I'm sorry. Could I ask you to just repeat that first part about Chairman Kim?

QUESTION: Chairman Kim has rejected U.S. interpreters at Pompeo and Kim Jong-un's meeting. So why North Korean Kim Jong-un rejected U.S. interpreter? That is the –

MS NAUERT: I'd have to refer you back to that government to get an answer on that, but we feel that we were well represented in that meeting with Secretary Pompeo, with Special Representative Steve Biegun, and we also had a colleague of ours in the room who speaks fluent Korean. So we feel that we were well supported in those meetings.

QUESTION: But periodically, you may need both sides interpreter. Why he need their own side? Why they don't want it, the United States side interpreter? That is not fair.

MS NAUERT: We had equal numbers of people in that room having those meetings, and we feel fully confident that those meetings were fully understood, not only by the United States side but I believe by the North Korean side as well.

QUESTION: How do you understanding the North Korean Kim Jong-un's Korean saying? You probably –

MS NAUERT: Well, I certainly wouldn't.

QUESTION: Yes.

MS NAUERT: But my colleagues who were in the room who speak Korean would. Okay.

QUESTION: All right. Thank you.

MS NAUERT: Next question. Anything – anybody else have something on North Korea? Boy, since when are you all not interested in North Korea? Okay. Lalit, go right ahead.

QUESTION: First a quick follow-up on Iran.

MS NAUERT: Okay.

QUESTION: Has India requested for a waiver on Iranian oil?

MS NAUERT: I think I already addressed that.

QUESTION: You (inaudible). And secondly, India has – Saudis supplying additional oil to India from next month onwards. Is it part of the U.S. request to Saudis to –

MS NAUERT: Saudi Arabia sent oil to India? I wouldn't have – I don't have any –

QUESTION: Is Saudi Arabia releasing more oils to India next month?

MS NAUERT: I'm afraid I don't have any information for you on that. Okay.

QUESTION: Okay. And then I have two more questions on South Asia, one on Afghanistan. Ambassador Khalilzad is in Saudi Arabia right now. Before, he was in Afghanistan, Pakistan. Has he made any headway in the peace talks?

MS NAUERT: Well, I think any time we're there on the ground we're making headway. And the fact that we have a special envoy whose main job is to bird-dog this issue – sort of an American term, forgive me for that – but to fight for this issue every single day, to work hard on this issue with his team, that's important. I think that's a step forward. He has a lengthy trip to the region. He was just in Afghanistan. He spent some time in some other countries. He will head back to Afghanistan at some point before the end of his trip, I believe to give the Afghan Government a complete readout of his entire travels.

The purpose of this entire trip is to talk about the peace and reconciliation progress. This is something that will be Afghan led, Afghan owned, but supported by the U.S. Government. So anything beyond that, I don't have, but I can tell you that he is meeting with a wide range of folks on the ground, from – or, excuse me – from President Ghani to the Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah, political groups, the High Peace Council, Afghan media, and also civil society.

QUESTION: And one on Pakistan. Pakistan had reached out to IMF for bailout package of around \$8 billion. I know Secretary Pompeo had commented on this few months ago, expressing his revisions on under what conditions IMF will give bailout package to Pakistan. What the U.S. has to say now?

MS NAUERT: Sure. So we understand that Pakistan has formally requested assistance from the International Monetary Fund. In all cases, we examine that closely from all angles of it, including Pakistan's debt position, in evaluating any type of loan program. This is something that we've been tracking fairly closely. The Secretary had spoken about this a few months back, I know, in some interviews not that long ago. I think part of the reason that Pakistan found itself in this situation is Chinese debt and the fact that there is debt that governments have incurred that they maybe thought wouldn't be so tough to bail themselves out of, but has become increasingly tough. So – last question and then I've got to go.

QUESTION: I just want to –

QUESTION: I got two, but go over there, but I have –

MS NAUERT: Abbie, go ahead.

QUESTION: – two that I need to get done before the end of the week.

QUESTION: I have one more question on the subject here at the top. Yesterday, there was a call for senators triggering the Global Magnitsky Act. Can you say what role the State Department would play in that and

if there's any comment generally on the letter that was sent by the senators saying that there was a need for this investigation.

MS NAUERT: Yeah. So Global Magnitsky is a human rights legislation, a law that is imposed or goes into effect for certain countries under certain circumstances.

QUESTION: (Sneezes.)

MS NAUERT: Bless you, Rich. That is something that – we don't have enough information at this point. So I understand that Congress may be interested in that, in a Global Magnitsky investigation, but we don't know the facts of this case just yet. So I think they're getting ahead of themselves at this point. We will watch the situation very carefully, very closely, wait for the facts to come out, and then we'll get there.

To answer your question, though, about what State Department's role is in that, State Department, Department of Justice, and also the Department of Treasury under the Office of Foreign Assets Control would all play some sort of a role in this.

QUESTION: Heather, can I get –

MS NAUERT: Okay. Go ahead, Matt.

QUESTION: – two very briefly? Just – one is we've been talking a lot about the Khashoggi case and as you say, you don't know what happened.

MS NAUERT: Right.

QUESTION: There is a case with another journalist in Europe, actually, though, who we do know what happened. She was raped and murdered in Bulgaria, and I'm wondering if you guys – I don't think you've been asked about this yet.

MS NAUERT: No, we've not yet discussed it.

QUESTION: So do you have any comment or reaction to this?

MS NAUERT: Well, sure. I woke up this morning, I saw that story about this young woman working so hard and something so horrible happened to her. I'd like to start out by expressing my condolences to her and her family and her colleagues who certainly are heartbroken by this loss. We don't know what the motivation was for the person who did this to her, so I don't want to jump to conclusions that she was targeted because of her profession. I think the investigators are not at that point yet where they can – that – where they can make that assertion. So for now, I'm just going to be able to express our deepest condolences for the loss of this Bulgarian woman.

QUESTION: All right. And then secondly, I want to go back to something that is of great interest to you and the Secretary, at least in the past couple of days, in this ongoing war of statements between you and the

Secretary and Senator Menendez over State Department appointments.

After the statement that came out last night from the Secretary, which again blamed Menendez and his – Senator Menendez and fellow Democrats for holding up the nominations, Senator Menendez's office came back again with basically a restatement of the – of his office's denial of the first one. And I just – I think everyone can sympathize with the Secretary and the fact that he – that the appointments aren't going as speedily as possible or as they possibly could.

But one of the points that Senator Menendez's office makes is that it is a myth that only Democrats have opposed Trump administration nominees. Isn't that a true statement? Isn't that fair? There have been nominees who have – are currently being held up and have actually had to have been withdrawn because of Republican opposition to them. You have a situation –

MS NAUERT: Let's keep this in perspective, all right? First of all, we have more than 60 nominees who have not been voted through the Senate at this point. Some of them have holds on them right now.

QUESTION: Right.

MS NAUERT: The Senate had said to the Secretary when he first came in, when he was going through his confirmation hearings – sir, will you staff up the State Department. You remember the conversations, all of you, that we had one year ago. The flood of people leaving the State Department, State Department demoralized, Black Friday – you remember that one as well – Foggy Bottom is burning. You remember all those headlines. This Secretary came in and he said I'm going to change things. In order to do –

QUESTION: Well, are you saying all those are true? (Laughter.)

MS NAUERT: Hold on, hold on. In order to do my job, in order for the State Department to do its job on behalf of the 75,000 people who work for the State Department around the world, let's get our field – our team on the field. And this Secretary has prioritized that. He's brought in a counselor who is working nonstop to get that team on the field. The Secretary said in that confirmation hearing, I will get my team on the field, U.S. senators, but I will also need your help. When there are more than 60 people who are not getting through the Senate, the Senate is not doing its job. And there are some members in particular who are holding them up.

QUESTION: Okay.

MS NAUERT: Now, are there some who have hit some hurdles because senators have additional questions or maybe they don't like them, maybe they feel like they are not qualified? Sure, there are a handful, as there would be in any administration. But by and large, of the 60-some people who have not gotten through the Senate, the vast majority of them

are senior Foreign Service officers. These are the career professionals who work for the State Department, who are trying to get out in the field to go be the ambassadors of – Robert, help me fill in the countries – Togo. They need an ambassador. Our ambassador is still hanging out in the Senate. We'd like to get our ambassador to Togo. Help me out with some of the other countries.

STAFF: Equatorial Guinea.

MS NAUERT: Equatorial Guinea. We need to get our person into Equatorial Guinea. Give me another one.

STAFF: Panama.

MS NAUERT: Panama. We need to get our ambassador into Panama.

QUESTION: Okay. So –

MS NAUERT: And I'm sure those countries want their ambassadors. So the Senate needs to do its job, get our people through. In addition to those Foreign Service officers I just mentioned – again, the vast majority of those 60-some people who have not been pushed through yet – we do have political appointees. We need an under secretary for management. Management, under secretary, there are only a handful of under secretaries here, seven or so at the State Department. We need someone to permanently run management. Get these people through. Put them up for a vote so the State Department can conduct the diplomacy it needs to do on behalf of the American people.

QUESTION: Okay. Well listen, I am not going to denigrate the international importance and significance of Togo and Equatorial Guinea and the role that they play as it – related to U.S. foreign policy. But I think first of all that Menendez, his office takes issue with the more than 60 – he says it's 56 – and also says, I mean, what about nominating people for Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Australia, Mexico, Pakistan, Egypt, Singapore? These are countries that, with all due respect to Togo and Equatorial Guinea, are also important to U.S. priorities.

MS NAUERT: And you are – Matt, you're absolutely right. Let me finish.

QUESTION: I would say that – I would say that –

MS NAUERT: Let me finish. Hold on.

QUESTION: Well let me finish my question. I was –

MS NAUERT: You are absolutely right about that.

QUESTION: All right.

MS NAUERT: How often do you hear that? (Laughter.) Not at home, not at home at least, right?

QUESTION: Hear – my God, I think that is the first time I’ve ever heard that from this podium. (Laughter.)

MS NAUERT: No you’re – Matt, you are right about that. Pakistan –

QUESTION: But you haven’t nominated anyone for those.

MS NAUERT: – Turkey – hold on. Those countries deserve an ambassadorial nominee. And I can tell you –

QUESTION: Right, and you guys got them – but you guys have to nominate someone.

MS NAUERT: I can tell you those two countries in particular, we have people in the pipeline.

QUESTION: Yes.

MS NAUERT: Now as you all know –

QUESTION: But they haven’t been nominated.

MS NAUERT: – the nominations are actually announced out of the White House. So we don’t make those announcements here from the State Department. But we have people through the pipe – going through the pipeline right now. It’s a lengthy process. I went through it myself when I became spokesperson. Background investigations, financial disclosures, ethics reports. It takes a long, long time, and there’s a lot of information that you have to go back and fill in again.

QUESTION: All right, but Heather –

MS NAUERT: It’s a lengthy process. We’ve got people identified. We’re pushing to get them through just as quickly as possible.

QUESTION: Heather, but you had – you cannot deny that you had a nominee for assistant secretary of state for East Asia, a very important area, South China Sea, all this stuff, who had to withdraw because a Republican senator said that he would do – this is Senator Rubio of Florida – would do everything he possibly could to stop her nomination. You have a situation, a crisis that the Vice President – that everybody talks about it all the time – in Venezuela which is absolutely awful. The country next door to that, Colombia, there’s a career Foreign Service officer who is being held up by a Republican senator.

MS NAUERT: There are some –

QUESTION: Is that not true?

MS NAUERT: There are some cases, yes, where –

QUESTION: Are those cases true? Okay.

MS NAUERT: – where a few members on the Hill –

QUESTION: So –

MS NAUERT: Let me finish. You asked –

QUESTION: It's not all Menendez's fault.

MS NAUERT: It is largely the fault of Senator Menendez. I'm sorry.

QUESTION: Okay. All right.

MS NAUERT: Let's get those folks to do their job so we can get the team on the field. We need to get it done. Okay. Thanks, everybody, we'll see you soon.

(The briefing was concluded at 3:53 p.m.)

DPB # 52

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