

Press Releases: Interview With Barbara Plett Usher of BBC

Interview
Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Washington, DC
September 21, 2018

QUESTION: You may have been told, Mr. Secretary, that I want to mostly focus on North Korea, but just a quick question about the latest news: We understand that the Security Council meeting next week is about nonproliferation. The President had just tweeted that he's going to chair a meeting on Iran. So what's the meeting about?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So Iran will certainly be a topic. The meeting is on a broader set of nonproliferation issues, but the world should know Iran leads the charge when it comes to the risk of proliferation. They continue to be the world's largest state sponsor of terror and they continue the programs that have threatened the world for so long. The President's determined to push back against them, and the meeting that he will chair next week will be centered on ensuring that nonproliferation is at the top of the world's agenda.

QUESTION: So let's talk about North Korea. There have been developments this week. Kim Jong-un has said he's ready for rapid denuclearization, but as you know, he first wants the U.S. to declare a formal end to the Korea War. South Korean president has said that's a good idea. Is the U.S. prepared to do that?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So I've been great about this: I'm not going to talk about the negotiations, where they stand, give any details that we choose not to make public. But I think it's important for the world to remember: This is a country that threatened the world with nuclear weapons and missile systems. The world then made a decision to vote a set of UN Security Council resolutions that mandated the denuclearization of North Korea. The two leaders met, and Chairman Kim promised President Trump that he would do it, and my task and the task of others is to ensure that we implement the agreement from Singapore.

QUESTION: So Kim Jong-un wants another summit with Mr. Trump. What does he

have to do to get it?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yeah, I mean, I think it's fine. The two leaders are going to have to make lots of things happen. They're the decision makers in each of the two countries. I'm going to travel to Pyongyang before too long if everything falls in place and schedules all work. We'll continue to work to solve this vexing problem. And then the two leaders will continue to build upon the negotiations that are had at other levels and through other channels.

QUESTION: So it's in the works?

SECRETARY POMPEO: It's in the works. We're hoping everything falls together and it makes good sense here before too terribly long.

QUESTION: Given the way that things are moving, do you think you can say that there's no longer a nuclear threat from North Korea?

SECRETARY POMPEO: No, there's still a threat. We still have work to do. But the good news is the threat is reduced from where it was. No test and no missile launches. To complete out a nuclear program, any good engineer will tell you you have to conduct tests, you still – there's work to do. When we took office, the world was closer to war with North Korea than it is today. That's a big step forward. But we're going to keep the economic sanctions in place until such time as North Korea is fully and verifiably denuclearized. That's the agenda that President Trump has set out, it's what he agreed to with Chairman Kim, and we're on our way to achieving that end state.

QUESTION: He has set out the agenda, but of course it was he who tweeted that there was no longer nuclear threat from North Korea.

SECRETARY POMPEO: I know the tweet very well. The President was saying that the risk is reduced, that the effort that North Korea had been engaged in to rapidly seek to perfect their missile system and their weapons system, their nuclear weapons system, that risk had been greatly reduced as a result of the efforts that this President undertook.

QUESTION: But by expressing his views in real time publicly – everyone can see them – doesn't he – isn't there a danger that he gives away the game? I mean, it seems as if Kim Jong-un has picked up on that. He gets ahead of the policymaking. That's the view of allies, anyway.

SECRETARY POMPEO: That's not what the allies tell me. Let's step back just one moment. Whatever means, whatever modalities this administration has used to achieve the denuclearization of North Korea, it has proven more effective than at any time in America's history. So one can critique my style, the President's style, our different modes of operating. This much we can say: For the first time yesterday, a North Korean party paper talked about denuclearization and a peaceful, denuclearized Korean Peninsula. That's just one example of the progress that we have made today. So I'm very proud of what we've done and the means by which we have done it. I think President Trump is putting us in a position to get to the end that the world so richly

deserves.

QUESTION: You haven't been tempted to take any documents off his table, have you?

SECRETARY POMPEO: I find that question offensive; I truly do. I've worked with this President closely, perhaps as closely as any other cabinet member. I briefed him almost every day as CIA director. This is a President who is thoughtful, who takes information, who deliberates, who asks hard questions and tosses out ideas about how we might think about things differently. No, I'm working diligently to deliver the foreign policy that President Trump is setting forth for America. It's a challenge. The previous administration left the world in a dangerous place. Leading from behind has real consequences and our allies knew that, and they are thankful for the new approach that President Trump has brought to American foreign policy.

QUESTION: You mentioned your position as the CIA director. In order to do a deal, you'll need to know when Kim Jong-un is lying. How will you know that?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yeah, I'm not going to talk about what we know or don't know. The best way to know if we're at the end is what we've talked about, verification, right? This is the *sine qua non* of the end of the discussion. It's when we can fully verify that the North Korean peninsula – the North Korean country has made the strategic decision to take all of their nuclear weapons program and stand down. And at that time, sanctions will be relieved and as President Trump has said, there'll be a true brighter future for North Korea and its people.

QUESTION: Mr. Pompeo, thank you very much for speaking with us.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you very much. It was great to be with you. Good to see you.

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[Press Releases: Passing of President Tran Dai Quang of Vietnam](#)

Press Statement

Heather Nauert

Department Spokesperson

Washington, DC
September 21, 2018

We were deeply saddened to hear of the passing of President Tran Dai Quang of Vietnam. Our thoughts and prayers go out to President Quang's family and the people of Vietnam during this difficult time.

President Quang was a strong supporter of the U.S.-Vietnam relationship, helping advance our bilateral partnership to new heights on the basis of mutual respect, shared interests, and a common desire to promote peace, cooperation, prosperity, and security in the Indo-Pacific region.

We honor his legacy and mourn his loss alongside his family and our friends, the people of Vietnam.

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Press Releases: Remarks at the 13th Annual Values Voter Summit

Remarks
Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Omni Shoreham Hotel
Washington, DC
September 21, 2018

SECRETARY POMPEO: Good afternoon. That is an unbelievably warm welcome. It is wonderful to see so many patriots here who carry the torch of freedom forward. Thank you all for being here.

It was great, I heard Tony say too – I was glad, it sounded like there were a few more Marines than Army guys here. (Laughter.) But I am so privileged to have the opportunity to be here. There were some folks who didn't want me to come here today. I don't know if any of you read about that. But it seems to me only natural that an American Secretary of State would come to talk to you about America's values and interests. And I know that religious freedom is important to each of you, and it's important for me to be here today to talk to you.

Thanks, Tony, for your kind introduction and for the opportunity to speak here today. I've known Tony as a fierce, courageous defender of America's essential freedoms, the thing that I do now each and every day as a Secretary of State. And I didn't know that Tony had a connection to the State Department until I was preparing for this. A few years ago, he was part of our Anti-Terrorism Assistance Program. And someone said that the dark was scared of him; I hope the terrorists were scared of him, too. (Laughter.) Thank you, Tony, for your important work.

This State Department under President Trump is fighting to make sure that American citizens and American interests come first in our foreign policy. (Applause.)

At the very heart of our mission is the preservation of human dignity. And this administration understands an eternal truth – that each person has an

essential worth simply because he or she is human and having been created by God. And our Declaration of Independence enshrines that self-evident truth – we all know this – that each of us is endowed by our Creator with inalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Whenever I say that, I am always reminded when I taught fifth-grade Sunday school with my wife, Susan, we were teaching them about faith, but we were talking about religious freedom in America and how we were so blessed to be able to go to that church and worship. And I talked to them, and I read that phrase to them, and one of the little fifth-grade boys raised his hand and said, “I especially like that pursuit of happiness part.” (Laughter.)

These ideas come from our unwavering belief in the inalienable rights. It’s what makes America so exceptional, so free, so prosperous – the greatest nation in the history of the world. Our calling as Americans is to preserve that, to protect it, to keep that ancient spark of wisdom in the laws of our own republic, and to do so as best we can all around the world.

President Trump, in a remarkable speech he gave in Warsaw, Poland, said that, “Above all, we value the dignity of every human life, we protect the rights of every person, and we share the hope of every soul to live in freedom.”

For Americans, that’s our birthright – freedom. But for many around the world, it’s an aspiration. And each of us can do many things to help fulfill that aspiration. I think that sometimes here in America we take it for granted. Those of us who are believers don’t see that in so many places in the world that simple thing, that belief that we have, is challenged. And I urge each of you never to hide it under a bushel, to understand – to understand how important it is that we speak about this, we speak about faith and freedom in a way that is candid and clear, and the best of what America has to offer.

When I came to the State Department, I talked about “swagger” and the State Department getting its swagger back. It’s been mocked a little bit – indeed, by Kanye West. He had a song or something. I’m pretty unfamiliar with that terrain. (Laughter.) But what I meant by that was what I just said. We have this incredible privilege to be citizens of the United States of America, to have the religious freedom and to build relationships around the world. It allows us to protect human dignity of our own people and advance it when that freedom is under assault.

I want our diplomats, those diplomats who are tasked with representing you all around the world, I want them to comfortably, unapologetically, and respectfully advance American ideals and interests in every corner of the world. (Applause.) And you should know that because we believe these principles are worth living by, we proudly raise our banner of self-government, freedom, and human dignity all across the world. We’ll never accept a diminished role for America on the global stage. We’re going to lead from the front. (Applause.)

Now, it’s a little different from when I was a soldier. I am now a diplomat. I think you can see the change already. (Laughter.) Yes, you laughed just

exactly right there. (Laughter.) My team, my diplomatic team, has responsibility on a couple of fronts. I want to talk to you about them. First is we need to make sure that America prospers here at home, so the work that we do abroad should be designed to support President Trump's efforts to make sure that America's economy is strong.

We all know that human dignity depends on work, and the opportunity to work is something that the State Department has a role in to bring people to America, to invest, to help create and grow this remarkable economy that is ours here in the United States. The Trump administration fights for jobs at home because we know that the ability of every man and woman to put their hand to labor is not just a matter for their pocket books. It's about human dignity and pride.

We also know – and this is what I want to focus on today – that we are ensuring human dignity by advancing one of our most cherished and indispensable liberties. It's enshrined in the First Amendment. It is our religious freedom. Since the earliest days of his presidency, President Trump has directed all of us in his administration to advance and defend religious freedom at home and abroad, because religious freedom is a universal, a God-given right, to which all people – all people – are entitled. (Applause.)

It is – religious freedom is also an essential building block for all free societies, and our founders knew this. It's a freedom that I care personally about, and I know you do as well. It's the one that drew me to serve my country in the United States Armed Forces. But sadly, today more than 80 percent of the global population lives in countries that place significant limitations on religious freedom. And I know it brings many of us heavy hearts to watch the ongoing persecution of Christians and other minorities in countries like the Islamic Republic of Iran. We are fighting for human dignity of the Iranian people by speaking the truth about the oppressive and corrupt regime that controls those people. Religious minorities in Iran are routinely imprisoned, stripped of their rights, kicked out of their jobs, and subject to many other abuses.

Earlier this year – I'm sure some of you saw this – there was a moving news segment on 20 Iranian Christians who made a dangerous journey outside of Iran to an undisclosed location. After years of gathering in secret, all they wanted was to spend a few days in a place, in a place where they could conduct a baptism ceremony without fear of reprisal. And so 20 of them secretly flew to a foreign country and rented a hotel swimming pool for some baptisms. One man said he had waited 10 years since his conversion for this very moment. This is the level of secrecy needed to be a Christian inside of Iran.

I could give you many more examples, examples of how Iranian people have been mistreated by a repressive, corrupt, and hypocritical regime for 40 years. As part of a larger persecution of the Sunni minority last year, one court sentenced four Sunnis to five years imprisonment for the crime of jogging, of all things. A Sufi Muslim man was hanged in June after a sham judicial process.

After President Trump withdrew from the flawed deal, he implemented a new strategy to force a change in the Iranian regime's behavior. And part of this strategy is to make sure that the voices inside Iran crying out for accountability, justice, and religious freedom know that the United States stands with them. We stand with the Christians, the Jews, the Sufis, the Muslims, the Zoroastrians, the Baha'i, and all other faith groups in Iran who have had their human dignity violated by this regime. We know the importance of God-given right of all people to worship according to their conscience.

Another example is in China. Hundreds of thousands, and possibly millions, of Uighurs are held against their will in so-called re-education camps, where they're forced to endure severe political indoctrination and other awful abuses. Their religious beliefs are decimated. And we're concerned too about the intense new government crackdown on Christians in China, which includes heinous actions like closing churches, burning bibles, and ordering followers to sign papers renouncing their faith.

One of the most important things I think I can do in my role as Secretary of State is to speak to these issues. Tony referred to the first-ever Religious Freedom Ministerial that we held at the State Department.

Now, if you're like me, you don't know what a ministerial is. (Laughter.) Two years ago, I probably could not have told you. Let me try it this way. When I was a deacon at my church back home, if we were trying to confront a problem, we held a meeting. That's what – it's just a meeting. (Laughter.) But it was an important meeting. It was a meeting where representatives from over 80 countries attended a unique event to stand with the United States in our cause of defending the rights of all individuals to worship how they choose and believe what and how they want.

We let the world know that religious freedom mattered and that it is a fundamental human right, and the United States would expect them to honor that.

I must say, when the meeting kicked off, I didn't know exactly what to expect, but the response – the pent-up demand for this opportunity – was so overwhelming that we're going to do it again next year. (Applause.) It – I hope it will become a tradition that is honored by decades of happening, and I hope to attend the 30th, 40th, and 50th ministerial. (Applause.)

We truly do. We envision this becoming – we envision this becoming a landmark gathering for the world. We didn't just talk; we came up with plans, we helped countries that were challenged to set up institutions where religious freedom would be talked about and discussed, and if they were a little further along, to help them continue to develop that inside their own country. And most of all, we wanted to do this to set an example. It's what the State Department can do best in representing each of you all around the world, making this nation the continued beacon – the beacon that says one's right to worship their god is a fundamental freedom that every human being has and that America values this and will demand it.

We're confident that our progress will continue because the State Department

has been a lifelong champion for religious liberty. We're blessed now to be quarterbacked by a good friend of mine – two Kansans now – Senator Sam Brownback, leading our religious freedom efforts. (Applause.)

As I close today, a couple thoughts. I want to tell you a final quick story about how we're ensuring human dignity – by working to bring home Americans that have been unjustly held captive by other nations.

Far and away the greatest highlight to date of my job as Secretary of State was bringing home three Americans from captivity in North Korea. (Applause.) Thank you. Thank you.

It – it's emotional still to speak about it. When Kim Dong-chul, Kim Hak-song, and Tony Kim got off our plane at about 2:30 a.m. at Andrews Air Force Base, their faces were bursting with tears of joy. They hugged and they wept with their families. And President Trump was on the tarmac to meet them. (Applause.)

I remember – I remember the trip well. I remember our – my hope and my prayers that we would be able to deliver these people home, and when they arrived at the airport, I was already aboard the plane and I saw them get out of the vehicle and they could walk and they appeared to be in reasonably good health. I wasn't emotionally prepared for the moment, and even now as I speak out it – speak about it, it reminds me of the greatness of our nation.

On that flight, they scribbled out a note and you can see it if you go back and look at the video. One of them – one of the men handed me a little note card and I put it in my vest pocket as they were climbing down the stairway. As I got home that night with Susan, I pulled it out and on it – on that index card was Psalm 126, and it read as follows:

"When the Lord brought back the captives to Zion, we were like men who dreamed. Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy. Then it was said among the nations, 'The Lord has done great things for them.' The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy." (Applause.)

Even as we sit here today in this beautiful hall, there are thousands of Christians and people of other faiths in North Korea and around the world like Kim Dong-chul who are praying for deliverance from captivity and from fear of persecution.

His deliverance gives us hope and energizes our prayers that all those mistreated for their faith around the world will endure and one day be free.

His story fuels the Trump administration's commitment to protect human dignity by ensuring that all those with the fire of faith in their hearts to be able to exercise their God-given rights.

There's another man you've likely heard of, Pastor Brunson. Let me say right now here we are sparing no effort to return Pastor Brunson home to the United States. The work is important. (Applause.) He – the work is important. He has been wrongly held, and his proper place is to be able to return here to once

again practice his faith in our great nation. (Applause.)

Know that – know this: President Trump will never forget about our own, and that is one of the greatest American values of all.

On the day Pastor Brunson returns, just like the men I spoke of a bit ago, they also will be able to say that “the Lord has done great things for us,” and again our hearts will be filled with joy.

Thank you. May God bless you all. (Applause.)

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[Press Releases: Secretary Pompeo's Call With Japanese Foreign Minister Kono](#)

Readout
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
September 21, 2018

The below is attributable to Spokesperson Heather Nauert:□

Secretary Michael R. Pompeo spoke by phone with Japanese Foreign Minister Kono yesterday. They discussed the ongoing pressure campaign to achieve the final, fully verified denuclearization of the DPRK as agreed to by Chairman Kim Jong Un in Singapore. They also talked about the upcoming UN General Assembly and global security issues of importance to the U.S.-Japan alliance.

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Press Releases: Department Press Briefing – September 20, 2018

Heather Nauert
Spokesperson

Department Press Briefing
Washington, DC
September 20, 2018

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TRANSCRIPT:

3:22 p.m. EDT

MS NAUERT: Good afternoon, everyone. Hope you're well today. I'd like to start off with telling you a little bit about who we welcomed here at the State Department today. Today Secretary Pompeo met with the Georgian prime minister and reaffirmed the strength of the U.S.-Georgia bilateral relationship. Ten years ago, Russia invaded Georgia and continues to occupy the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. In spite of Russians' occupation of 20 percent of its territory, and in spite of deaths, kidnappings, and other abuses that have occurred under Russia's ongoing occupation, Georgia continues to reform its democratic institutions and develop its economy.

The United States stands with Georgia; U.S. and Georgian soldiers serve side by side in Afghanistan, where Georgia is the largest per-capita contributor to NATO's Resolute Support Mission, and we look forward to one day welcoming Georgia into NATO. The United States continues to support Georgia's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders, and the United States will continue to support Georgia's efforts to enhance the rule of law and accountable government.

Next, I'd like to thank the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for their votes earlier this week where they approved several of our outstanding ambassadorial nominees. This helps fill vacancies in American embassies all over the world and to advance American interests. We still have far too many vacancies here at the State Department, from ambassadors to regular folks here serving at the assistant secretary level, also the under secretary level.

So today we call on the Senate to help us get the finest diplomatic team on the field and get to work on behalf of the American people. A diverse group of more than 55 nominations still await the Senate's approval. As we head to the United Nations General Assembly, it is more crucial than

ever that the world's diplomatic corps see an American team ready to execute on our foreign policy. Today we implore the Senate to act so that these candidates may take their place along the finest – alongside the finest of diplomats.

Lastly, I'd like to mention a little bit about the schedule in the coming days, as many of you will be joining us at the United Nations General Assembly. The Secretary arrives in New York on Sunday the 23rd for the 73rd Session of the UN General Assembly. The White House will be issuing the President's schedule. Ambassador Haley, you may have seen a short while ago, just concluded a press conference highlighting some of the events that we can expect at the High-Level Week.

I thought I'd take a few moments to give you a sense of the administration's priorities for this year's UNGA, and they fall within five overarching themes. First among the priorities is addressing the global threat posed by weapons of mass destruction. That includes the proliferation of chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons, as well as ballistic missiles. The President intends to chair a UN Security Council meeting on that issue, and you can expect considerable discussion of North Korea, Iran, and Syria in this category throughout High-Level Week and beyond.

The United States will use UNGA High-Level Week to highlight humanitarian crises around the world and to encourage all nations to do more to support humanitarian response and also food security. The United States believes UN member-states can do more to address threats to peace and security, in particular the world drug problem. That's something that the President, the First Lady, and the Secretary and others will certainly be highlighting in the early part of the week.

The United States will continue to emphasize also global initiatives to defeat ISIS, al-Qaida, and other terror groups that threaten America and its interests. We will reinforce last year's call for member-states to support meaningful and lasting reform to ensure that the UN is serving the interests of its membership effectively, efficiently, and accountably.

Regarding Secretary Pompeo's schedule: On Monday, Secretary Pompeo will join the President's Global Call to Action on the world drug problem. On Tuesday, Secretary Pompeo will speak out against Iran's proliferation in an event hosted by the United – United Against Nuclear Iran. On Tuesday, Secretary Pompeo looks forward to hosting the annual Transatlantic Dinner. He's excited about that. We know many of our European friends are looking forward to joining that as well. On Wednesday, Secretary Pompeo will participate in an African Union meeting regarding the peace process for South Sudan. On Thursday, he'll join the P5 foreign ministers to address some of the world's most pressing global issues. Then on Friday, the Secretary will meet with some of our Middle East partners to address shared security goals.

Some of the other senior officials who will be in New York next week

include our Deputy Secretary John Sullivan, Under Secretary David Hale, Under Secretary Andrea Thompson, our Director of Policy Planning Kiron Skinner, our Special Representative Steve Biegun, and Special Representative Brian Hook, among many others from the State Department.

The United States seeks a strong, sovereign, and independent partnership with countries that control their own destinies, and the United Nations General Assembly provides an excellent platform to advance our American interests. And I look forward to seeing you all in New York and talking with you nonstop, I am sure.

I'd be happy to take your questions.

QUESTION: Probably more than you want.

MS NAUERT: (Laughter.) And I imagine we'll be having a few drinks together as well. So looking forward to that.

QUESTION: Shh. What was Thursday again? I'm sorry, you were going very fast and I can't –

MS NAUERT: Let me go back to that. Bear with me one second. And we will provide updates to the schedules. As you know, with bilateral meetings, there is a lot of shifting in the schedules, and so we will provide you with the schedule in the evening and then any revised schedules in the morning.

Let's see, Monday – bear with me.

QUESTION: No, no, Thursday is what I missed. Sorry, everyone.

MS NAUERT: Can anyone else help out Matt? Can the class help?

QUESTION: Well, we can –

MS NAUERT: Ah, excuse me. On Thursday he'll join the P5 foreign ministers to talk about global challenges.

QUESTION: Global challenges.

MS NAUERT: More specific details, we'll provide that for you.

QUESTION: All right.

QUESTION: Are there any specifically on Syria?

MS NAUERT: I – look, you're all going to have a lot of questions, I understand, about a lot of these things. Syria will, of course, come up under proliferation, but any side meetings related to that, I just don't have that for you today.

QUESTION: So –

MS NAUERT: Some of these things are still being developed, and we'll

provide you updates to the schedule on a daily basis.

QUESTION: All right, okay. Well, so I was trying to come up before this with something very profound to ask, but I failed miserably.

MS NAUERT: Okay.

QUESTION: So do you know –

MS NAUERT: I've bored you to tears.

QUESTION: I realize that you don't have his exact schedule for bilats yet, but yesterday in his statement he said he had asked the North Korean foreign minister to meet with him at some point next week. Do you know, has that – is that going to happen, or is it still not going – I'm not asking for a time or a venue or a place.

MS NAUERT: I understand. So an invitation went out. I don't have any updates for you on that. We certainly stand by ready to meet if they are able to.

QUESTION: Okay. And then the same goes for Special Representative Biegun. Do you know, has a date for the Vienna – proposed Vienna meeting –

MS NAUERT: So that –

QUESTION: Clearly, it won't be next week if he's going to be in New York.

QUESTION: Steve Biegun will be in New York with us and I am sure looks forward to meeting a lot of you in the coming days and weeks ahead. We don't have anything specific on his schedule with regard to any travel to Vienna, but he stands by ready to travel.

QUESTION: Okay. And –

QUESTION: The meeting with the Middle Eastern partners, is that on Wednesday? Is that what you said? Wednesday or Friday?

MS NAUERT: I put it away. Now I have to go back and look.

QUESTION: It was on Friday.

QUESTION: Friday. Yes, okay.

QUESTION: Have any bilats been set yet?

MS NAUERT: Oh, yes, we do. But as you know, these things are shifting a lot.

QUESTION: Well, that's fine.

MS NAUERT: So we're not ready to announce all the specifics just yet, but

we will on a daily basis get you all the information that you need so that you can plan your schedules. Okay? And Said, I'll get back with you on that answer to that question.

QUESTION: And then I had one other logistical question.

MS NAUERT: Okay.

QUESTION: And that is the Tuesday thing, the Iran, United Against Nuclear Iran event, that is part – that's a nongovernmental group that was very opposed to the Iran deal. I'm presuming that that is not – do you know what the venue is for that?

MS NAUERT: I don't know where that is being held offhand.

QUESTION: Okay.

MS NAUERT: Okay. Lesley, go right ahead.

QUESTION: Can I have – yeah, can I have a follow-up? So what does – can you give us some kind of insight into what the Secretary is thinking about this next meeting with the North Koreans? Does he feel – I mean, does he want to get a list of all the North Korean nuclear facilities from the foreign minister? Where does he – where does he want to take it? Can you give us some kind of –

MS NAUERT: So I think the first thing that we want to do is get a very fulsome readout that resulted from the meeting between North Korea and South Korea. We have received a preliminary readout – as you know, we coordinate very closely with the South Koreans – but have obviously have yet to meet with them face-to-face to fully flesh out the negotiations and the conversations and how those went in North Korea. So that's the first step.

The Secretary looks forward to speaking with them in the days to come. The President, along with – our President, along with President Moon, will have an opportunity to chat, I believe in person, in the early part of the week. So that will be the first step, having those conversations to learn in a more granular level how those conversations went.

We are open to meeting, certainly, as you well know. The Secretary put out a statement yesterday congratulating President Moon on a successful series of meetings in North Korea. We welcome the reaffirmation of the elements that were agreed to in the Singapore summit, the joint agreement, and we also welcome Chairman Kim's decision to complete the previously announced dismantlement of various sites.

So all of that is good news. We see that as progress, and we're prepared to engage immediately in negotiations if and when they're ready.

QUESTION: So there's a lot of focus on the date, the 2021. What exactly is the goal for denuclearization by that time?

MS NAUERT: Well, this is something that the Secretary has spoken to before. I think when we were in Seoul, I think you and I were sitting right there with the Secretary, Francesco, as he talked about this and highlighted the fact that we get this done pretty quickly when or as North Korea cooperates. The intention is to get this done by the time the – at the end of the President's first term. So this is not something new. It's somehow been interpreted as something new, but this is something that the Secretary has said before.

Okay, Francesco.

QUESTION: You didn't mention the Secretary chairing a UNSC meeting on North Korea on Thursday. Is this still happening?

MS NAUERT: As far as I know. Let me have my colleagues double-check. Yes, it is. Yeah.

QUESTION: Yes. And then on – yesterday in his statement, the Secretary didn't mention the fact that Chairman Kim, Kim Jong-un, is asking for corresponding measures to dismantle its nuclear complex. Are you ready to corresponding measures, which would mean a phased, step-by-step, reciprocal process?

MS NAUERT: I think I'd go back to something that Chairman Moon^[1] has often said, and that we have to have –

QUESTION: Chairman Moon?

MS NAUERT: Excuse me.

QUESTION: Chairman Moon or President Moon or Chairman Kim?

MS NAUERT: You know I always do this, right? I get tired at the end of the day and people start marrying up like that, so –

QUESTION: Yeah.

QUESTION: This is just the beginning. (Laughter.)

MS NAUERT: I think I'd just go back to what I've said about that very issue before, and that nothing can happen in the absence of denuclearization. Denuclearization has to come first, okay.

Hi, Janne.

QUESTION: So no corresponding measure to – for the dismantlement of the site?

MS NAUERT: Look, I don't have any guidance on that beyond what I've just told you, that denuclearization is something that has to come.

Hi, Janne.

QUESTION: Hi. Thank you. North Koreans said that if United States take

steps first, they will destroy or shut down Yongbyon reactors. Do you think this is successfully – Moon say that is – I don't think so – Moon does make any successful denuclearizations meeting with Kim Jong-un.

MS NAUERT: Look, I think any time that we have our government sitting down and talking with their government, that we have President Moon talking with Chairman Kim, it is a step in the right direction – a step in the right direction to start to have regular dialogue. This is something we had talked about a couple months ago, and I said these things will become regular, where it's not such a surprise when the U.S. is having conversations, trading emails, phone calls, whatever you want to call it, having meetings with North Korea. And I think it's just another step in that direction, okay.

QUESTION: But should North Korea not develop future nuclear weapons or should not all nuclear weapons be destroy? So what do you want? What United States want? They want a future nuclear weapons or –

MS NAUERT: Well, we'd like to see a brighter future for the North Korean people and for the North Korean Government. We hope that they would like to see the same thing. That is something that Chairman Kim had indicated to the President, that he shared that vision to have a brighter future for North Korea. That means a denuclearized North Korea. That's something that the United States doesn't just believe in, but many other countries have joined us in this overall mission to achieve denuclearization of North Korea, okay.

Hi. Nazira.

QUESTION: Yes, thank you. Heather, do you know that President Ghani will have meeting with President Trump or Afghan delegation, what kind of meeting they will have in New York next week?

MS NAUERT: I understand that the Afghan Government will have representation at the UN General Assembly. I don't have any specific meetings to read out for you, especially on behalf of the President, so we'll just have to wait for the White House to put out that – their meeting readout schedule.

QUESTION: Sure.

MS NAUERT: Okay.

QUESTION: Can we go back to North Korea?

MS NAUERT: We'll come back to that. Hey, Abbie.

QUESTION: Hey. My apologies if I missed some of this at the top, but were you asked whether or not Secretary Pompeo will be meeting with any member of the Palestinian delegation, if there's an attempt to be meeting with a Palestinian while he's there? And separately, given the general feeling that often the U.S. is ganged up on on this issue, do you anticipate any sort of blowback from recent U.S. decisions to not

fund UNRWA and take funding away from the East Jerusalem Hospitals?

MS NAUERT: Yeah. So I'm not aware of any meetings taking place. Again, I don't have the full schedule, but I'm not tracking any meetings between the Secretary and the Palestinians at next week's UN General Assembly.

To the hospital issue – and I know some of you have asked questions about that in the past, so I'll just address that right off the bat, and you all know the news that was made there. The United States Government does not believe that it is responsible for paying for the hospital bills. Now, that may shock some people to hear that. The Palestinian Authority is the one that actually incurs these bills on behalf of Palestinian citizens and others who seek treatment at that hospital. The Palestinian Authority is solely responsible for paying for the treatment of Palestinians in those hospitals.

Historically, they have neglected to pay the bills at their hospital of those individuals and other bills related to the hospital. Our funding in the past has generously shored them up. The PA, though – we have seen the Palestinian Authority is prioritizing paying its debts – has failed to prioritize paying its debts and has instead put money into funding things like payment to families of terrorists and payment to – as you all are well aware of the Taylor Force Act – and payment to families of those who have been imprisoned. We think that that is a wrong decision, that the Palestinians should be funding the care of their own people in the hospitals and that it should not be the responsibility of the United States Government to pay those bills when the Palestinians have that money that they could choose to use on their own people, as opposed to funding the families of terrorists and those who are serving in prison.

QUESTION: Sorry, wait a second, Heather. Are you saying that the Palestinian Authority takes money that it would otherwise be using to pay for medical treatment for Palestinians in the East Jerusalem Hospital Network and instead pays – gives that money to the relatives of prisoners and people who have committed anti-Israel acts or killed –

MS NAUERT: Three words to answer that question: Money is fungible, and that is the money that we provide to different entities and groups throughout the Palestinian Authority can be used for other things. So we see that. We hope that the Palestinians will choose – the Palestinian Authority will choose to spend money on its own people at the hospital, and the United States should no longer be forced to shoulder that bill.

QUESTION: Well – but forced?

QUESTION: Forced?

QUESTION: The United States was never forced to pay Palestinian hospital –

MS NAUERT: Encouraged. The United States should no longer pick up that tab. Okay?

QUESTION: You – but you did it –

MS NAUERT: Yeah.

QUESTION: – keep these hospitals funded because you are, as you consistently say, the most generous country on Earth.

MS NAUERT: And we –

QUESTION: So your argument is that this is not – it is not ungenerous to take away money that could be used –

MS NAUERT: No, Matt, that the Palestinian Authority could pay these bills on their own.

QUESTION: Could it? I mean, do you have the numbers to know?

MS NAUERT: Could pay these bills on their own, but you know what, they're choosing to spend money that goes to the families of terrorists. Under the Taylor Force Act, that is something that is now established into law, and so –

QUESTION: Has someone crunched those numbers? Because the Palestinian Authority doesn't – I mean, it takes in some money, but a lot of money is supposed to be transferred to it by Israel, and that money has been in the past withheld from it. So has someone done the numbers to show that they could actually pick up the – pick up the money that you cut from the hospital network?

MS NAUERT: I'm not sure it's our responsibility to crunch the numbers to figure out whether or not they have enough money –

QUESTION: Well, it kind of is if you're saying that –

MS NAUERT: – to share in – to pay for those hospital bills. The United States has shored them up in the past. The United States Government has made the decision at this point to no longer do that.

Said, I'm sure you have some questions about this.

QUESTION: Yeah, I just have a couple of follow-up. Even in your report on terrorism yesterday, you mentioned that this agreement with Israel, paying the prisoners, goes way back to 1965. So the Israelis have agreed to this a long, long time ago. You mentioned that in your report.

MS NAUERT: I'm sorry, the Israelis have agreed to what?

QUESTION: I'm saying the payment to prisoners and so on was something that was agreed through international bodies with the Israelis even before the '67 war. Another thing is that, on these hospitals, the funding predates the PA. It goes way back before the PA on these particular hospitals.

And my question to you is actually on settlement. It's not a topic that you address frequently, but in fact, I know your position –

MS NAUERT: Let me – before we go on to settlements –

QUESTION: Okay. Fine.

MS NAUERT: – and I'd be happy to address that – I just want to highlight something, in that we have heard reports the Palestinian Authority has said that it will pay money to the family of the man who murdered an American citizen, Ari Fuld. We've heard that report. We are looking into that. While I'm at it, because we've not talked about it at this briefing, let me add that we are deeply saddened by the loss of this American citizen and our condolences go out to his family and also his friends. I want to make clear that we condemn the Palestinian Authority payments to the families of prisoners, of convicted terrorists, and deceased Palestinians, and we strongly oppose any program that incentivizes those acts of violence and terror. And let me remind folks that that law, the Taylor Force Act, became law and was a bipartisan law, and that is something we continue to stand behind. Okay?

QUESTION: No, we understand this –

QUESTION: Just –

MS NAUERT: Yeah.

QUESTION: You just said that you've seen reports and you're looking into it, that they will pay this – the perpetrator, the killer of this guy, but both Ambassador Friedman and Jason Greenblatt have said that they have condemned this payment, as if it was confirmed and had already happened. So are you trying to walk that confirmation back at all?

MS NAUERT: Not in the least. I just haven't seen their tweets. I'm sorry. I just haven't seen that today. Okay, in terms of settlements, your question.

QUESTION: Yeah, let me ask you on the settlements, because this is an issue that can be discussed at length, the payments and so on, because they're paying the families. They're not paying the person, the perpetrators. A lot of them have children and so on that they have nothing to do with that decision. But I – but that's something for you –

MS NAUERT: You don't see that happening in the United States. That's not a normal thing to do.

QUESTION: I understand. Okay, but –

MS NAUERT: It's not a normal – it's not a right thing to do to pay the families of those who have murdered innocent people. I mean, that's something that the United States Government on a bipartisan level passed a law against. It has bipartisan support.

QUESTION: They did – I mean, I understand your condemnation.

MS NAUERT: Yeah.

QUESTION: I understand your feelings. But the day before, two Palestinian children, one 12 and one 14, were gunned down in Gaza. Were you aware of that?

MS NAUERT: I was not aware of that. I don't have any information on that for you.

QUESTION: Okay. All right.

I wanted to ask you about the settlements. I know it is not a topic that we discuss often because you guys say, "Our position on the settlements is well known." But I want to bring your attention to the fact that this administration has not in any way expressed outrage on the settlement activities that is just going crazy every day. There's not a day that goes by without expropriating land, without throwing Palestinians out of their land, without taking land and so on, establishing outposts and so on. You don't even express any outrage or you don't call on the Israelis to stop. Are you planning to, as a show of goodwill, considering this is the time of high tensions between Palestinians and Americans, to show that America does stand by its principles and does consider these settlements to be illegal?

MS NAUERT: Said, I'll say it one more time, and that is that the Israelis have assured the President that they will take his considerations – his concerns into consideration regarding settlements. They've assured the President of that. Unrestrained settlement activity does not advance the prospects for peace. We've been clear about that. Peace will not be easy. We all know that very well. And it will take some time, but we're ready to sit down and help facilitate those talks when the parties are ready.

Okay. Hey, Laurie.