

U.S., Saudi Arabia and Israel: “Iran supports terrorists”

Required Annotations		Student-Created Annotations		Summary / Questions / Reflection	
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New U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo **underscored** the need for unity in the Persian Gulf during a brief visit to the Saudi capital on Sunday as Washington aims to muster support among allies for new sanctions against Iran.

Pompeo assured Saudi Arabia that unless there is an agreement by European partners to improve the Iran nuke deal to make sure the Islamic Republic never possesses nuclear weapons, the United States will abandon the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran, [which, though opposed by a large majority of Americans], was [pushed through] by President Barack Obama.

“Iran destabilizes this entire region,” Pompeo said in a joint press conference with Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir.

“It supports **proxy** militias and terrorist groups. It is an arms dealer to the Houthi rebels in Yemen. It supports the murderous Assad regime (in Syria) as well.”

Pompeo also met briefly with Saudi King Salman and his 32-year-old son, Crown Prince Mohammed on Sunday before heading directly to Jerusalem for talks with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel, Iran’s [other] arch-enemy. ...

After meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu in Tel Aviv, Pompeo said, “We remain deeply concerned about Iran’s dangerous escalation of threats to Israel and the region — and Iran’s ambition to dominate the Middle East. The United States is with Israel in this fight.”

Senior State Department officials had said Pompeo would discuss Iran’s behavior in the region and call for sanctions to **curb** the Islamic Republic’s ballistic missile program during his discussions with Saudi leaders, [who are also greatly concerned with Iran’s nuclear program].

During Sunday’s press conference, Jubeir said, “Iran should be dealt with by imposing further sanctions for its violations of international laws relating to ballistic missiles.”

Iran continues to support Houthi rebels in Yemen by providing military equipment, funding and training in violation of the U.N. Security Council resolutions, Pompeo said. He noted that Houthis routinely fire missiles into Saudi Arabia, threatening Red Sea shipping and the Saudi people. Yemen’s Houthis have fired over 100 missiles into Saudi Arabia, the latest killing a man in the southern Saudi province of Jizan on Saturday.

The attacks have fueled accusations by the United States and the Saudi-led coalition that Iran is providing the missiles to its Houthi allies. The Islamic Republic [Iran] denies this.

While pledging to help Saudi Arabia “with its defense needs,” Pompeo also stress the necessity for Middle Eastern nations to act. He said:

“America is prepared to stand with Saudi Arabia in pursuit of the shared interests and security [but] the nations of the Middle East cannot wait for American power to crush terrorism for them. Muslim nations must be willing to take on that burden.”

Senior State Department officials also said that Pompeo would urge Saudi Arabia and other Gulf allies to resolve their nearly year-long dispute with Qatar.

... Saudi Arabia, along with the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt, cut off travel and trade ties with Qatar last June, accusing it of supporting terrorism and the countries’ arch-rival Iran on the other side of the Gulf.

Doha [Qatar] has denied the accusations and has said its three fellow Gulf countries aim to curtail its sovereignty. For its part, Iran denies supporting terrorism or having sought to develop nuclear weapons.

The United States, which has military bases in both Qatar and some of the countries lined up against it, is trying to mediate the feud. Trump publicly sided with the Saudis and Emiratis early in the crisis but is now pushing for a resolution to restore Gulf unity and maintain a united front against Iran.

One U.S. official said Washington feared the **rift** risked undermining efforts to contain Iranian influence and crush Islamist militants. ...

Just hours after being confirmed as Trump's top diplomat on Thursday, Pompeo set off on a whirlwind trip, first to NATO in Brussels and then to our Middle East allies. [In Brussels, he warned NATO foreign ministers that the U.S. was ready to scrap the Iran deal if it isn't strengthened "significantly."]

The trip comes as President Trump considers whether or not to abandon [his] May 12 deadline to end the Iran nuclear deal he [and a large majority of the American public] see as deeply flawed. He has called on Gulf allies to contribute funding and troops to stabilize areas in Iraq and Syria where a U.S.-led coalition has largely defeated Islamic State jihadists. ...

President Obama's 2015 agreement required Iran to limit enrichment of uranium – which can be used for nuclear fuel or for building nuclear weapons. In exchange, most international sanctions against Iran [which were greatly hurting the economy] were removed.

President Obama and the leaders of Russia, China, Germany, Britain and France (the other signatories to the 2015 nuclear pact), claimed it was the best way to prevent Iran from developing nuclear bomb capability. Iran has repeatedly claimed its ballistic missile program has nothing to do with its nuclear weapons and is non-negotiable.

President Trump sees three defects in the deal:

1. a failure to address Iranian ballistic missiles;
2. the terms under which U.N. inspectors can visit allegedly suspect Iranian nuclear sites;
3. "sunset" clauses under which key limits on the Iranian nuclear programme will start to expire after 10 years.

Questions

1. Who is Mike Pompeo? What did Mr. Pompeo assure Saudi Arabia of regarding U.S. participation in the Iran nuke deal?
2. List the ways the Iranian regime makes trouble in the region (to its sworn enemy Israel as well as to other Muslim nations).
3. Why does Saudi Arabia want new sanctions placed on Iran, according to Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir?
4. While assuring Saudi Arabia the U.S. will help them with their defense needs, what did Mr. Pompeo call on the Saudis and other Middle Eastern nations to do?
5. Why do Saudi Arabia and its Gulf allies UAE, Bahrain and Egypt have a problem with Qatar, and what action did these allies take against Qatar?