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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6225

July 23, 2018

The Honorable Mike Pompeo
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Pompeo,

I am writing today to call on you to reinstate the Department's Daily Press Briefings. Since you were confirmed as Secretary of State three months ago, your Department has conducted just *ten* press briefings. That is an average of less than one per week. This trend is not new, however. Throughout this administration, the Department has held a public briefing, on average, just once or twice per week. Before this administration, they were daily.

Freedom of the press is a foundational value of the United States and critical to holding elected officials accountable. Unfortunately, the President himself has on more than one occasion called the press the enemy of the people. As the public face for U.S. diplomacy to the rest of the world, the Department's actions demonstrate that the U.S. remains committed to an open and free press.

At a time of unprecedented, head-spinning developments for U.S. foreign policy, our relationship with our allies, and our role on the world stage, the lack of interaction with the American public and the world via the press is particularly concerning. The President seems to have conflicting views with that of his own Cabinet and career national security professionals. The American people deserve transparency.

As you are well aware, critical vacancies remain at the Department. Since the unceremonious dismissal of the most recent one, the Administration has not even put forth a nominee to serve as the Under Secretary of Public Diplomacy, who would most directly be responsible for ensuring that the Bureau of Public Affairs fulfills its mission of "engaging domestic and international media to communicate timely and accurate information."

The public deserves to hear—either directly from you or your spokespeople—how the Department is protecting and advancing our interests around the world.

In your confirmation hearing, you committed to be open, transparent, and engage with the press. I intend to hold you to that commitment. I look forward to hearing your plan to immediately increase the Department's briefings to the press, and to restore them to a daily occurrence.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Robert Menendez". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a period at the end.

Robert Menendez
Ranking Member