Pompeo gets to work as secretary of state

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Mike Pompeo has some pressing global issues to deal with upon his confirmation as US secretary of state on Thursday.  
After the 57-42 confirmation vote by the Senate, Pompeo headed to Europe, where the 54-year-old former CIA chief will be in Brussels to attend a NATO foreign ministers summit, to be followed by a trip to the Middle East until Monday, according to a release from the State Department.  
He is supposed to keep up pressure on NATO's European members to live up to their past pledges to boost defense spending, while during his stops in Saudi Arabia, Israel and Jordan, the future of the Iran nuclear deal and the conflict in Syria will be significant agenda items, The Associated Press reported.  
US President Donald Trump, who fired his first Secretary of State Rex Tillerson on Twitter last month, said in a statement issued by the White House that Pompeo's "immense talent, energy and intellect" would be "an incredible asset" for the US at this "critical time in history".  
Trump refrained from tweeting about Pompeo's confirmation by press time Thursday night. But he asked the Senate to approve Pompeo as soon as possible in a Twitter post on April 19, saying, "He will be a great Secretary of State!"  
Pompeo, however, avoided being the first nominee for secretary of state ever rejected by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee only when Republican Senator Rand Paul, who had vowed to oppose him, shifted position minutes before the panel voted on Monday, Reuters reported on Thursday  
The number of yes votes for Pompeo on the Senate floor on Thursday was only one more than Tillerson got.  
Most Senate Democrats voted against Pompeo.  
Pompeo also will prepare for the summit between Trump and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's top leader Kim Jong-un as early as next month.  
Kim is meeting with South Korean President Moon Jae-in at the border village of Panmunjom on Friday, a summit that some believe will set the stage for a Trump-Kim summit.  
Hours after Pompeo's confirmation, the White House tweeted two photos of him shaking hands with Kim about three weeks ago, saying, "Secretary Pompeo will do an excellent job helping President Trump lead our efforts to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula."  
"I opposed his nomination because I believe he will only reinforce President Trump's worst instincts, but now that he has been confirmed, I certainly hope to be proven wrong," Senator Richard Blumenthal was quoted by the Agence France-Presse as saying.  
But Senator John Thune said on his Twitter account, "Mike Pompeo is beyond qualified to serve as our nation's top diplomat, and I'm glad the Senate voted to confirm him as our next secretary of state."

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