

Press Releases: Interview With Jason Miles of KHOU-11 News

Interview
Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Houston, Texas
March 12, 2019

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, thanks for sitting down with us. Let's start with kind of the news of the day, and that is the decision to withdraw personnel from Venezuela. What can you tell us about that?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So Jason, it's great to be with you, thanks for your time today. We made the decision last night that the situation in Venezuela changed, that the risk to American diplomats was too great. And so we've decided that we'll have them all return to the United States. Keeping them safe is our first priority. We also found that it was constraining some of the things that we think we're going to need to work on over the next weeks. We wanted to make sure we had the capacity to do that, so they'll be coming home the next couple or three days.

QUESTION: What's the biggest challenge in regards to Venezuela?

SECRETARY POMPEO: The devastation that Maduro has wrought on the Venezuelan people is truly horrific. They've got food and water shortages. We've seen over the past days the electrical outages that they can't get fixed. This is really horrible. The American people have been very generous, have delivered over 200 metric tons of food aid into the region, but the Maduro regime won't let it in. They won't allow food for starving people or medicine for the sick to come in and take care of their people. And it's what we, along with our partners in the region – Brazil, Colombia, all the neighbors of Venezuela – are working on to try and fix. We want a better life, we want democracy restored in Venezuela.

QUESTION: Obviously you travel the globe from country to country, crisis to crisis – North Korea, China, Venezuela, name it. As far as the Trump administration is concerned right now, what's the most concerning or biggest global issue for you personally and/or the administration?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So it's always hard to pick the top issue. We've certainly focused on North Korea, trying to convince Chairman Kim to honor the

commitment he made this past June to denuclearize. The President's focused on the border as well; that matters here in Texas. It's a national security issue, too. The long-term threat that China poses to the United States is real, and we continue to work on that each and every day. And then I'm here, I'm here in Texas this week to talk about energy and American energy security. So the things we do domestically, the fact that we're going to become the world's largest producer and exporter of crude oil, is a big deal globally. It helps us make friends around the world and take pressure off some of those countries who have been relying on energy from countries they'd frankly rather not do business with.

QUESTION: There's a new poll out this morning – Monmouth, I think – 57 percent of Americans supposedly wanting a new president in 2020. What is the Secretary of State's role on the political side? Is there one?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yeah, I'm in charge of working to be America's senior diplomat and keep Americans safe. I suppose if we do that, the American people will be more likely to be happy, but it's not what I'm focused on. What I'm focused on is making sure that each and every day, my team – that numbers in the tens of thousands that's all around the world – is doing its job to project American values, the rule of law, the intrinsic greatness of the United States of America that helps keep Americans safe. I think we're winning; I think we're making real progress there. And I'm very proud of the work that this administration has done around the world.

QUESTION: A lot of Americans may not realize all the rank and file people who are doing day in and day out jobs in your department, many other departments, no matter what political crisis or drama is going on, right?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Everyone who gets a passport is interacting with an employee of the United States Department of State. We have a big task around the world. President Trump has enabled us to do really remarkable work. I'm very proud of our team, and I'm glad to be in Texas today to talk about what it is we do, how we recruit young people to come be American diplomats, and why I want Texans to come be part of the State Department as well.

QUESTION: The new budget proposal has a big chunk of money, obviously, for the border wall. You mentioned it a little earlier. What are the chances of that happening?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Sorry, I don't do political predictions. I'm kind of out of that business. But I think there's a bipartisan consensus that there's real risk, that there's a crisis down at our border. I hope they will provide the resources, that Congress will provide the resources that Americans are demanding along that border so that we can keep Americans safe. It's not only about keeping people – and knowing who's coming in, but we need to know what contraband's passing along that border as well. I've seen this. We need to know who and what is coming across our southern border, and President Trump is firmly committed to achieving that.

QUESTION: CERAWeek, a lot of people realize it's a big energy conference. What is the main message you're going to deliver today?

SECRETARY POMPEO: The greatness of America and the importance of American energy to America's national security, how it is the case that if we get it right at home, if we keep winning in the energy world here at home, that folks that live in San Antonio or Houston or Longview – I know Texas well – that the people of Texas will be safer and more secure, and that we'll do a good turn for the rest of the world as well.

QUESTION: That it? Thank you, sir.

SECRETARY POMPEO: All right, Jason, thank you very much. It's great to be with you.

QUESTION: Pleasure to meet you.

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[Press Releases: U.S.-India Foreign Office Consultations](#)

Media Note
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
March 12, 2019

Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs David Hale and Foreign Secretary Vijay Keshav Gokhale held Foreign Office Consultations on March 12, 2019, at the Department of State. They affirmed the vitality of the U.S.-India strategic partnership and the importance of joint leadership to strengthen the rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific region. They affirmed their support for increased cooperation to include advancing initiatives undertaken as part of the 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue process. Recognizing that the United States and India share complementary visions for the Indo-Pacific, they agreed to deepen cooperation toward their joint goals in the region,

including in conjunction with other Indo-Pacific partners. They also discussed counterterrorism cooperation and a range of global and regional issues of mutual interest, including the current situation in Afghanistan, D.P.R.K., Iran, and Venezuela.

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[Press Releases: Secretary Pompeo To Release the 2018 Human Rights Reports](#)

Notice to the Press
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
March 12, 2019

Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo will deliver on-camera remarks on the release of the 2018 *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* on Wednesday, March 13, 2019, at 11:00 a.m. in the Press Briefing Room at the U.S. Department of State.

Ambassador Michael Kozak from the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor will take questions in the Briefing Room immediately following Secretary Pompeo's remarks.

Promoting and defending human rights and fundamental freedoms are central to who we are as a country, and the United States will continue to support those around the world struggling for human dignity and liberty. The 2018 *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* are required by U.S. law and document the status of human rights and worker rights in nearly 200 countries and territories.

This event is open press coverage. Journalists who plan to cover this event in person must be seated in the Press Briefing Room by 10:45 a.m. The Press

Briefing Room is accessible from the 23rd Street entrance of the Department.

Media representatives may attend this event upon presentation of one of the following: (1) a U.S. Government-issued photo media credential (e.g., Department of State, White House, Congress, Department of Defense or Foreign Press Center), or (2) an official photo identification card issued by their news organization, or (3) a letter from their employer on official letterhead verifying their current employment as a journalist. Additionally, they must present an official government photo identification card (i.e., U.S. driver's license or passport).

The event will be streamed live on www.state.gov.

Instructions for embargoed access to the reports will be sent to members of the press only, on Wednesday, March 13 at 9:00 a.m. The entire report is EMBARGOED until the start of the press briefing at 11:00 a.m. The reports will be available to the public on state.gov at that time.

For further information, please contact the Office of Press Relations on 202-647-2492 or PAPressDuty@state.gov.

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[Press Releases: United States Welcomes the UN Panel of Experts Annual Report on the D.P.R.K.](#)

Press Statement
Robert Palladino

Deputy Spokesperson

Washington, DC
March 12, 2019

The United States welcomes the release today of a report by the UN's independent Panel of Experts on the implementation of UN sanctions on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (D.P.R.K.) and commends the panel for its hard work. The report provides timely, relevant, and impartial analysis that helps governments around the world to take decisive action and demonstrates the need for continued vigilance against entities involved in D.P.R.K. sanctions evasion activity. The United States takes allegations of UN sanctions violations seriously, and all Member States are expected to fully implement UN Security Council resolutions. International unity in implementing these sanctions continues to hamper the D.P.R.K.'s ability to further its illegal weapons of mass destruction programs and sends the message that the D.P.R.K. will be economically and diplomatically isolated until it denuclearizes.

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[Press Releases: Interview With Laura Rice of Texas Standard](#)

Interview

Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Via Teleconference

March 12, 2019

QUESTION: U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo joins us now. Secretary Pompeo, thank you for your time.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you, Laura. It's great to be with you.

QUESTION: The U.S. has recently become the world's largest oil producer and new reports say it could soon be the largest oil exporter. I understand your address today will focus on how this strengthens our national security. How is that?

SECRETARY POMPEO: I wanted to come to Texas today to talk about that very fact. This is a game-changer for American national security. As America's most senior diplomat, I travel the world, and boy, there's not a country I go to where energy isn't at the top of their list, and what this does – what all of this success here in American domestic energy production does for me and for Americans, to keep them safe – is it permits us to share with those countries our wealth, our resources, to cut deals that support their energy security in places as far off as Vietnam and the Philippines and Europe.

And it permits them too to wean themselves from energy that they're taking from adversaries, countries that want to do their country harm. This is a big deal for American national security. It gives us lots of power throughout the world, and our capacity has increased during the Trump administration. We intend to – intend to continue to do that, not only to create wealth for and jobs here in the United States, but to enhance America's national security posture around the world as well.

QUESTION: The big news today again is Venezuela. One statistic you mentioned in a press conference yesterday is that Venezuela's oil production is down by half since Nicolas Maduro took power. You accuse Cuba's involvement as being about oil. Is oil also at the center of U.S. interest in Venezuela?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Only in the sense that we want the Venezuelan people to have access to their own wealth and not the corruption – the corruption that has followed the Maduro regime, this oil wealth being stripped away by the kleptocrats of the Maduro regime, taken for their personal benefit and not shared with the Venezuelan people. The Cubans have done the same. This isn't what the Venezuelan people deserve, it's not what they want, and America's efforts to restore democracy and the rule of law, and to help feed and have medicine for the Venezuelan people – that's the purpose of our efforts in Venezuela. And when we get this right, when Maduro is gone and there's fair and free elections and democracy is restored, the oil wealth of Venezuela will be returned to its people.

QUESTION: Along with Cuba, you point to Russia as helping to support Venezuelan president Nicolas Maduro. You just announced you're withdrawing all diplomatic staff in Venezuela. In a tweet, you said, "The presence of U.S. diplomatic staff at the embassy has become a constraint on U.S. policy." How do you mean?

SECRETARY POMPEO: We decided yesterday that it was important that we keep American diplomats safe, and so we made the decision that we would withdraw the remaining personnel there in Caracas and bring them back to the United States. So we'll do that over the days ahead. Anytime you're dealing with a situation that is deteriorating as fast that it is – as it is in Venezuela

today, decisions you make are always encumbered by the fact that you know there's real risk to your own people, people that you've sent into harm's way. We wanted to get them back, we wanted to get them out of the country so that we could move forward in a way that provided that opportunity.

We have 200 metric tons of food sitting in the region, trying to deliver into Venezuela to feed the hungry and to provide medicine for the sick. We want to make sure that as we continue to work in the region alongside of our partners, we don't have any constraints on action that we might need to take in order to achieve that.

QUESTION: That food that is waiting to support Venezuelan people, I assume part of the State Department budget goes out to pay for programs and food like that. What do you do with the Trump administration's new budget proposal, which includes \$13 billion in proposed cuts? Does that mean that support like this for places like Venezuela is lessened?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Oh, in fact just the opposite. Contained in the President's budget request is up to \$500 million, an enormous amount of resources that the Trump budget is proposing to provide to assist the Venezuelan people when the time is right. This budget will serve America well, America's national security interests, because we're prepared to help the Venezuelan people with real resources. The American taxpayers have been most generous, and President Trump has led that charge.

QUESTION: So as Trump's budget decreases the spending for the State Department and also includes more military spending, should Americans be worried about policy shifting from diplomacy to boots on the ground?

SECRETARY POMPEO: You can take a look at the first two years of the Trump administration to see the effectiveness of our foreign policy. Our capacity to deliver really solid, really sound diplomatic outcomes – to build coalitions in a way that, frankly, the previous administration just chose not to do – a global coalition to put sanctions on North Korea, to hopefully get them to denuclearize. The world has come together – 50-plus nations – to recognize that Maduro's time had come. A big, global coalition to take down the caliphate – over 80 countries in the Defeat-ISIS Coalition. We have worked diplomatic – incredibly successfully in the President's first two years, and I'm very confident that we'll have the resources, and I know we have the talent to deliver good outcomes for the American people in the days and weeks and months ahead as well.

QUESTION: You mentioned North Korea. The proposed cuts to the State Department come soon after a second summit between President Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, where no agreement was made. Where do we stand now in that situation?

SECRETARY POMPEO: I've personally been working on this alongside the President for my entire time as the Secretary of State, and in fact even just a bit before. In Singapore, in June of last year, Chairman Kim made a historic commitment to denuclearize his country, and in exchange the United States and President Trump made a commitment to provide peace and security

and stability on the Korean Peninsula and a brighter future for the North Korean people. Our Japanese partners, our South Korean partners are working alongside us to achieve each of those goals from Singapore.

We didn't make as much progress as we would have hoped in Hanoi, but the conversations continue. And meanwhile, there are not missile tests being conducted, there aren't nuclear tests being conducted. We've made progress. Obviously more needs to be done. This has been a problem of a long standing, and we continue to march down the path, hopefully leading to a place where the threat of nuclear weapons from North Korea will be enormously diminished.

QUESTION: U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in Houston today for the energy conference known as CERAWEEK. Secretary Pompeo, thanks again for your time.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you, Laura. You have a great day.

QUESTION: You too.

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