

Press Releases: Interview With Brian Kilmeade of The Brian Kilmeade Show

Interview
Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Via Teleconference
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QUESTION: And of course, when it comes to Governor Scott, he wants to be the next senator. With us right now, a man who used to do politics for a living, Congressman Mike Pompeo, now has turned into – from CIA Director Mike Pompeo to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo.

Mr. Secretary, welcome to the Brian Kilmeade Show.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Good morning, Brian. How are you today?

QUESTION: Man, your resume's getting better and better. This is obviously with a most challenging job. Today is an important day in U.S.-Iranian relations. Tell us why.

SECRETARY POMPEO: So we are now just a handful of days from all of the sanctions that the previous administration had relieved against Iran snapping back, coming back into effect, and it's having a real impact on the Iranian leadership. This is important. The Iranians are – just yesterday or the day before, Denmark announced that Iran had plotted an assassination attack in their country. Same has happened in France and Albania. They are the world's largest state sponsor of terror and they are squandering the people's money, the Iranian people's money, on these silly malign activities. And our effort is to get them to change that behavior.

QUESTION: Well, I mean, let's talk about what you just glazed over, an assassination attempt inside Denmark and now the Danes are asking for the European Union to take action. Could you tell us more about this?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So that's right. So an Iranian intelligence officer was in Denmark seeking to conduct an assassination attempt inside of Europe on the EU's soil. This is the third effort of just recent times. There's a long history of this. We talk about assassinations around the world. The Iranians are the leading actor conducting these assassination attempts in Europe and that kind of behavior needs to stop, and we have offered our support and

effort to help the Europeans in preventing these kinds of assassination attempts from taking place.

QUESTION: So back to what led to the JCPOA, which is an agreement the President promised to rip up that you didn't like when you were congressman and now it's gone. Now, there was no obvious breach of this agreement according to the United Nations by the Iranians, but this time it's harder for you because the deal was done, the Russians were on board with the sanctions, as were the Chinese, as was the European Union. But now once they signed onto this, they're reluctant to sign off of this. How hard a job has it been to try to get, number one, our allies of the EU to step away with us?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So, so far, Brian, the Europeans have stayed in the deal. They've taken a fundamentally different position than ours. But we talk to them nearly every day. We're working with them to explain things like what just happened in Denmark yesterday and why we have to have a completely different policy with respect to Iran. The problems – and the President has talked about this at great length – the challenge of the worst deal ever was that it didn't address Iranian missile programs, it didn't address Iranian terror, it did none of those things. And you can see the fruits of that today where Iran is running rampant in Syria and in Iraq and in other places in the Middle East. That's the reason that the JCPOA made no sense and the reason President Trump made the bold decision to withdraw from it.

QUESTION: So the Iranian foreign minister was on CBS, Mohammad Zarif, and he's got a problem with this – with the Trump administration and you. Cut one.

(An audio clip was played)

QUESTION: So what do you think he's talking about?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Boy, it's difficult to know. We know this: This is not the first time that Mr. Zarif has made threats against the United States. President Trump has been unambiguous that we will defend American interests all around the world, and that what we're looking for is Iran to become a normal nation. We're not asking for much, Brian, right? We're asking the same thing of Iran that we ask for every nation. Don't cause trouble, don't commit terror acts around the world, don't engage in this kind of malign activity.

We are hopeful that Zarif's boss, the ayatollah, the man who actually makes all the decisions – it's not Mr. Zarif, it's the ayatollah – that the ayatollah will see the error of his ways and will come to understand that it's in Iran's best interest to change the nature of the activities that Iran is conducting all around the world and become a normal nation.

When they do, President Trump's made very clear we're happy to talk with the Iranians and bring them back into the community of nations, but they've got to do about a dozen things, simple things like stop launching missiles into airports in the Middle East, before such things – such a thing can take place.

QUESTION: Any indication – have they reached out to you guys at all that they might be willing to talk at any level?

SECRETARY POMPEO: We've seen no indications of any change in their behavior, Brian. None at all.

QUESTION: A lot of focus on Saudi Arabia, their archenemy in the region. You're either in the Iranian camp or the Saudi camp, and that camp has gotten really muddy and murky. MBS, as commonly known, the crown prince, a 33-year-old, you met with him, you talked to the king about the murder of Jamal Khashoggi. Now everyone admits what we were able to figure out almost immediately and Bob Corker said the day it happened, that he was brutally murdered by a hit squad. Is there any doubt in your mind the prince knew?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Look, the death of Jamal Khashoggi is tragic. It's an awful thing that took place. The killing, the murder of Jamal Khashoggi in the consulate in Turkey violates the norms of international law. That much is very, very clear. What we've asked the Saudis to do and the Turks to do, the place which the murder took place, is to help us continue to develop the facts, that there are still many unanswered questions about precisely how this came to be. We are working diligently, our team, to get the facts, the facts that the Americans can learn. We won't rely on others; we'll take their information, we'll make sure and develop our fact pattern.

But Brian, I want to remind your listeners there are long – since FDR, long, strategic relationships with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Military, commercial ties, important relationships with the United States of America. And it's very important for us to keep that in mind as we continue to ensure that accountability is had for all those who were involved in committing this murder.

QUESTION: Right. If you look at what he's done with the prime minister of Lebanon, if you look at what he did at the Ritz-Carlton, jailing the family until they did exactly what he wanted, they say the haphazard way in which they're conducting the war in Yemen and the way they have isolated Qatar – a lot of people say this is a type of leadership under this 33-year-old prince that – irresponsible, that we really can't get behind.

In fact, General Michael Hayden says this: "The only way to salvage [this] relationship between the United States and Saudi Arabia is to curtail the relationship with Mohammed bin Salman. America obviously does not get to pick [their] future Saudi kings, but we do get to choose how we relate to one."

Are you going to re-evaluate, if not – you just told me you're not going to break, but are you going to re-evaluate that relationship because of his recent actions?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Brian, we've got to see where the facts ultimately lead us. We truly have a responsibility to America, to the American people, to ensure that we have a good relationship with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. To General Hayden's point, the people of Saudi Arabia are an important partner for the United States, and we're working to make sure we have the right – the facts

right. I've spoken to the king a couple of times, I've spoken with MBS, I've spoken with their foreign minister, my direct counterpart, al-Jubeir, on numerous occasions. I think the Saudis share our view. They understand that they've got to get these facts out, and that time is not on their side in doing so.

QUESTION: Now let's switch, if we can. I know we have a couple more minutes. The Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, with us. It's hard to imagine, on more levels, America confronting China. The backlash is building around the world in China because they come in with a lot of money and they basically build up certain things, lend money to countries, and they become hostage to them. An example now: Pakistan's beginning to push back on the debt trap, so to speak. Brazil, the same thing. Now we understand the – one of their ships got within 45 yards of one of ours, and China's leader, President Xi, reportedly put his military advisors overseeing operations in the South China Sea on high alert last week. He says it's necessary to strengthen the mission and concentrate preparations for fighting a war.

I mean, we have two superpowers staring each other down. Where is this heading, Mr. Secretary?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So I think President Trump and our National Security Strategy are spot on. I think we've got it just right. We are in a competition with China. You identified a handful of things. Just this week our Department of Justice indicted 10 folks from China for having stolen intellectual property related to the aviation industry. This is a behavior that is inappropriate, it's not consistent with being a superpower or a leader in the world. Stealing another country's intellectual property, something China's been engaged in to the tune of hundreds of billions of dollars, is just something China has to figure out a way to stop. And President Trump is the first president in some time who was prepared to say we're going to have fair and reciprocal trade, we're going to continue to build our military so that there is no challenge that we can't meet, and we're not going to allow China to continue to steal our intellectual property.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, I know you have to run. My last question is: Do you expect any progress in the G20 to start healing the rift between these nations? Or are we not at the point where talking would even help?

SECRETARY POMPEO: I'm very hopeful that there'll be good, constructive – to your point – healing conversations at the G20 at the end of November. I'm looking forward to it; I know President Trump is very much looking forward to being there and being with his counterparts from each of those countries.

QUESTION: He is – the Secretary of State Mike Pompeo gave us a few minutes. Thanks, Mr. Secretary. Best of luck.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Brian, thank you. Good luck to you, too. Have a great day.

QUESTION: All right. The 70th U.S. Secretary of State.

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