

Press Releases: Interview With Bryce Dolan of 550 KFRM-AM

Interview
Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Via Teleconference
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QUESTION: (Inaudible.)

SECRETARY POMPEO: Sure. So the President's decision to withdraw the couple thousand folks that we've had in Syria is based on the fact that the effort there to crush the caliphate, the ISIS caliphate in the region, is now near completion. We had remarkable success: over 90-plus percent of the real estate that ISIS owned in which they attacked people in the West from that place is gone. We've achieved that mission and now it's time to make sure that we continue to fight ISIS – they exist not only in Syria but around the world – but do so in a way that reduces the risk to American soldiers. The President made that decision and we will, in an orderly way, make a transition so that we can continue to keep Americans safe without expending as much blood and treasure of the American people in Syria.

QUESTION: So with that being said, Mr. Secretary, as I alluded to, Fort Riley, the Big Red One, is sending soldiers to Afghanistan in February. What is the status of the relations in the Middle East right now?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So our – the Middle East continues to be a place where terror emanates. We have to make sure that we do everything we can to prevent that terror from reaching our homeland, from attacking Americans certainly in the United States but Americans that travel around the world. We've watched Iran be the world's largest state sponsor of terror from that region, and this administration has begun a massive campaign to put pressure on the Islamic Republic of Iran to stop that terror. We've done so by building out coalitions with our partners in the Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, all around the Middle East, our Israeli partners, to do just that – to create stability in the Middle East and prevent terror attacks on our homeland.

QUESTION: So switching topics here, Mr. Secretary, leading up to ongoing trade negotiations. How would you explain China's attitude towards the United States?

SECRETARY POMPEO: China has had for a long time before this administration an incredibly unfair trade relationship with our country. I saw that when I was a member of Congress from Kansas. Farmers who tried to sell their products into China, our aviation builders, our manufacturers all across the state couldn't get a fair shake. There weren't reciprocal, fair arrangements between the United States and China. President Trump is aiming to fix that. The negotiations that are underway are very much aimed at that. And what the President asks for is simply this: He wants fairness and reciprocity. If the Chinese can sell their products here, we ought to be able to take American products built by American workers and send them to China and serve their customers as well.

I hope we can get that done in the next few months, but the President is determined to achieve that outcome on behalf of the American worker.

QUESTION: And with that being said, after entering into a new trade agreement with Canada and Mexico, the USMCA, please explain the relationship between the two countries moving forward.

SECRETARY POMPEO: It's good I've had a chance to actually meet the incoming – or now the current – president of Mexico. I work closely with my counterpart there. I work closely with my counterpart in Canada. We now have the USMCA, which we believe will, again, be much more fair to American workers and create a North American trading system that will be the envy of the world. It'll be good for workers all across America, including those in Kansas.

QUESTION: Secretary, I know we don't have a lot of time and we could really spend hours talking about each of these questions. But as briefly as you could, could you explain the status of U.S.-Russia relations?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So it's been a real challenge during our time. President Trump very much understands that this is a nuclear-armed state and to the extent we can find places where we can cooperate and work together, that benefits America. But they have proven not to be reliable partners across almost every front. What they did in Ukraine, the actions they took against our elections – all of these things create risk for the American people and President Trump has been very strong in communicating to the Russians that this kind of behavior is simply unacceptable and we've done all that we can to deter it.

QUESTION: Just one more question, Mr. Secretary. From representing Kansas to leading the nation's highest intelligence agency, and now coming up on a year as our country's top foreign diplomat, how has your experience in Kansas influenced your work in foreign relations?

SECRETARY POMPEO: I think about home a lot. I think about Kansas all the time as I travel the world. The people that I knew there shaped me. When I ran a small business there, I came to understand how important it is to make sure American workers have opportunity to sell their products around the world. Everything about my life in Kansas shapes what I do every day. It's an incredible privilege to be America's most senior diplomat and serve President Trump, and Kansas certainly is sitting there when I'm with the President,

well represented.

QUESTION: All right, Mr. Secretary, we are outside our five-minute window. I appreciate you taking the time to speak with us. Are you okay with everything that I asked and everything that was said?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yes, sir. It's all good.

QUESTION: Well, it was much appreciated, Mr. Secretary. And you have a great Christmas.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you. Merry Christmas to you too. So long, sir.

QUESTION: Thank you. Bye.

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