

Press Releases: Interview With Chris Wallace of Fox News Sunday

Interview
Mike Pompeo

Secretary of State

Washington, DC
May 13, 2018

QUESTION: And joining us now, the new and very busy Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. Mr. Secretary, welcome back to Fox News Sunday.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Good morning, Chris. It's great to be with you.

QUESTION: Let's start with breaking news. First of all, that savage attack last night in Paris, a Chechen knifing killing one person, wounding four others. What can you tell us about a possible link to terror?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Well, we don't know much more. We know that the caliphate ISIS has claimed responsibility. They said he was one of their soldiers. We can't verify that yet. The French authorities, with all the intelligence help the United States can provide, we'll do our best to unpack this in the coming hours.

QUESTION: Okay, let's talk about some other breaking news. The North Koreans announced yesterday that they are going to blow up their nuclear site in 10 to 12 days. How big a development is this, and is that, do we believe, their only nuclear test site?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Chris, it's good news. Every single site that the North Koreans have that can inflict risk upon the American people that is destroyed, eliminated, dismantled is good news for the American people and for the world. And so this is one step along the way. I had a good set of meetings this past week aimed at heading in exactly this direction.

QUESTION: I want to go back to the comment – and Kevin just played it – your comment on Friday that if Kim chooses the, quote, “right path,” the U.S. is prepared to work with North Korea to, quote, “achieve prosperity.” What does that mean in terms of direct U.S. investment in North Korea? And are we, as part of this, willing, in effect, to guarantee Kim's security, that regime change will be off the table?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Chris, here's what this will look like. This will be Americans coming in – private sector Americans, not the U.S. taxpayer – private sector Americans coming in to help build out the energy grid – they need enormous amounts of electricity in North Korea; to work with them to develop infrastructure, all the things that the North Korean people need, the capacity for American agriculture to support North Korea so they can eat meat and have healthy lives. Those are the kind of things that, if we get what it is the President has demanded – the complete, verifiable, irreversible denuclearization of North Korea – that the American people will offer in spades.

QUESTION: And as part of that, are we, in effect, saying to Kim, “If you give us what we want, you can stay on in power?”

SECRETARY POMPEO: We will have to provide security assurances to be sure. This has been a tradeoff that has been pending for 25 years. No president has ever put America in a position where the North Korean leadership thought that this was truly possible, that the Americans would actually do this, would lead to the place where America was no longer held at risk by the North Korean regime. That's the objectives. When I said earlier this week that I think Chairman Kim shares the objectives with the American people, I am convinced of that. Now the task is for President Trump and he to meet to validate the process by which this would go forward, to set out those markers so that we can negotiate this outcome.

QUESTION: Do you have any problem, given Kim's history and the history of his family as an oppressive regime, any problems with the idea of the U.S., even if we get our deal, in effect, giving a security guarantee to the Kim regime?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Look, we'll have to see how the negotiations proceed, but make no mistake about it: America's interest here is preventing the risk that North Korea will launch a nuclear weapon into LA or Denver or into the very place we're sitting here this morning, Chris. That's our objective, that's the end state the President has laid out, and that's the mission that he sent me on this past week to put us on the trajectory to go achieve that.

QUESTION: Let's talk about denuclearization, the objective. Two weeks ago, National Security Advisor John Bolton sat in this very seat, and he told me that the U.S. negotiating position going in is that Kim has to ship out, has to dismantle and take out of the country all of his nuclear weapons, all of his nuclear infrastructure, all of his long-range missiles before the U.S. will grant any concessions. On the other hand, this week, Kim met with Chinese President Xi and he called for, quote, “phased and synchronous measures,” in other words, action for action. Have you and Kim agreed what the sequencing is? Is it all of the actions by him first, or is it step by step? And is that something, as I say, that you've agreed with, or is it something that Kim and the President will have to work out at the summit?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Chris, we've had discussions on how this would proceed. There's still a great deal of detail to be worked on, and in the coming weeks we will continue to work on that so that we can be in a good spot on June 12th in Singapore for President Trump. But make no mistake about it: We've

done this before, right? We've done trade for trade, moment for moment; you give me X, I give you Y; and it has failed repeatedly. I think Chairman Kim understands that. I think he appreciates the fact that this is going to have to be different and big and special, and something that has never been undertaken before. If we're going to get to this historic outcome, both sides have to be prepared to take truly historic measures to achieve it.

QUESTION: And how confident are you? Because you're going to be putting the President of the United States in a room with Kim in Singapore with the whole world watching. How confident are you that not only he understands it, but that he's going to have to – that he's going to deliver on our expectations?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Well, to quote President Trump, we'll see, right? We are not to the place yet where we should be remotely close to declaring that we have achieved what it is we want. There's a great deal of work that remains. Our eyes are wide open with respect to the risks. But it is our fervent hope that Chairman Kim wants to make a strategic change, a strategic change in the direction for his country and his people; and if he's prepared to do that, President Trump is prepared to assure that this could be a successful transition.

QUESTION: All right, I want to talk about that. You've said that we understand, and John Bolton talked about that nobody in the administration is starry-eyed. The President has been raising expectations for the summit, saying he thinks that they're going to make a great deal – his phrase. Your predecessor at the CIA, John Brennan, says he thinks that's playing into Kim's hands. Take a look:

PRESIDENT TRUMP: "I think that we're going to have a success. I think this will be a very big success."

MR BRENNAN: "I think he has been masterful in how he has manipulated perceptions and how he has manipulated and, quite frankly, duped Mr. Trump."

QUESTION: Is it a mistake for the President to predict a, quote, "great success"?

SECRETARY POMPEO: I think Former Director Brennan's remarks are silly on their face. We're going to enter into a set of discussions with two nations doing their best to achieve outcomes for their own people that are consistent with their objectives and goals. I think we now understand that there is the potential that there are shared objectives, and our mission is to prepare the groundwork. And we're pretty far along the way in doing so, and we'll continue to work in the days ahead – 30 left – to prepare for June 12th so the President can have a successful outcome, that the two of them can meet and see if there is sufficient overlap so that we can achieve the ultimate objective for the American people.

QUESTION: After you brought the American hostages home and the whole world celebrated that, President Trump praised Kim for releasing them. And that praise – not the release of the hostages, but that praise – upset some

critics. Take a look at this:

PRESIDENT TRUMP: “Kim Jong-un did a great service to himself, to his country, by doing this.”

SENATOR SCHUMER: “We can’t be fooled into giving the North Korean regime credit for returning Americans that never should have been detained in the first place.”

QUESTION: According to your State Department’s latest report, North Korea still holds at least 80,000 political prisoners in its labor camps and other facilities. Is human rights an issue in this summit, or is this just going to be about the nuclear issue?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yeah, Chris, this administration is always concerned about human rights. It’s the case not only are there political prisoners that remain in North Korea, there are Americans held around the world by other rogue regimes too. I can assure you this administration – I saw it in my role as director of the CIA and I’ve seen it now in my first two and a half weeks as Secretary of State – is intently focused on achieving the return of each of those as well. We had a success this week. We’re happy for those families and for America that those three Americans returned home, but we recognize there’s much work to do. We still have Americans held and we’re working diligently on behalf of each and every one of them.

QUESTION: When people found out that you were going to be on the program today they all had the same question. I must say I did. What is Kim like? With the possible exception of Dennis Rodman, you have spent more time with him than any other Westerner, at least two and a half hours the way I figure it. What is he like? Give us any kind of personal insight. How aware is he of what President Trump has been saying? Was there any mention of Little Rocket Man?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Well, I’ve got a lot fewer rebounds than Dennis Rodman, but I did get to spend a great deal of time with Chairman Kim. The conversations are professional. He knows – he knows his brief. He knows what the – what he is trying to achieve for the North Korean people. He is able to deal with complexity when the conversation requires it.

He does follow the Western press. He’ll probably watch this show at some point. He’s paying attention to things that the world is saying. He too is preparing for June 12th. He and his team will be working with them to put our two leaders in a position where it’s just possible we might pull off a historic undertaking.

QUESTION: Was there any mention of the exchange of insults back and forth?

SECRETARY POMPEO: No, we didn’t cover that, Chris.

QUESTION: That’s probably wise. (Laughter.) I want to turn to – there’s a lot on your brief. Iran and Israel got into an armed conflict across the Syrian border this week after President Trump pulled out of the nuclear deal with Tehran. Do you think that there’s any connection that Iran feels less

constrained now that the U.S. no longer is part of this deal about Iran nukes?

SECRETARY POMPEO: That's ludicrous. That's ludicrous to suggest that Iran feels less constrained when during the JCPOA they have now fired missiles into an airport where Americans travel each day in Riyadh, they've now fired missiles into Israel; to suggest that somehow the withdrawal from the JCPOA is driving the Iranian conduct that's taken place during the JCPOA in Yemen, the rise of Hizballah – all of those things took place during the JCPOA. Indeed, I would argue that they felt they could act with impunity. They watched. They watched Europe put exactly zero sanctions on their missile program during the JCPOA. I think Rouhani and Zarif need to explain why it's the case that while this agreement was in place Iran continued its march across the Middle East.

QUESTION: President Trump made it clear that he's not only going after Iran but he's also prepared to sanction European companies that continue to do business in Tehran. Here is the President: "We will be instituting the highest level of economic sanction. Any nation that helps Iran in its quest for nuclear weapons could also be strongly sanctioned by the United States."

But the leaders of France, of Germany, of Britain all say that they're going to stay in the deal and they're going to look for a way to protect European companies that continue to do business. The question is: How hard is the Trump administration prepared to go after European companies that ignore the U.S. pulling out?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Two things, Chris. First, the wealth that was created in Iran as a result of the JCPOA drove Iranian malign activity. It fueled Qasem Soleimani. It fueled the IRGC. It provided resources for their work in Syria and Iraq. President Trump's withdrawal is aimed at denying them that wealth, denying them the resources to continue their bad behavior, to take the money away from them.

The withdrawal wasn't aimed at the Europeans. I worked hard over the short time I've been the Secretary of State to try and fix the deal. We couldn't reach agreement with our E3 partners. I am hopeful in the days and weeks ahead we can come up with a deal that really works, that really protects the world from Iranian bad behavior, not just their nuclear program but their missiles and their malign behavior as well.

QUESTION: But what about –

SECRETARY POMPEO: And I'll be working closely with the Europeans to try and achieve that, Chris.

QUESTION: But what about if the European companies and the European countries say look, there's not going to be a renegotiation any more than there's going to be a renegotiation of the Paris Climate Accord? Is the U.S. prepared to go after companies in our allies like Britain, France, and Germany, if they try to continue to do business?

SECRETARY POMPEO: The sanctions regime that is now in place is very clear about what the requirements are. My mission that I've been given by President Trump is to work to strike a deal that achieves the outcomes that protect America. That's what we're going to do, and I'll be hard at it with the Europeans in the next several days.

QUESTION: A couple of final questions. Israel. The U.S. opens its embassy in Jerusalem tomorrow. The Palestinians are talking about a day of rage, violent mass protests, and the PLO won't even talk to the U.S. anymore as an interlocutor in terms of the Middle East. Is the peace process dead? And given the threat of violence, what are you as the Secretary of State saying to Americans in the Middle East in those parts of the world over the next few days?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So the peace process is most decidedly not dead. We're hard at work on it. We hope we can achieve a successful outcome there as well. With respect to security, we are aware of the situation on the ground. The United States Government has taken a number of actions to ensure that not only our governmental interests but the American people in that region are secure as well, and we're comfortable we've taken action that reduces that risk.

QUESTION: Finally – and it's pretty remarkable given all that's happened, all that's on your brief – you have been Secretary of State for barely two weeks now. What's your vision for the State Department?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Well, first, Chris, I hope I haven't peaked in my first two weeks. (Laughter.) But it's pretty clear: We've got to go put the diplomatic team on the playing field. It should be the United States State Department that is at the front of American foreign policy, delivering solutions to solve America's problems without resort to military force. And so I'm going to build the team, we're going to get our swagger back, and the State Department will be out in front in every corner of the world leading America's diplomatic policy, achieving great outcomes on behalf of President Trump and America.

QUESTION: Secretary Pompeo, thank you. Thanks for your time in a very busy schedule.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you.

QUESTION: Always good to talk with you, sir.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you, Chris.

The Office of Website Management, Bureau of Public Affairs, manages this site as a portal for information from the U.S. State Department. External links to other Internet sites should not be construed as an endorsement of the views or privacy policies contained therein.