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Interview
Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Via Teleconference
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QUESTION: Secretary of State Mike Pompeo with us this morning. Mr. Secretary, it's an honor to speak with you. Good morning.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Good morning. It's great to be with you as well.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, I'm going to start here at home with our top story, flooding in Missouri and Kansas right now. It's been a crazy winter on the heels of another scorching summer. You travel the globe and see what's going on every day. Where is climate change on your list of global threats and what needs to be done here and around the world?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So the Trump administration takes very seriously these risks, the risk of flooding from all the things you just described. We need to make sure that the policies we put in place actually work. Frankly, what we saw happen in the previous administration was going to impose enormous cost on people from Kansas and Missouri. We've got flooding in Nebraska, the eastern part of Nebraska, as well today.

President Trump is very focused on making sure that the federal government does all it can, and we want to do so in an environmentally responsible way, but it does no good – does absolutely no good to put huge regulations, huge economic burdens which will only, in fact, make our country poorer, and poorer countries don't do nearly as good a job at keeping clean air and safe drinking water for their people.

QUESTION: And what do you say to those foreign leaders? Because the Trump administration makes the point that, look, we can do all this stuff, but the rest of the world's not doing it. What do you say, what can you say to them to try and get them to play along?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So many of these countries – your point is very well taken

– so many of these countries have made promises, they sign agreements, they have fancy ribbon-cuttings and they celebrate, but then they do nothing. China is the perfect example. They are still in the Paris accord, but their climate record is atrocious. What really matters is what countries are doing. The United States is a global leader in environmental improvement. We will continue to be.

What I do when I travel around the world is I tell people it's not enough to say things, it's not enough to sign agreements; you have to begin to put your country down the right path, you have to grow your economy in an environmentally responsible way, and you too can then have the standard of living we have in the United States where we have cleaner air and we have safer drinking water each and every year.

QUESTION: Secretary of State Mike Pompeo with us on the news line. Massacre in New Zealand last week and has thrust white nationalism back into the headlines. Can you talk about how big a threat white nationalism is at home and abroad and which countries ought to be most worried about it?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So it was a real tragedy. I spoke with Winston Peters, my foreign minister counterpart there in New Zealand to share the American grief as a result of this tragic incident. Look, the threat from extremists that comes from a broad spectrum is real. The State Department plays an important role, as do other elements of American national security power to take down these kinds of threats. I did the same in my previous role when I was the director of the Central Intelligence Agency, where we worked closely with our Five Eyes partner, New Zealand, to try to provide them information that could protect them from every kind of threat. Look, governments have responsibility to reduce these risks, and the United States is at the forefront of trying to do so.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, I remember when the headlines came out that said Mike Pompeo may be the President's choice for CIA director, and we all looked at each other and said, well, that's great, but how did that happen? We know your credentials are impeccable, but how did you pop up on the President's radar screen, and what is it that clicks about the two of you?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So I've now had a chance to know the President for, goodness, coming on two and a half years. He's a leader who is crisp and demanding, has very high expectations, sets them out for us, and then allows us to go get our teams – my team at the State Department, the previous team I led at the CIA – to go execute and implement America's foreign policy, and previously its intelligence mission. I've enjoyed that. I hope I've served him well. I hope I'm continuing to serve the American people well. I keep my head down and I keep working hard and if we do those two things, I think Americans can continue to be increasingly secure the days and weeks and months ahead.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, my co-host Ellen could not be here this morning, but she wanted me to follow up with this question: Given the President's style and his way of talking to and about people, she wanted to know what you say to people who ask you, how can you work for this man?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Oh, goodness, it's really easy. I look at the things that we've achieved. Some of them are in national security space, but some of them aren't. I'm here in Kansas today for a global entrepreneurs seminar. It's part of our effort to grow the American economy. I look at the unemployment rate all across the United States. I look at the Supreme Court justices that are put in place. I was a small businessman in Kansas for a decade-plus. I can see how the regulatory environment has changed how businesspeople can take risks and, in turn, grow their businesses and hire people, great jobs for people all across places like Kansas. It's an incredible privilege to serve in this administration and to serve the American people.

QUESTION: You've mentioned jobs a couple of times in that answer, Mr. Secretary, and so let me ask you real quick: Why should we come work for the Foreign Service? Because I hear there are jobs available in the Foreign Service.

SECRETARY POMPEO: There are. You should come work in the Foreign Service because it's an amazing opportunity to grow and perhaps, most importantly, an amazing opportunity to serve. We have people with all kinds of different skillsets from all across America. I want Kansans to know about that opportunity too, whether you're an engineer or you have a language specialty, we have historians, all the different skills that Americans can provide and serving – to get a chance to serve and represent America in Asia and Africa or in Europe is an incredible privilege, one that will make you better and one that, if we get enough folks from the heartland to come be part of, will make America better as well.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, you have two choices: K-State or KU. Who are you putting on the winning line on your bracket on this first Monday of the tournament week?

SECRETARY POMPEO: I like K-State's chances this season. They had a great season. They won the Big 12 Conference, but I'm really focused on the Wichita State Shockers and a deep run through the NIT. (Inaudible.)

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, it is an honor to talk to you. We welcome you back to Kansas and we thank you for this time we had this morning with you.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you very much, sir. You have a great day.

QUESTION: You too.

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