

Press Releases: Interview With George Lawson of KFDI News

Interview
Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Via Teleconference
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QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, new Iran sanctions are in place, eight countries exempted and European countries are staying with the original agreement. What impact do you expect the new sanctions to have in the short term and long term?

SECRETARY POMPEO: The goal is really very clear, George. It is to make sure that we protect America from the threats that the Islamic Republic of Iran presents to folks all across the country and including in Kansas. So these sanctions are intended to convince the Iranian leadership to change their ways, to stop launching missiles into cities where Americans are, to stop building weapon systems that threaten America. That's our goal is to get the leadership in Iran to change its behavior, to protect Americans wherever they live and wherever they travel.

QUESTION: And these sanctions are targeting the oil production in Iran?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Multiple levels of sanctions. Certainly their oil production, but many other elements of their commercial world as well. We're trying to do this at the same time that we protect the Iranian people. We're convinced that the Iranian people don't want what it is their leaders are bringing them. And so we are doing everything we can to make sure that Iran still has the food and medicine and all of the things that the Iranian people need so that they can make good decisions about their leadership and the actions their leadership will take.

QUESTION: A lot of discussions this week on Saudi Arabia after the murder of Jamal Khashoggi, and I know some senators like Lindsey Graham have disagreed with the President's assessment of the situation. They're talking about Congress imposing some sanctions against Saudi Arabia. What's your reaction to that?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Look, the mission the President set out for the State Department and for the U.S. Government is very clear. We want to make sure

that we do everything we can to hold accountable those who committed the murder of Jamal Khashoggi, and do so while still maintaining this incredibly important relationship with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. They provide a lot of oil that matters to folks in Kansas. They provide help pushing back against Iran. This matters a lot to the people of Kansas.

Senator Graham and I both share that concern about Iran and I'm very confident we will continue to work together to keep America safe from Iran. But different members of the Senate will have different views. We're happy to consider them, and the President said if they bring legislation, he'd be happy to take a look at it. And if it makes sense, if it furthers the interests of America and keeps folks in Wichita, folks in Kansas City, folks in small towns throughout Kansas safe, then the President will be happy to support it.

QUESTION: Have you had any contacts from members of Congress on this?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Oh yes, we've been talking to Congress about the issues of Saudi Arabia since I became the Secretary of State, not only issues around the murder of Jamal Khashoggi, and we've – I've talked to a number of members about that – but the broader set of issues in our relationship, the good work they do providing support to the young men and women who choose to serve in our armed forces who are from Kansas. The Saudis have been an important partner of the United States, helping us do whatever we can to create stability in the Middle East, which is good for American business and Kansas businesses as well.

QUESTION: Can you talk about the working group that has been set up by the U.S. and South Korea on dealings with North Korea?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yes. That – it's important as we work to denuclearize North Korea, as we work to fulfill the promises that were made between President Trump and Chairman Kim, there are lots of elements to them. One of them is the relationship between South Korea and North Korea, and the working group is designed to make sure that that effort, that effort to restore peace on the peninsula, moves in parallel with the denuclearization discussions. We are in lock step with our Republic of Korea partners and we want to make sure we stay that way.

QUESTION: So it's really two issues that are being discussed here, the working group with South Korea, making sure you're working together, relations between the North and South, and then also the denuclearization.

SECRETARY POMPEO: That's right. Yes, sir, that's exactly correct.

QUESTION: Of course, some strong statements recently from North Korea, talk about new tactical weapons they have. What are the next steps on that front?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So we think we know what it is they're referring to there; we're pretty sure. I can't say much. Know this: We've known this was going to be a lengthy process. This administration came in with a very difficult risk from North Korea. The President made the decision to have a summit with

Chairman Kim, and I've been tasked with negotiating its resolution. It will take time. We are prepared to be patient, but all the while – all the while that we're working to make sure that North Korea has continued to stop its missile tests, continued to stop its nuclear tests, the economic sanctions which have caused North Korea to engage with us will remain in place.

QUESTION: And do you have a special message for the people of Kansas for the Thanksgiving holiday weekend?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Just a Happy Thanksgiving. Susan and I wanted to say thanks for all the people of Kansas have done for us. We miss them and we hope to be back there when our time of service is complete.

QUESTION: Okay. Mr. Secretary, I think that will cover us.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you, sir.

QUESTION: Thank you very much.

SECRETARY POMPEO: You have a wonderful day and a great Thanksgiving, George.

QUESTION: You too, sir. Thanks.

SECRETARY POMPEO: So long.

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