

Press Releases: Interview With Laura Ingraham of The Laura Ingraham Show

Interview
Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Via Teleconference
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QUESTION: As the new information coming from Europe where you have these Iranian hit squads roaming about trying to knock off oppositional voices, Denmark, after an assassination plot there foiled, Denmark saying, okay, bring on the sanctions against Iran. And we have a champion in real freedom in the Middle East at our State Department and our White House with President Trump and Mike Pompeo at State, and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo joins us now to give us the latest on these threats that we're hearing from Iran about the new round of sanctions, and he joins us now.

Mr. Secretary, good to have you with us.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Hello, Laura. Good to be with you.

QUESTION: So what do you make of that comment from the foreign minister?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So it's not the first time that Mr. Zarif has made these kinds of threats, but the real decision-making there isn't him, it's the ayatollah. That's who our counterparty is. That's who is making all of these decisions. You referred to the assassination attempts all throughout Europe. They're not just the couple from these past months, this has been going on for some time. They're the world's largest state sponsor of terror. We saw that their nuclear program continues to present risk to the United States. That's why the President made the right decision withdrawing from the JCPOA. We ask for one simple thing, right? We want the Islamic Republic of Iran to behave like a normal nation. If they'll do that, we're happy to allow them to enter the community of nations, but we have to continue to apply pressure. On Monday on the week ahead, we will put back in place sanctions that will be very severe on the leadership of Iran, and we hope that that will convince them to change their ways.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, you have a cold. I can hear it.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Just a bit.

QUESTION: Oh, you poor guy. Well, you're flying all over creation. (Laughter.) You're flying all over creation.

SECRETARY POMPEO: I'll be just fine. No sympathy needed, Laura, but thank you for your concern.

QUESTION: Oh, no, I know. But as a mother, I worry about all my friends who are sick, so thank you for playing sick here with us.

So right now the Europeans – there's developing persistence, split in opinion on what to do with this Iranian menace. Where is Germany today given the fact that Merkel is out as her party leader? She's in her last term. Clearly, opposition forces in Germany, more populist anti-migration political elements.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Laura, so far the German Government has not changed its position. It still wants to stay inside of the JCPOA, but nearly every German company – folks with real money at risk – made the opposite decision. They have fled. They have left. They have decided they are not going to run through the Iranian sanctions that President Trump will put back in place on Monday. And there are other countries in Europe who are with us, and I am convinced that over time all of the European countries will come to see that Iran is indeed the force creating instability in the Middle East and that we must apply all possible pressure to push back against that to fix it.

QUESTION: So the sanctions go in place on Monday, correct?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yes, ma'am, Monday.

QUESTION: Okay. And they'll feel them immediately or will it take a little time to settle in?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So, Laura, they're already feeling them. But as the days go on, the pressure will increase. We will substantially drop the amount of crude oil, their primary revenue source, that they can ship around the world. Treasury will put back in place sanctions on financial institutions there. And we hope that the sanctions we put on individuals and in other places will convince the leadership. We want the Iranian people to be successful. We want this to be a successful country. We want to restore democracy there. We think the Iranian people want that same thing. And so our aim is not to harm the Iranian people, but to change the behavior, the malign activity of this regime.

QUESTION: Just going back to Germany, boy, have Merkel's fortunes changed. Obviously, she'll be finishing up her last term, but she's been there for I guess 13 years or so. And she's leaving as head of her party. How will that change our dealings with Germany in the near term, and what do you see as the political climate in Europe with the rise of Salvini and the challenges the EU is facing?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So we have many places where the Europeans work alongside us. We clearly have some where we don't share the same view. The President has been direct with respect to the Europeans taking increased responsibility

for their own security. That makes perfect sense. Most European countries understand that. The primary folks who need to defend against the risk that Russia creates reside in Europe not in America. So I'm hopeful as each of these governments evaluate this and sees that America is with them, we're happy to assist them, but they have the primary responsibility. We hope that each of these governments will come to see that in the way that President Trump has so clearly laid out.

QUESTION: CNBC reported yesterday, Mr. Secretary, that North Korea is reportedly preparing nuclear and missile sites for international inspectors. What can you tell us about – I know you are going to go meet with your North Korean counterpart in just a matter of days, but what's the latest from North Korea?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So I can't say much about what's taking place on the ground, but I can make clear that when I was with Chairman Kim, now three, three and a half weeks ago, he committed to allowing American inspectors to come look at two significant sites. We hope to get them there before too long. It's one of the things I'll speak with my counterpart next week about. And then we do have the intention of President Trump and Chairman Kim getting together before too long, hopefully early in the next year, where we can make a substantial breakthrough in taking down the nuclear threat from North Korea. I'm – we're still happy that they haven't conducted a nuclear test in an awfully long time and they haven't launched a missile in an awfully long time, but there's a lot of work which remains, and Chairman Kim has made clear to me – just as plain as I'm speaking to you, Laura – that he has the intention to denuclearize and we'll do everything we can to assist him in following through on that commitment.

QUESTION: I want to move to China, Mr. Secretary, because we've seen in recent weeks nothing that's surprising to you or me, because we've been following this issue of Chinese stealing our intellectual property and bribing, attempting to bribe foreign officials, including here at different times in the United States – business officials, excuse me – to gain access to technology, critical technology in manufacturing, aviation, and so forth. Now we have this chipmaker ban in place that garnered a lot of attention, and it's trying to – I guess we're trying to target that state-owned chipmaker in China over national security concerns. How is that going to fit in to our overall aggressive stance against this expansive Chinese behemoth?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Laura, China is probably, over the long term, the biggest challenge, national security challenge that faces our country. You saw the indictments of 10 Chinese persons for the alleged theft of intellectual property, aviation-related intellectual property. This is a story that's been going on for years. This is the first administration that has been prepared to push back against China, and we're doing so on all fronts. So where the semiconductor piece fits in is it's part of a mosaic of our strategic effort to push back against this continued Chinese effort. It begins with trade. We want, the President has demanded fair and reciprocal trade with China. We've demanded that they not steal our intellectual property. We talk with some frequency about the enormous violation of religious freedom that's taking place against the Uighurs in China. We're very worried that China will put

the people in many countries around the world, in Africa and Central America and Latin America, in a debt trap that will cause those countries decades of pain.

It is a multipronged effort on behalf of all of the United States Government, at the President's direction, to convince China to behave like a normal nation on commerce and with respect to the rules of international law.

QUESTION: Yeah. I mean, I know you have to go, Mr. Secretary, but just so people understand this. Our trade policy with China has had a real effect inside China. They already have structural weaknesses within China at large, but they had the weakest manufacturing growth in more than two years in China, and the yuan has slid, manufacturing stalled, and their ambitions as a result have been affected. But they're still lofty, and we do finally have an administration who's seeing this with eyes wide open.

Mr. Secretary, we really appreciate your joining us and best of luck –

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you, Laura.

QUESTION: – on that next meeting with your North Korean counterpart, and get better, get well, okay?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you, Laura. So long.

QUESTION: All right, you take care.

SECRETARY POMPEO: (Inaudible)

QUESTION: Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, on your healthy radio addiction.

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