

Press Releases: Interview With Margaret Brennan of CBS Face the Nation

Interview
Mike Pompeo

Secretary of State

Washington, DC
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QUESTION: We want to welcome Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, our first guest here in the new Face the Nation studio. Mr. Secretary, thank you for joining us.

SECRETARY POMPEO: It's great to be with you. Happy Mother's Day. It's a beautiful studio.

QUESTION: Thank you. Thank you. It's been an extraordinary week for you on many fronts. I want to ask you about North Korea. They have, in the past, pledged to dismantle nuclear sites before. They're saying they're going to do it again. Is this latest pledge a theatrical gesture, or is it significant?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Well, my trip was designed to lay the groundwork to prepare for the President's meeting with Chairman Kim on June 12th, now just 30 days away. We have seen this happen before. We have our eyes wide open with respect to the fact that the North Koreans have not proved worthy of their promises. But we're hopeful that this will be different, that we won't do the traditional model where they do something, and we give them a bunch of money, and then both sides walk away. We're hoping this will be bigger, different, faster. Our ask is complete and total denuclearization of North Korea, and it is the President's intention to achieve that. As he has said, we'll see if that works, but we're setting conditions for a successful meeting between the two leaders.

QUESTION: Have you defined denuclearization?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yeah. Total, full, complete.

QUESTION: That means full dismantling –

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yes.

QUESTION: – stopping computer modeling –

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yeah.

QUESTION: – getting rid of the centrifuges –

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yeah.

QUESTION: – stopping all enrichment, getting inspectors on the ground?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yes, ma'am, the same deal we should have done with Iran.

QUESTION: So for you, you've talked about making it worth North Korea's while financially –

SECRETARY POMPEO: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: – if they follow through. John Bolton said today on another network that no one should look to the U.S. for economic aid, including North Korea.

SECRETARY POMPEO: That's right.

QUESTION: How do you reconcile those two things. They seem to be in contrast.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Oh, it's very, very – no, no. Oh, no, ma'am. Very, very consistent. What Chairman Kim will get from America is our finest – our entrepreneurs, our risk-takers, our capital providers, not our taxpayers. They'll get people who –

QUESTION: Private capital?

SECRETARY POMPEO: They will get private capital that comes in. North Korea is desperately in need of energy support, electricity for their people. They are – they're in great need of agricultural equipment and technology, the finest from the Midwest that I come from. We can deliver that. And as I said earlier this week, we can create conditions for real economic prosperity for the North Korean people that will rival that of the South, and that is our expectation. It won't be U.S. taxpayers. It will be American know-how, knowledge, entrepreneurs, and risk-takers working alongside the North Korean people to create a robust economy for their people, too.

QUESTION: That sounds like sanctions relief –

SECRETARY POMPEO: Well –

QUESTION: – to make it possible for a company to invest directly in North Korea when we do that –

SECRETARY POMPEO: Ma'am, if we get denuclearization, of course, there will be sanctions relief, certainly. There'll be more than that. There'll be a real – the President has a commitment, and he will make this commitment to Chairman Kim, I am confident, that says if you do the things we need to do so that America is no longer held at risk by your nuclear weapons arsenal, and that you get rid of your CBW program and missiles that threaten the world, we will

ensure that your people have the opportunity for the greatness that I know Chairman Kim wants them to have.

QUESTION: Not many secretaries of state get to say they brought three Americans home in their second week on the job or have even been to North Korea twice in six weeks' time. But I'm wondering, in your interactions with Kim, because you've had them directly, have you assured him that the U.S. isn't trying to oust him from power?

SECRETARY POMPEO: I have told him that what President Trump wants is to see the North Korean regime get rid of its nuclear weapons program in completely and in totality; and in exchange for that, we are prepared to ensure that the North Korean people get the opportunity that they so richly deserve. It's pretty straightforward, and I said earlier this week I think in that sense Chairman Kim shares that same objective. I think he understands that President Trump has put an enormous pressure campaign in place with the aim of achieving a good outcome for North Korea and its people. That's our objective. That's the American goal that President Trump set forward.

QUESTION: So the U.S. no longer believes that Kim Jong-un is holding on to these weapons to secure his place in power? In other words, you are saying no regime change?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Only time will tell how these negotiations will proceed. The President uses the language, says we'll see. We're – there's still a lot of work to do. The American leadership under President Trump has its eyes wide open. It could be that we won't be successful. It's possible; we acknowledge that. We've watched this fail before. But the model that has been employed here is fundamentally different, and we are hopeful that we will get a fundamentally different outcome.

QUESTION: What will this summit in Singapore look like? Are you walking into the room with President Trump to sit across from Kim Jong-un?

SECRETARY POMPEO: I don't know.

QUESTION: You don't know yet?

SECRETARY POMPEO: I don't know. We're working on the details, the actual blocking and tackling of the meeting. We have been working on them for weeks. We'll have teams working on them in the days and weeks ahead. We've got now some 30 days, I guess it is, and there will be a great deal of work done between our two countries between now and then to finally set the stage for what we hope will be a very successful visit in Singapore between our two leaders.

QUESTION: So you're still figuring out the protocol, but you spent the most time with Kim Jong-un.

SECRETARY POMPEO: And I've –

QUESTION: What has struck you about him?

SECRETARY POMPEO: What struck me about – me is very knowledgeable in the sense of he knows the files. He's very capable of engaging in complex set of discussions. When I ask him a question about something that's a little off, he answers it. There's no notecards. It is Chairman Kim, in this case, interacting with me directly, having a robust discussion about what the outlines of a successful negotiation between our two countries might ultimately be.

QUESTION: You brought those three Americans home from North Korea. There are still at least four Americans being held in Iran. Their families are concerned that tearing up this diplomacy, exiting the nuclear deal, puts their loved ones at risk. What can you tell them?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Two things. First, everyone should know that this administration is intent on bringing home every American who is held anywhere in the world. We've got Pastor Brunson in Turkey that we desperately need to get back. We have others held in Iran and in Syria. We are working diligently to get each of them back.

With respect to whether the actions of this past week with respect to the JCPOA increased anyone's risk, I think that's ludicrous. The Iranian bad behavior increased, it only increased, during the time of the JCPOA.

QUESTION: Are you willing – are you willing to carry out a prisoner swap with Iran still?

SECRETARY POMPEO: I can't answer that question. We didn't exchange anything for these North Korean detainees. They came back because Chairman Kim thought it was in his best interest to do so, and we are thankful for that. And we are hopeful that Mr. Rouhani, who fancies himself a Westerner, would undertake to release the Iranian detainees as well. He talks about the fact that he wants European business there. The least he could do would be to return all of the people that his country, Mr. Rouhani's country, has hold of.

QUESTION: Fundamentally, a number of our European allies, as you know – I'm sure you've had some difficult conversations in the past few days – have been frustrated that the U.S. cut short the diplomacy, in their view. They said in a conversation with you last Friday you assured them that they had – they were close to this side deal to address the things President Trump was worried about. Why not try it? Why not finish that? Why did the President cut that off?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Oh, Margaret, we did. We did try. The President set out a set of objectives. He tasked me in my first couple weeks to work with the Europeans to try and do it, although the work had been ongoing before I arrived at the State Department. And at no time were we able to reach an agreement. The Europeans simply wouldn't accede to the requirements to fix the deal. And so they had some 90 days to do so. We were –

QUESTION: Mm-hmm. They thought they had another five days and could get there on the sunset clause.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Margaret, we had 90 days to work at it. And you should know we will continue to work. President Trump and President Macron have both said we want to get a deal that's right, a bigger deal. We will be hard at that in the weeks ahead. I hope to be a central part of achieving that. It would be a wonderful thing if we could get the Europeans to do this.

But Margaret, I do want to add this: Fundamentally, what's happened during the time of the JCPOA was that the Iranian wealth creation fueled their malign behavior. The money that they had to go and launch missiles into Riyadh and Israel – putting Americans at risk – was provided by the economic benefits they got from the JCPOA. President Trump wants to starve them of that wealth.

QUESTION: So fundamentally though, are you trying to negotiate a new nuclear deal, or are you trying to put together a coalition to defeat Iran?

SECRETARY POMPEO: We are going to put together a coalition that pushes back against not only Iran's nuclear program – which, by the way, Margaret, they still deny. No Iranian leader has admitted they had a weapons program, and the facts are now public that they did. They ought to at least be honest about that. But it's not going to just be the nuclear file. It will be their missile program. It will be their effort to build Hizballah. It'll be their threats against Israel. It'll be the work that they're doing in Yemen to launch missiles into Saudi Arabia, for goodness sakes.

This is the activity that the Iranian regime has undertaken during the JCPOA. We're going to make a shift. We're going to deny them the benefit of the economic wealth that has been created and put real pressure, so that they'll stop the full scale of the sponsorship of terrorism with which they've been engaged in these past years.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, thank you for coming on Face the Nation.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you very much, Margaret. Happy Mother's Day to you.

QUESTION: Thank you.

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