

Press Releases: Interview With Peter Zampa of Gray Television

Interview
Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

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QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, you could have picked many places for this agriculture discussion. Why Iowa?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Peter, we decided on Iowa because, first of all, it's the heartland of American agriculture. I'm from Kansas. That is too. But we chose Iowa because it has such an important element of what we're trying to do. We can talk about the importance of American technology and agriculture, the importance of American innovation in agriculture, and then I'm going to have Ambassador Branstad, the ambassador – United States ambassador to China, who, of course, was the governor of Iowa. We want to go to Iowa and talk to them about U.S. trade policy and how it impacts security and how we know the first client for the United States State Department is the people of the – are the people of the United States of America, including those in the heartland. So we wanted to get out there and talk to them about what it is the State Department does for them.

QUESTION: Yeah. No, farmers across the country, including those in Iowa, are waiting on a new trade deal with China. Some folks have been losing business because of these trade disputes. As our nation's chief diplomat, what is your message to these farmers?

SECRETARY POMPEO: We've got to get through this. I'm very confident that we'll get a trade agreement put together. And when we do, it'll turn the lights on. It will create a historic change, a historic set of opportunities for farmers, farmers in Iowa and all across the United States of America.

Peter, for an awfully long time, American farmers have been at an enormous disadvantage. Countries around the world, China included, have just denied access to our farm products – the highest quality, the highest yield, the most affordable products in the world – and these countries have just said no to protect their domestic industries. And so our companies didn't have a chance. Our agriculture companies didn't have a chance to sell their products

around the world. The Trump administration is going to change that.

QUESTION: Part of the reason for this Iowa trip is recruiting. You're trying to get folks of all ages interested in working at the State Department. Why should Iowans get involved?

SECRETARY POMPEO: There's no job as great as being able to represent America as a diplomat in every corner of the world. You get a chance to see the world, but most importantly you get a true opportunity to represent the greatest nation in the history of civilization. And, Peter, it's often the case that diplomats come from the east coast. We recruit a lot of people out of Washington, D.C., and Boston and New York. I want a diverse workforce at the State Department, and so I want to make sure that the tremendous opportunity, the incredible privilege of representing America as a diplomat working at the Department of State is something that people in the heartland know about as well.

QUESTION: You're speaking to some Future Farmers of America. What's your message going to be to them to get involved?

SECRETARY POMPEO: It's going to be a great day out in Iowa. We're going to be in Des Moines. We'll have a chance to spend a little bit of time with the governor. We'll talk to some farmers. We're going to talk to Corteva, a business out there.

My message is this: The Trump administration is dedicated to making sure that their kids – and these will be young people; they won't be thinking so much about this – but their kids, the next generation, will have all the same opportunities that their father and their mother and their grandfather and their grandmother all had in agriculture. We're determined to protect these businesses and make sure they can sell to growing populations all around the world.

QUESTION: Now, at the same time you're in Iowa, the attorney for the family of Hoda Muthana, the woman who left Birmingham, Alabama to join ISIS, then she eventually fled the terror group, will be meeting with your counsel in District Court in Washington. Her family is suing you after you decided she's not allowed back in the U.S. What's the case your team is going to make?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So this woman who worked so hard to put American lives at risk – U.S. soldiers, U.S. service members, frankly civilians as well by becoming a terrorist – isn't coming back to the United States of America. She has no right to come back to the United States of America. She is not a U.S. citizen. She has no claim for U.S. citizenship. That's what we'll be telling the court because that's the truth.

QUESTION: Folks who want to see her go through the legal process here in the States, what's your response to them, rather than letting her live at large elsewhere?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Well, this woman should not come back to the United States. It presents an enormous risk to the United States of America if she returns

and those like her return – and President Trump has made very, very clear. If we've got to prosecute terrorists here in the United States, we're completely prepared to do that, but in this instance it makes no sense.

QUESTION: Now, you've only had a few hours to rest before jet-setting off to Des Moines again, just returning from the important trip to Vietnam, the second summit between President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un. The President said he takes Kim Jong-un at his word that he didn't know about the treatment of the University of Virginia student Otto Warmbier that led to his death. Do you believe Kim Jong-un?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So you know I've had a chance to spend a fair amount of time with the Warmbier family. They are great people, truly wonderful people who suffered a horrific loss, and the President said that again yesterday too. The President also said that he understands who is responsible for his death. It's the regime in North Korea. He holds them responsible.

Most folks who are asking this question really are trying to get at why would we engage, why did we have those discussions in Hanoi, why have I been negotiating with a country that has horrible human rights abuses. And the answer is those were going on for an awfully long time. The previous administration took an approach of strategic patience. You can see, you can see, that that didn't work. We're trying to fix it. We're trying to correct. We're trying to get North Korea to course correct so there'll never be another suffering like the Warmbier family has gone through.

We also had the good fortune – I personally had the good fortune – of bringing three Americans home. I wish we could have brought Otto home in a condition that was better and this tragedy had not taken place. We are determined to get Americans back. We got another American back from Yemen just this past week. The Trump administration is serious about American safety abroad, and what happened in North Korea was absolutely outrageous, and President Trump knows that.

QUESTION: Do you believe Kim Jong-un when he says he didn't know about the treatment that led to his death?

SECRETARY POMPEO: We take very seriously the North Korean human rights violations, and we know exactly who's responsible for the death of Otto Warmbier. The North Korean regime is responsible for the death of Otto Warmbier.

QUESTION: So Kim –

SECRETARY POMPEO: There's no doubt about that.

QUESTION: So Kim Jong-un?

SECRETARY POMPEO: The North Korean regime is responsible for the death of Otto Warmbier, end of story.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, thank you so much for taking this time.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you very much. Appreciate it.

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