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Interview

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Secretary of State

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QUESTION: All right. So I just wanted to – well, first of all, thank you for being here today.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Great to be with you.

QUESTION: And I wanted to ask, what is your message to the people who are coming to this very large conference? Obviously, CERAWeek is a big deal. Can you tell me, what is your message to everyone here today?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So it's great to be in Houston. I came down really to talk about three things: first, the incredible importance of America's continued energy success to what I do, the task of trying to keep America and Americans safe. Our capacity to deliver energy around the world and to have less demand here, to be less dependent as a nation on others for energy, frees up a lot of capacity for us to do good around the world and to keep America safe.

The second thing I wanted to talk about is recruiting. We're always looking for talented people. I want to make sure we get out and talk to people all across America, and the State Department is a noble calling. It's a wonderful task to be an American diplomat. I want to share with people the real opportunities there are to serve America working with the United States Department of State.

QUESTION: Great. And can you talk to me about the energy revolution? And it – had mentioned that the energy revolution and this ability to help us keep America safe. National security – can you talk to me about that lane?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So we will be the world's largest exporter of crude oil in just a relatively short number of months. That's an amazing turnaround from a place where we were 10 years ago, where we were consuming product from all around the world and we depended upon the Middle East and other countries to provide us with those energy resources. This shale revolution, the amazing

innovation that's taken place in the United States of America has fundamentally transformed energy markets, not only for crude oil but for natural gas as well, and those have real ramifications for America's national security.

When I travel, wherever I go – I was in the Philippines last week, and in Vietnam; I'll be in the Middle East next week, and then on to Europe – everywhere I go, these issues of energy security are out there. Countries would much rather take their energy from a place like the United States, where we value the rule of law, we treat partners well, than to have to rely on Russia or someone else that doesn't behave that way. That gives me as America's most senior diplomat real opportunities to develop close partnerships and in turn keep the American people safe.

QUESTION: Thank you. Now turning to foreign affairs, specifically with North Korea. Can you talk with us about you – what is your take on the situation with North Korea, the satellites showing that they're maybe restarting this long-range rocket facility? And also the situation in Iran, with them potentially working on missiles that are blacklisted. Can you talk to me about what is your take on the situation in North Korea right now?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So we've been working at this, since the administration came into office, diligently. We've now got missile tests stopped; nuclear testing hasn't taken place for a while either. We think we can continue to maintain that. Chairman Kim committed to not doing those things when we were in Hanoi. President Trump sat down with Chairman Kim to try and fulfill his commitment to denuclearize. These nuclear weapons present a threat to the world, to our partners of Japan and South Korea in the region, and to the United States. And we're determined to follow through on the commitments that were made in Singapore. If we can get this right, there will be a brighter future for the people of North Korea and reduce risk all around the world.

We're mindful of the challenges. We know that it will be a bumpy, long road. This problem's been out there for quite some time. But we continue to be optimistic that Chairman Kim wants to denuclearize and that he intends to go down that path.

QUESTION: And when you're seeing certain pieces of what could be evidence of – satellite images and things like that, is there a concern there and how are you addressing that concern if that exists?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So I can't talk about what we know, American intelligence. We – what I can say is this: There's still work to do. North Koreans have not fulfilled the commitment that Chairman Kim made yet. They came partway there when the President traveled to Hanoi, but it wasn't enough. It's not just enough for America; this is the entire world. The United States has built out a fully global coalition. The resolutions that are putting pressure on North Korea are UN Security Council resolutions, not American sanctions. The whole world understands this threat, and the whole world is urging Chairman Kim to make the right strategic choice to get rid of his nuclear weapons and rejoin the world.

QUESTION: And this comment, does that also apply to the sanctions, the alleged breaking of the sanctions, importing oil and selling weapons and things like that?

SECRETARY POMPEO: It certainly does. These are UN sanctions. Enforcement of those sanctions matters an awful lot. We are urging every country to enforce them as rigidly as they can, and frankly, we've done pretty well. There are gaps. When we find gaps, we work to close them.

QUESTION: Okay, great. And the last topic I wanted to talk about is Venezuela. Can you talk to me about the decision to pull out the many American diplomats from the country?

SECRETARY POMPEO: It was really pretty straightforward. Last night, the – we made the decision that we would remove the remaining diplomats that we had on the ground in Caracas, Venezuela. We'll get them out in the next few days. The situation on the ground is deteriorating. It's so tragic. The humanitarian conditions there are just awful. You have people starving, can't get medicine to the sick. The American people have been incredibly generous, a couple hundred metric tons of food and hygiene kits and medicine sitting in Colombia, and the Maduro regime denying us the ability to get them to people who are starving. It's horrific; it's evil. Maduro has to leave. The Interim President Juan Guaido is working diligently alongside the Colombians, the Brazilians, the OAS, a group called the Lima Group, to build out a coalition that when this happens, when the Venezuelan peoples' voices are finally heard and Maduro leaves, we can restore Venezuela to the economic powerhouse that it has the capacity to be and a place where basic human rights are respected.

QUESTION: Okay, and in the interest of using up some time, because I want to make sure I'm using all my five minutes –

SECRETARY POMPEO: Of course.

QUESTION: Would I be able to just ask you about the state of U.S. image in terms of foreign affairs? They've described President Trump's leadership style as somewhat unilateral. Would you say that that is the case, and is that a good or a bad thing for the United States image?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Remember, I'm America's senior diplomat. Our first client is the American people, and I think President Trump definitely recognizes that. When I travel the world, when I meet with my foreign counterparts, they understand too that we're doing this alongside them. The coalition that we built out to put pressure on North Korea was worldwide. Today there are 50-plus countries that are recognizing that we've got to do something fundamentally different in Venezuela. We built out an 80-plus country coalition to defeat ISIS and take down the caliphate. Those are real partnerships. America led many of those efforts, and we're very proud of the work we do alongside those other countries, being mindful every day that our task is to keep the American people safe.

QUESTION: Thank you so much for your time today.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you very much.

QUESTION: I really appreciate it.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you.

QUESTION: Thank you. It's a pleasure to meet you.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you. It was wonderful to meet you, too.

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