

Press Releases: Interview With Sabrina Ahmed of WOI

Interview
Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Des Moines, Iowa
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QUESTION: Good morning, Elias. We are getting out of the studio this morning and switching things up a bit because we have a very special guest on Good Morning Iowa. We are joined now by the U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. Secretary Pompeo, thank you so much for being here.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Sabrina, it's great to be with you. Good morning.

QUESTION: So I'm sorry that it's so cold, first of all, but are you –

SECRETARY POMPEO: (Laughter.) Reminds of home in Kansas.

QUESTION: Yeah, there you go. You're here on a day-long trip. You have a whirlwind of events. You are shifting your focus. We've been talking a lot and hearing a lot about the North Korean summit, and now you want to talk more about agriculture, and what more of a fitting way to do that than to be joined by former Governor, now Ambassador to China Terry Branstad. Why are you here in Des Moines today?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So this was actually former Governor Branstad's idea. He said, "Mike, we need to get out and talk to the people of Iowa about the amazing work that the State Department does on behalf of folks like people from – Iowans." We wanted to come out here and talk about that, the work we do to open up markets so that farmers, ranchers in Iowa can sell their products all across the world. We want to talk about the country that he's our ambassador to, China, and the risk that that presents to the next generations of farmers.

And so we're out here today, and then I have another mission, which is that I want a lot of great, talented young people working as diplomats on behalf of the United States. And I would love to have some wonderful young people from Iowa decide that a career as a member of the diplomatic corps for the United States of America, the greatest nation in the history of civilization, is something they want to do. So I'm on a recruiting trip as well.

QUESTION: Okay, wonderful. Now you mentioned all of the wonderful things that the State Department is doing for Iowans and for the markets, but we have this trade war going on right now and it has created so much uncertainty for our farmers. What is your message to them this morning? Because honestly, with this on-and-off-again “Yes, there will be tariffs, yeah – no there won’t be increasing tariffs,” there’s – they just don’t know what to think.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Sabrina, remember the mission. When President Trump came in office, Iowa farmers, farmers all across America were being treated horribly around the world. These markets were closed. They were using smear campaigns to say that our food wasn’t safe, our product wasn’t high enough quality, and they had tariffs and barriers that prevented Iowans from competing around the world not just in farming, but in manufacturing, other businesses as well. And so President Trump set about the difficult task of fixing that to get fair and reciprocal trade. So a Iowan who wants to sell their products in China or in Europe can do so in a way that they can sell their products here. That’s the mission statement and it creates some uncertainty, to be sure, but it’s an important mission and one that I know in the long run will benefit Iowa farmers, Iowans more broadly as well.

QUESTION: What is the status of those negotiations? We’ve heard a lot that maybe there might be –

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yeah.

QUESTION: They might be coming to an end sometime this month. (Laughter.)

SECRETARY POMPEO: So I’ve been in a lot of negotiations too. It’s never over till it’s over, but they’ve made a lot of progress, and so I’m very hopeful that in the coming days and weeks, there’ll be a significant announcement. You saw the President make the ask of China – I think it was on Friday of this past week – saying hey, you should take down all your tariffs. That’s been the goal, it’s the President’s objective, and I hope the Chinese will agree to do that. When they do and when Iowans can compete, I know they’ll be successful.

QUESTION: But do you think it’s fair for Iowa farmers to be bearing the brunt of this trade war?

SECRETARY POMPEO: It wasn’t fair for 25 years to have China steal agriculture’s intellectual property, to take our trade secrets. Those are things that aren’t fair, and the President’s determined to get fairness. That’s the objective. We don’t want anyone to bear the brunt of any of this, but for too long, Iowa farmers have been abused by these countries, treated unfairly, and President Trump and I are determined to fix it.

QUESTION: This evening at the World Food Prize, you, in front of the Iowa Farm Bureau, are expected to make the, quote, “major policy announcement.” Can you give us some insight of at least a topic, a direction for us to begin?

SECRETARY POMPEO: I can’t tip much, but we’re going to come back to the

central theme of making sure that Iowans have a chance to compete around the world, and the State Department's role in ensuring that opportunity exists.

QUESTION: Fairly vague.

SECRETARY POMPEO: (Laughter.) Yes.

QUESTION: Okay. So talk to me a little bit about your relationship with former Governor –

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yeah.

QUESTION: – now Ambassador to China Terry Branstad.

SECRETARY POMPEO: It's been wonderful to get to know him. He works his tail off on behalf of the United States of America. He loves this place, Iowa, deeply. He communicates very effectively on behalf of our country the things that President Trump's trying to achieve, and to convince China to just compete, but not to do so in a way that's unfair. He's been a great ambassador. He is a great ambassador. I'm looking forward to spending the day here in Iowa with him.

QUESTION: Now as we consider this – continue this conversation of trade and trade talks, do you believe that President Trump has been an effective leader in this?

SECRETARY POMPEO: I do. I do. He's the first president in some time – and this isn't political, this crosses both parties – who's been prepared to take this challenge on, who recognized that when China steals hundreds of billions of dollars a year worth of intellectual property that Iowans invested in, that the seed that they buy, right, has a component, that the cost has to do with R&D and innovation and technology – when they steal that, that's bad news in the long run for Iowa farmers. President Trump's been prepared to take that on, and I'm very confident we'll get a good outcome for America and for Iowa.

QUESTION: Secretary Pompeo, thank you so much for taking the time.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Sabrina, thank you so much. Wonderful to be with you.

QUESTION: Welcome to Iowa.

SECRETARY POMPEO: All right. Stay warm.

QUESTION: All right. Elias, we will send it back to you – you stay warm too – in the studio. For now, I am live in downtown Des Moines, Sabrina Ahmed, Local 5 News, We Are Iowa.

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