

# Press Releases: Interview With Sean Hannity of the Sean Hannity Show

Interview  
Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Via Teleconference  
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**QUESTION:** All right, 25 till the top of the hour. Glad you're with us. Four days until the important midterm elections. I'm just going to take a slight break in our programming because that's all we've been talking about today, but starting Monday, the President now reimposing all the sanctions that were lifted under what was the acceptable – unacceptable Iranian deal. And the President is putting in place what are the single toughest sanctions ever on the Iranian regime, targeting much of the corrupt regime's critical sectors, including the economy, energy, shipping, shipbuilding, financial sectors. The impact already being felt in a lot of ways.

Here to update us on the importance of this is, I think, the Secretary of State – the best we've had in our lifetime – Mike Pompeo is with us, also former CIA director. How are you, sir?

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** Sean, I'm good. Thanks for the kind words.

**QUESTION:** Well, you've been doing really well. I had a chance to see you in Singapore and Helsinki, and you've been traveling the world pretty much day and night, and a lot of good things on foreign policy happening. Let's start with these sanctions.

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** Yes, sir. So come Monday, as you said, we will not only be reimposing the sanctions that were in place before the crazy JCPOA was entered into, but there'll be over several hundred designations. We will ultimately move Iran to zero crude oil. That'll take us some number of months to do that. We've been able to do that in a way that hasn't had a huge impact on crude oil prices. That's a good thing for American consumers.

But remember the purpose. The Islamic Republic of Iran is the world's largest state sponsor of terror. We're trying to change the ayatollah and Qasem Soleimani's behavior to keep the American people safe and secure. That's the mission, these sanctions are a part of our effort, and they're already being felt by the Iranian leadership.

**QUESTION:** We've known for a long time they're the number-one state sponsor of terror, but they also have been fighting many proxy wars in the region, including their responsibility and culpability of killing Americans in Iraq and Afghanistan.

But with that said, there is – and putting aside what happened to this individual Khashoggi, there seems to be an opportunity and a new alliance that has risen against the potential of a nuclear-armed Iran and Iranian hegemony in the region, and that is the United States, Israel, the Jordanians, the Egyptians, the Saudis, the Emirates all standing together in ways that nobody even imagined just a few years ago creating an alliance against Iran. What is the status of that?

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** Sean, that is all the good work of President Trump. He made this fundamental decision early on in the administration that this was the greatest threat to the United States and so did, in fact, build out an enormous coalition. There are some European countries in that too. We need to get more of them. But you're right, whether it's the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia or the Emirates or Egypt, these are all countries that understand their threat to regional stability in the Middle East. And we, of course, know the risk that it presents to us.

Sean, you would have probably seen this week there was another assassination attempt in Europe by Iran trying to kill Europeans. This is outrageous and it's the kind of behavior that the sanctions that go back next week are aimed at correcting.

**QUESTION:** Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is with us. One of the things that I think is going to be one of the President's biggest legacies is his advancement towards full and complete energy independence for the United States. And by that, we have the North Dakota Keystone pipelines; the President lifting the bureaucratic assault on the coal industry has helped West Virginia and Kentucky – we see immediate results there – opening up ANWR and drilling in the 48 states and off our coast. We have more oil, more natural gas, more coal than the Middle East combined, which means not only will we be able to produce all of our energy needs, which is the lifeblood of any economy, but then we can also help out our Western allies like Germany recently. And instead of making Russia and Putin rich again and the threat of him turning off the spigot one day, we could help out our Western European allies.

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** Sean, this is often overlooked in the national security realm, but the importance of the American energy renaissance that President Trump has greenlighted, has permitted to happen, can't be underestimated. Our ability to produce nine, ten, eleven million barrels of oil today, enormous natural gas resources, gives us freedom from others who might want to use their energy to extort America into engaging in behavior they preferred. It gives us the capacity not to have to accept a bad deal because we needed some energy. And then in fact, you're right, it gives us the capacity to influence what's going on elsewhere in the world by delivering good American energy that creates jobs at home as well.

**QUESTION:** I know you've followed up since Singapore as it relates to North Korea. Let me ask you – I couldn't understand the media's coverage of it because the President really gave up nothing except for a few kind words, but we did get the remains sent back from the Korean War, we did have hostages returned as well. We don't see rockets being fired over Japan or the world being threatened. It looks like little rocket man fire and fury, our button's bigger than yours and works, all of a sudden now we're talking about the denuclearization of the entire Korean Peninsula. What is the status of those talks? I know you've had numerous since Singapore.

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** I have. In fact, I'll have another set of conversations next week with my counterpart, the number two person. I was with Chairman Kim early in October. In each of those conversations he has made clear his intention to denuclearize.

Sean, you know as well as I do we've got to verify that. We've got to make sure that we get that piece of it right. We won't accept anyone's word for it. But that work, which will take time, has delivered for America good outcomes already, outcomes that weren't delivered by previous administrations and ones that have benefited America enormously, right. No nuclear testing, no missile testing. Those are not small things. They're good steps along the way. A lot of work remains, but I'm confident that we will keep the economic pressure in place until such time as Chairman Kim fulfills the commitment he made to President Trump back in June in Singapore.

**QUESTION:** He's even talking about having a denuclearized North Korea within a year. Do you think that's possible still?

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** I think it's physically possible. I think it will be a real challenge to move to that timeline. And President Trump's been pretty clear, we're not going to be driven into – to artificial timelines that are set by others. We're going to continue to make progress. And so long as we have the capacity to understand what's going on there and to continue the march towards denuclearization, this is an acceptable place for us to be.

**QUESTION:** One of the things that I think the President has not gotten enough credit for, I was arguing even before President Trump got elected, he doesn't want a trade deal. He's the consummate, never-ending negotiator. And yeah, we've had some really horrible trade deals over the years, but if you don't take the strong position that we will fight back and that we will put tariffs on you, I don't think anybody would take any word seriously. So the President has successfully now done that with Mexico and with Canada. Now it's going on with our European allies. He's even renegotiating the contribution of other countries as it relates to NATO. But I think the biggest showdown is with China and with their economy falling, what, 30, 35 percent. I'm guessing China's going to be banging down Donald Trump's door soon wanting a trade deal.

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** Sean, this has been an enormous success for the administration. To create wealth and jobs for American people, we need other countries to trade fairly with us. His raising the specter of tariffs has caused these countries to change their behavior, to be willing to engage in

negotiations they would not otherwise have been prepared to engage in. You can say the same thing on the national security front, too. You mentioned NATO, but in the Middle East as well we've gotten our partners to share more of the burden of their own defense, and that's the appropriate place. America's there. We understand our interests, but these other countries have a responsibility to secure their own people and their own nations and protect their own sovereignty. Our responsibility is to keep the American people safe and secure.

**QUESTION:** Well, it made no sense for the United States to pay 72 cents of every dollar in terms of protecting the NATO alliance, and then some of our NATO partners, in the case of Germany and Chancellor Merkel, going ahead and doing billion-dollar deals with Russia, which would make them rich again and also he would have control over the lifeblood of their economy there.

What is the overall relationship with China like? And as it relates to China, Russia, the United States, where are those – where are their alliances going now?

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** China, I think, Sean, you have correctly identified as the most important long-term strategic challenge for the United States of America, and that's across multiple fronts. We've talked about trade. We need that to be fair and reciprocal with them. But just this week we indicted 10 Chinese for stealing intellectual property. It's been going on in previous administrations for decades. This is really important to American business and protecting the human capital, the talented work of American people, and national security. We've seen –

**QUESTION:** I know somebody this has happened to. They literally just steal patents. They just steal them.

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** Absolutely, Sean. And they do it through cyber means or by extorting it. If a business wants to sell into their market, they require them to turn over some or all of their intellectual property. These are unacceptable behaviors that Donald Trump has made clear, that President Trump has made clear he will not accept, and we're working to correct them.

**QUESTION:** Oh, I hope that gets done. What is the status of the relationship the United States now has with Putin and Russia? I mean, the media loves to fixate and focus on it. There was no Russia collusion unless you consider the phony dossier that was bought and paid for by Hillary that was disseminated to the American people on a FISA court, but I'm not going to drag you into that mess. But what is the relationship with Putin now?

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** It's been a real challenge, but President Trump's made clear he wants very much to have a good relationship with the Russians. We need them to do a handful of things to change the behavior there. They're causing challenges, trouble, reducing America's security. We've seen this – the work. We need them to come back into compliance with their missile treaties, agreements that they've made as well. If we can convince them and we should have dialogue with them – I did when I was CIA director; I spoke with my Russian counterpart – if we can have conversations that can cause

them to change their behavior in a way that doesn't put Americans at risk, this is an enormously good thing. And I have encouraged the President and other cabinet members to do exactly that.

**QUESTION:** Last thing. We've learned an awful lot about – going back over many, many years how America has been assaulted in cyber warfare. And at some point, you build a sword, then somebody builds a shield. As I understand it, we have 250,000 IT employees that work for our government and yet still, our government agencies we hear, we read are hacked. And to me, that is just unacceptable because we know the threat is real. Are we taking the steps to fix that?

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** Sean, I think we are. It is a space where offense is easier to play than defense. I think America's commercial sector has seen that as well. So it is – I think it's a permanent part of the world in which we live. We're going to have to continue to expend the resources necessary to protect especially our most sensitive assets, especially that information which is most important to be kept private. We need to spare no cost to prevent it from being hacked, stolen, disrupted, destroyed. We're –

**QUESTION:** I don't think anybody ever had any idea, but I mean, it's been going on 40 years apparently.

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** Forty years now.

**QUESTION:** Now that I'm getting a – oh, it's crazy. Last question. The caravan, the President's comments, Mexico. You've been active and involved in –

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** Yep.

**QUESTION:** – talking to Mexican officials. What I don't understand in the whole equation is why haven't they turned the people around and said no, you can't stay here either? I know they've offered jobs in southern Mexico for some of the caravan – offering work permits to some people. They've turned down public – turned off public transportation, but they're still letting them walk.

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** Sean, it's a difficult challenge. The President has got this right. Securing our southern border, enforcing American sovereignty is an enormous national security issue. It's why, as Secretary of State, I've been very involved in these discussions. We're encouraging – I've spoken to the leaders of the three Northern Triangle countries in the last 48 hours. I've spoken – spoke with my counterpart down in Mexico and the incoming counterpart down in Mexico nearly every day. We are – encourage them to do all the things they can to break up these migrants.

And more importantly, Sean, these caravans are a symptom. We have a continuing problem there separate and apart from the caravans, and we need to make sure everyone understands there's only one way to enter the United States. It is legally. And if you come here illegally, you won't be able to stay. President Trump's made that very clear and I am hoping that will assist

in deterring people from making this arduous, dangerous travel through Mexico trying to enter our country unlawfully. It's unacceptable for them to try and come not through a legal port of entry.

**QUESTION:** Well, I think you're one of the President's best picks both as CIA director, now as Secretary of State. What did you graduate from West Point? What were you in your class?

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** (Laughter.) I was a pretty good student, Sean.

**QUESTION:** You don't want to – how come the President said he's number one in his class, he was number one? Anyway, great to talk to you, Mr. Secretary.

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** Thank you, Sean.

**QUESTION:** I know you've been traveling a lot on behalf of the country and it looks like we're making a lot of good progress, and that's good for all of us. Thank you for what you're doing.

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** Amen. Bless you, Sean. Have a good day.

**QUESTION:** You too. Have a great day.

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