

Press Releases: Interview With Trish Regan of Trish Regan Primetime on Fox Business Network

Interview
Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Treaty Room
Washington, DC
February 6, 2019

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, welcome. Good to have you here.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Trish, it's great to be with you. Thank you for having me on.

QUESTION: So you have effectively destroyed the caliphate. That is a big, big accomplishment. But have you destroyed ISIS?

SECRETARY POMPEO: The threat obviously continues, but the work that's been done – today, we held here at the State Department a big coalition group, over 75 countries, mostly my counterparts. The President came over to both thank them and remind them that this great work over two years, where our military and our diplomats have done such great work, has taken down nearly all of the real estate. You remember when they were putting people in cages and cutting off heads. This was horrific stuff. We've taken down almost all of that territory, both in Iraq and Syria. So that's the good news. The challenge, of course, is that the threat from radical Islamic terrorism remains, and the President told the assembled groups here today, "We're with you." We're with you in this fight. We understand this threat continues, and we're going to fight them wherever we find them.

QUESTION: How will we make sure that they don't reassemble in some way in Syria?

SECRETARY POMPEO: That's the challenge I think for our time. In Syria, we will simply do the same mission we've had for my two years in this administration. It's to identify, make sure we understand where they are, and go after them, whether that's us directly or through our partners and coalition partners, to achieve the outcome, which is to make sure that we do the thing that the President talked about in his speech last night: protect

Americans, protect American security, and make sure that the threats to the homeland are diminished.

QUESTION: Do you run the risk that they just change locations, so if it's not Syria, it's somewhere else tomorrow?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yeah, they'll try. They've been trying for a long time. They'll try and move. They'll certainly try and set up, whether that's in Africa or in Libya in the north. We find this threat from radical Islamist terrorism on most continents today. Our task is to deny them real estate, keep pressure on them, diminish their financial capacity, all the things that reduce risk for Americans.

QUESTION: Let me switch to North Korea. We've got a lot, by the way; that's why it's going around the world. We can certainly take our pick here. But when you look at North Korea and – do you see that as a success? I mean, the President is saying he avoided war with North Korea. Was it that close?

SECRETARY POMPEO: You remember what President Obama told him when they had their conversation. He said it was the biggest threat that President Trump and America would face during President Trump's time in office. I've seen this threat; you have too. For decades now, administrations allowed North Korea to continue to pose a threat to the United States. We've taken a very straightforward approach. We know the challenge of negotiating these nuclear weapons from Chairman Kim will be difficult, but it's the mission set. So we, in the finest tradition of diplomacy, built out a global coalition that has put on UN Security Council sanctions that are unequalled. We've put real pressure on them, and now have this opportunity. We've had one back in June in Singapore. We'll have another here at the end of this month in Vietnam to work with Chairman Kim Jong-un so that he can deliver on the promise he made in Singapore to denuclearize, and in turn that we made commitments that we'd create a brighter future for the North Korean people. We're completely prepared to do that as well.

QUESTION: Well, the critics would say, well, he's just biding his time. This gives him more of an opportunity. What do you say to that, sir?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So the time he has is with an economy that is not serving his people, and Chairman Kim Jong-un himself has said it. He wants to change the focus for North Korea. He said this in his New Year's Day speech, he said it in other places as well. He understands that we need to create collectively a better future for the people of North Korea. We stand ready to help. We simply need the nuclear weapons gone from the peninsula. We'll have peace, we'll have security, and then North Korean people can get a chance for the brighter future they so richly deserve.

QUESTION: Speaking of people that need a brighter future, what is your plan in Venezuela?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Plan's very straightforward. We're supporting the Venezuelan people, who have for far too long now suffered under the hands of Mr. Maduro. The people know better. The humanitarian crisis is real. He

conducted a sham election, then declared himself president, and we simply have said we're not going to recognize that. There are now almost four dozen countries that have taken this same view, that have recognized the interim president, Mr. Guaido, as the president of Venezuela, rightly, duly empowered under the Venezuelan constitution, under the people of Venezuela's own power to deliver good outcomes for them.

Trish, today we tried to deliver humanitarian assistance from Colombia, from the United States and Colombia, into Venezuela, and the Venezuelan military, under the direction of Mr. Maduro, stopped that. Not only is he not allowing the economy to flourish, he is actively denying medicine, foodstuffs, and hygiene kits for his own people. This is horrific stuff, and I think the Venezuelan people have had enough of it, and I'm confident that in the days and weeks ahead, they will continue to protest, continue to rise up, and their wishes will be seen for. We're doing everything we can to make sure countries in the region help us do that.

QUESTION: He controls the military. I mean, to me – he's controlling the military, and I know you've seen some success. For example, there was an Air Force general that said okay, I'm going to switch sides. How do you get more of those military members to switch sides, because ultimately, doesn't it come down to that?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So there's two interesting things I think about that. First, there's been some notion that there'd be an invasion of Venezuela. Well, that happened. The Cubans invaded Venezuela. But the Cubans have been controlling the security apparatus, protecting Maduro, and destroying the way of life for the Venezuelan people for an awfully long time. The second thing: I'm convinced that many of the individuals that are inside the Venezuelan military don't want to do harm to their brothers and sisters, to their children and their grandparents. I think they care about the Venezuelan people too. I think over time they will come to see that Maduro's time is up and change should be at hand.

QUESTION: There are five Americans that are in prison right now being held hostage by Nicolas Maduro. Six people actually left from the U.S. to go down to what they thought was a business meeting. They worked for Citgo, which was owned by PDVSA. They thought it was a normal business meeting in Caracas, and the next thing they know they wind up in prison. Again, five U.S. citizens and then another person who was working here with a green card. What are we doing to help them, to get them out? Because America can't stand for that. We can't allow a dictator to lock up our people.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Trish, I can't talk much about any individual case. I can tell the American people this: First, anywhere there is an American who is wrongfully detained, in this case by the thug Maduro – the United States Government is incredibly focused on obtaining their release. We've been pretty successful in President Trump's first two years in doing that. President Trump and my team are rightfully proud of the work that we've done.

In the case of Venezuela, I can assure the American people that we are working diligently to make sure that no American is wrongfully detained by

Mr. Maduro.

QUESTION: And the families in Texas and Louisiana, you can assure them that you're working hard?

SECRETARY POMPEO: There is – there is no effort that is being spared in returning Americans who are wrongfully detained, in – frankly, in Venezuela and elsewhere in the world as well.

QUESTION: Let me ask you about sort of the process for this, because again, how do you get rid of a dictator, right? I mean, this is a guy who's clinging to power. He's clinging to his military. There's certainly been precedent. We've done it before. John Bolton has said to me on this show: Well, he should take the deal. He should take the amnesty deal and live happily ever after on the beach in a villa somewhere far, far away from Venezuela. But how do you get from point A to point B in order for him to take that deal?

SECRETARY POMPEO: We've seen this before. A dictator is clinging to power until the moment they no longer can, and we hope that that moment, that moment when Maduro realizes he no longer has the support of the Venezuelan people in material ways and the military begins to recognize that to see Venezuela move forward, to see the good things that most Venezuelans want for themselves and for their families – when they recognize that the time is up and that there's no more negotiating, there's no more talking, there's no more fraudulent elections to be held, you can't cling to power – we hope that that day comes sooner. It will matter to the Venezuelan people. They'll be out of fuel before too terribly long. The shelves in the stores are already bare. The humanitarian crisis there is very real, and I think that's why you see the globe rise up. I mean, it's seldom been the case in South America. You know the history, Trish. Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Colombia – I'll forget names here, sitting here (inaudible) – are all rallying to the aid of the Venezuelan people. I am convinced that the – their fellow South Americans will be a powerful influence in Maduro realizing that his days are over.

QUESTION: It's heartening to see. It's heartening to see the people taking to the streets in the name of freedom and in the name of democracy, and it's heartening to see the United States standing with them in that endeavor.

Let me ask you about some of the sanctions we've put in place. Do you feel that those are working? There are people, investors that have invested in Venezuelan sovereign debt or PDVSA debt that feel some concern because they – they worry you're shutting down the market, and in doing so you're shutting down the market to Americans, thereby allowing the likes of the Russians or the Chinese or any of the other bad guys that want to come in and buy this stuff up on the cheap the opportunity to do so. Are the sanctions working, and what can you say to ease some of their fears?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So Trish, it's the case when America makes a decision to impose sanctions, it sometimes has adverse impacts on Americans. There's no doubt about that. They're not free. But this time they're really worth it. Sanctions matter over time. They don't matter on – so much on day one or day two, but over time deny the Maduro regime the resources to conduct business,

which includes paying salaries to the military, and to try and transfer those resources to the duly elected interim president, Mr. Guaido. If we can accomplish that, then that money – those resources will go for the good of the Venezuelan people and not for the evil of Mr. Maduro. That's the objective of our sanctions. We are still, in spite of the sanctions, providing humanitarian assistance. It's not –

QUESTION: And you'll keep doing so?

SECRETARY POMPEO: We will. These aren't aimed at the Venezuelan people; indeed, just the opposite. They're aimed at achieving a really good outcome for the people of Venezuela.

QUESTION: Why is this so important for our hemisphere?

SECRETARY POMPEO: We should not permit a country in our hemisphere to treat its own people this way. American values – America is – not only our interests, but our values are at stake here. We had someone hijack an election in the Western Hemisphere, and the people of that country revolted against it. We ought to do all that we can to rally the global community to reject that as a way of doing business in the Western Hemisphere.

QUESTION: And do we run the risk that if we're not there, Russia is?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Russia is there today. The Cubans are there today. We are very hopeful that when this peaceful transition takes place, which is our ultimate objective, that the Venezuelan people will want to be sovereign and independent, not rely on Cubans and Russians for their security or their wellbeing.

QUESTION: That would be great. I think they would like that. Before I let you go, I want to ask you: Ivanka Trump and you and everyone here at the State Department and some other agencies as well are teaming up in an initiative to help women all across the globe. Tell me a little bit about it and why it's so critical to reach the women of the world if you really want to see peace.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Trish, this is almost a truism in this administration that we believe, which is that if you empower women and you create opportunities for women, countries and families will be far more successful. So this initiative, which will be government-wide, run out of the White House, called the Women's Development and Prosperity Initiative, will have multiple pieces to it. But each of them are aimed at a singular objective, which is to make sure that every country maximizes the value of every human being, and in this case, making sure women are empowered in the most fundamental ways to take care of themselves, their families; if they want to be entrepreneurs, to do that, to go to school – all the things that we in this administration hope for every human being. We're going to work diligently to make sure that women in countries across the globe have those very opportunities.

QUESTION: I think it's very admirable. I really do think that women are so critical; they are the lynchpin, if you would, to a society. So it's a – it's a great way of interacting with the world.

And finally, I hear you're going to be in Warsaw next week.

SECRETARY POMPEO: I am.

QUESTION: Yes?

SECRETARY POMPEO: We're traveling to Warsaw to conduct a meeting of dozens of countries to talk about Middle East stability and how we achieve that. We thank the Poles for hosting it. We'll have countries from all across the globe talking about how it is we can take down the risk in the Middle East, whether that risk is from radical Islamic terrorism, or from the challenges that we find in Yemen or in Lebanon, or the threat that is posed by the Islamic Republic of Iran. Each of those topics will be discussed with a broad range of views, and we hope to come out of there with a strategic plan forward which reduces risk for the people here in the United States of America.

QUESTION: It's so important over there, but just to tie it back to Venezuela: Do you have concerns that Venezuela runs the risk of turning into a no man's land where you have these bad actors, including some with links to Hizballah, that could be more of a threat because they're in our hemisphere?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yeah, Trish, I'm glad you brought that up. People don't recognize that Hizballah has active cells. The Iranians are impacting the people of Venezuela and throughout South America. We have an obligation to take down that risk for America, and part of what we'll talk about next week in Warsaw is certainly how we do that in South America and all across the globe.

QUESTION: All across the world. Well, keep it up.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you, Trish.

QUESTION: Keep us safe.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you, ma'am.

QUESTION: Thank you so much, Mr. Secretary. Good luck on the trip.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you. It's wonderful to be with you.

QUESTION: Thank you.

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