

Press Releases: Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo With Mark Reardon of the Mark Reardon Show

Interview
Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Via Teleconference
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QUESTION: Secretary of State Mike Pompeo with us this afternoon on KMOX. Mr. Secretary, how are you?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Good afternoon, Mark. I'm good. How are you doing today?

QUESTION: Good. Thanks for coming on. Let me get right to it here because we have a variety of issues. Can you explain what's happening in Yemen right now and why – I guess one of the questions would be why folks here in my listening area should pay attention or how this plays into the broader issue with foreign policy.

SECRETARY POMPEO: So two things. First, in Yemen, al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula continues there to plot terror attacks on the United States of America. The United States is involved in order to prevent those. We've been very successful to date at disrupting those terror plots. We sometimes take for granted the fact that we've not had terror attacks from al-Qaida here in the United States for a bit, but that's due to a lot of hard work, much of which is taking place today in Yemen.

Second, we have Iran very active in Yemen. Iran, the world's largest state sponsor of terror, continues to provide missiles and artillery that threatens Western interests throughout the Middle East. It's those very real threats to the United States that cause us to have an interest in making sure that the American people are safe and secure.

QUESTION: And this sort of plays into the topic of Iran sanctions, and you're imposing new sanctions. These are called snapback sanctions. What's the goal here? What are we trying to accomplish overall?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Iran continues to proliferate missiles. Just this week in Denmark an Iranian intelligence officer was arrested for having attempted an

assassination attack inside of Europe. These kinds of things could most certainly impact American citizens traveling, business people doing business in Europe. This remains the world's largest state sponsor of terror.

The previous administration had entered into the JCPOA. President Trump said, and I agree with him, it was among the worst deals ever struck by the United States. And so the President withdrew back in May, and now this coming Monday we will reimpose the sanctions that were in place before that deal was entered into, which will deny Iran the money they need to continue to foment terror around the world.

QUESTION: So they – I'm sure they want to get around those sanctions. They're trying to make financial ties with other countries. Do you think they can do that successfully?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Well, the six months since the withdrawal from the JCPOA would indicate that they're going to have a real challenge in doing that. Nearly all of the major companies that were doing business in Iran – European companies, Asian companies, countries frankly from around the world that had their businesses doing work in Iran – have withdrawn from that country. And so I think they will be incredibly challenged to continue to do business with the rest of the world. The President has made this point very clearly: You can choose to do business with Iran or with the United States, but you cannot do both.

QUESTION: So if the sanctions result in the pressure that you're hoping for, what do you hope that the reaction then from the Iranians will be?

SECRETARY POMPEO: We hope they'll behave like a normal nation – stop conducting assassination plots in Europe, stop launching missiles into Saudi Arabia and the Emirates, cease their activities all around the world in supporting Hizballah that risks – puts at risk Israeli lives every day and Americans who are traveling to Israel as well. The kinds of activities we're asking them to cease, they're no different, Mark, than what we ask every country in the world to do. Behave like a normal nation, and then you are welcome to rejoin the community of nations.

QUESTION: And that sounds like it makes sense, but with Iran in particular we haven't seen them behaving in a way in the past to indicate that that would be something that they would do moving forward. Have we?

SECRETARY POMPEO: We haven't seen that. But one of the reasons we haven't is because the previous administration took an approach where it thought that it could work with Iran, it thought that if it opened up and cut a deal with them that the ayatollah would change his ways. That has proven to be patently false. Indeed the risk to the world from Iran increased during the JCPOA, and this administration is determined not to repeat that.

We're going to be diligent. These sanctions are not aimed at the Iranian people. Indeed, it is the Iranian people who we are supporting, and we hope that it will be the Iranian people that will demand that their government simply do the things that we've asked, to behave like a normal country.

QUESTION: Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is with me on KMOX this afternoon talking about a variety of foreign policy topics. Have you heard the audio tape of Khashoggi being killed yet?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Mark, I have not.

QUESTION: What's the next step in that situation? Obviously we have jobs on the line here. It's a tough situation because you have to balance human rights versus the economic reality. Boeing here in St. Louis, there are big defense contracts. How do you navigate these waters?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So we have deep and long-term strategic relationships with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and at the same time the murder of Jamal Khashoggi in the consulate in Turkey is unacceptable. President Trump has made clear that it violates all norms, and we don't – we neither condone it, nor will we permit it to go unresponded to.

So with respect – you asked with respect to next steps. We're continuing to understand the fact pattern. We are reviewing putting sanctions on the individuals that we have been able to identify to date that have – that were engaged in that murder. It'll take us probably a handful more weeks before we have enough evidence to actually put those sanctions in place, but I think we'll be able to get there. We're going to find the fact pattern. The President said we will demand accountability for those who were involved in the commission of this heinous crime.

At the same time, President Trump has made very clear not only do we have important commercial relationships, but important strategic relationships, national security relationships with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and we intend to make sure that those relationships remain intact.

QUESTION: Are you satisfied with the level of cooperation right now in that investigation with the Saudis?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yes. We're getting cooperation. We've had good cooperation with Turkey as well. And frankly, there's been good cooperation between Turkey and Saudi Arabia, although sometimes uneven. There's been good cooperation there as well. So yes, we're continuing to develop the fact pattern, as are other countries around the world. We'll form our own judgments about who should be held accountable for that murder.

QUESTION: You've been racking up some frequent flier miles to North Korea. I think you've been there four times already. There hasn't really been a breakthrough. What's the status of those negotiations, or what might happen? There's still talk of a summit next year, another summit. What can you tell us about that?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yes, sir. Well, we've made some progress, right? We stopped their missile testing. There is no longer nuclear tests being conducted. Those are really dangerous activities, and the North Koreans have stopped them.

We've had – they have closed down a couple of sites. We have been told that

we will get to inspect those sites shortly. Chairman Kim told me that himself. I'm hopeful that that will take place before too long as well.

And then we are continuing our negotiations not only, as Americans have seen, on the return of the remains of our fallen there in North Korea – a very important thing that we shouldn't underestimate either, at least the beginning of that. It is very important to those families.

But we're working diligently to complete what Chairman Kim and President Trump agreed to back in June, which is the complete and verifiable denuclearization of North Korea. No one ever thought it would be easy, straightforward, or quick, and so we're working to put the next steps in place so we can begin to take real, measurable, impactful steps, reducing North Korea's nuclear threat. And when we're done, when we get to the end, President Trump wants there to be a brighter future for the North Korean people. We're determined to get to that point.

QUESTION: Obviously this is a trust but verify situation, but why should we believe that the North truly wants to give up those nuclear weapons?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Well, he said that he will. We'll have to verify it. We have to see it. Your point is well taken. No one should for a moment believe that President Trump or me or this administration is going to take anyone's word for this. We'll need to see it. We'll need to know it. And once we've had the capacity, the opportunity to verify that this has taken place, then and only then will the economic sanctions that have been put on North Korea be removed.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, thanks so much for joining me here in St. Louis. Appreciate that.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you, Mark.

QUESTION: What's a tougher job, CIA director or Secretary of State? You've had two non-stressful jobs.

SECRETARY POMPEO: They're both incredible privileges to serve America, Mark.

QUESTION: I thought that might be the answer. Mr. Secretary, Mike Pompeo, thank you so much.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you, sir.

QUESTION: Appreciate it.

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