

[Press Releases: Interim President Juan Guaidó's Return to Venezuela](#)

Press Statement
Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Washington, DC
March 4, 2019

The United States applauds the people of Venezuela for their actions to create a peaceful democratic transition, and congratulates Interim President Juan Guaidó on his successful diplomatic efforts in the region and safe return to Venezuela.

The United States and freedom-loving nations around the world stand with Interim President Guaidó, the National Assembly, and all democratic forces as they work to establish free and fair elections that will return democracy to Venezuela.

We also welcome news of Venezuelan military and security service personnel doing the right thing and recognizing Interim President Juan Guaidó.

The international community must unite and push for the end of Maduro's brutal regime and the peaceful restoration of democracy in Venezuela.

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Department Official On Title III of the LIBERTAD Act

Special Briefing

Via Teleconference
March 4, 2019

MODERATOR: Thank you, and good morning everyone, or good afternoon. Thank you for joining us for today's background briefing on the LIBERTAD Act, also known as the Helms-Burton Act. Today with us is [Senior State Department Official]. A reminder: Today's call is on background and will be embargoed until the end of the call. I'll now turn it over to our senior official for brief remarks and then we'll take some questions. Thank you.

SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL: Great. Thank you very much, and thanks to everyone for joining us. I know there's a lot of interest out there, and so I am pleased to discuss today Secretary Pompeo's historic determination regarding Title III of the LIBERTAD Act. As you know, the United States is committed to advancing human rights, democracy, and the rule of law in Cuba. This administration's policy towards Cuba in particular has been especially clear-eyed in its focus on improving human rights, encouraging the rule of law, fostering free markets and free enterprise, and of course, promoting democracy and freedom in Cuba.

We, of course, are extremely concerned about ongoing human rights abuses in Cuba. The regime continues to deprive the Cuban people of fundamental freedoms, including freedom of speech, the press, and assembly. It's demonstrated over and over again that it's willing to use force to silence dissent. Reputable NGOs have reported more than a hundred political prisoners are behind bars, and most recently we saw the regime in action in the violent crackdown on opposition figures that took place prior to the February 24th so-called constitutional referendum.

Unfortunately, even under a new president in Cuba, nothing has changed. We see that the constitution retains the same authoritarian political system and simply reinforces the communist party's control over the island. Cuba continues to maintain close relations with Russia and China and has destabilized Venezuela, leading to mass flows of refugees and, of course, public health threats.

Since the LIBERTAD Act came into effect in 1996, as you are aware, every administration has fully suspended Title III. But despite that, we continue

to see the Cuban state's repression of its own people, which has, in our view, persisted and even worsened. We have seen additional reputable NGOs report over 2,873 short-term arrests in 2018 and over 405 arbitrary detentions in February 2019 alone. Accordingly, this administration undertook a very serious and thorough review of Title III, the conditions on the ground in Cuba, and whether a waiver is both in the U.S. national interest as well as expedite the transition to democracy.

So based on those considerations, Secretary Pompeo has decided against fully suspending Title III at this time. So today he is announcing the suspension of Title III for 30 days. That's a period from March 19th to April 17th. But there is one crucial exception, which is that U.S. nationals will have the right to bring action against Cuban entities and Cuban sub-entities on the Cuba Restricted List. And as a reminder, the Cuba Restricted List identifies entities and sub-entities under the control of Cuban military intelligence or security forces, which are, of course, those that are directly responsible for the repression of the Cuban people.

So finally, with this decision the U.S. is holding the Cuban regime accountable and opening a path of redress for U.S. claimants whose property was illegally and unjustly seized by the regime. We should remember that after Fidel Castro seized power, he confiscated private property of thousands of private individuals and companies without any compensation. And to date, there's really been no justice for this theft. In 1996, when Congress passed and the president signed the LIBERTAD Act, that was partially to penalize those who benefit from the rightful property of Americans.

In addition to taking this action, we also are continuing to encourage the international community to press Cuba on human rights and demand that the regime stop harassing and detaining peaceful activists and independent journalists, release political prisoners, and provide for a democratic and prosperous future for the Cuban people. We're also encouraging anyone doing business in Cuba to consider, whether intentionally or not, they're trafficking in confiscated property and therefore abetting the regime's repression.

So in sum, this is – it's clear that by this action we are ratcheting up pressure on the Cuban Government. In the days ahead we're going to continue to monitor the impact of the suspension with an exception and assess what further action may be necessary to the national interests of the United States and to expedite democracy and support efforts by the Cuban people to bring reform to their country. We'll also continue to encourage international partners to hold Cuba accountable for propping up the Maduro regime in Venezuela and press them to stop harassing and detaining peaceful activists and independent journalists.

And with that, I'll close and happy to take any questions.

MODERATOR: Okay. Now we'll move over to the questions.

OPERATOR: Ladies and gentlemen, as a reminder, please press * then 1 if you would like to ask a question.

All right. We have a question. We have a couple people in queue for a question.

MODERATOR: Okay. We'll take the first question.

OPERATOR: All right. We'll go to the line of Matthew Lee from AP. Please, go ahead.

QUESTION: Thanks. Listen, I've read through this waiver, which is very short, and I'm having a hard time figuring out exactly how – what kind of pressure this is going to put on the Cubans. And to that – to that end, how is a U.S. company or person supposed to bring an action against these people? What courts?

And secondly, are – if there are joint ventures that are on the list of restricted entities and sub-entities, will the foreign partner in the joint venture be able to be sued as well? Thank you.

SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL: Yes, thank you very much. So I'll take those three questions in order.

So in terms of the type of pressure, so, of course, this is the first time that we are implementing – that we have an exception to the waiver for Title III. It's very clear through this action that we are going to hold the Cuban regime accountable for its confiscation of properties and ensure that there is justice for U.S. claimants.

With respect to where they bring these cases, that would be to the U.S. federal courts.

And then finally, this is with a specific focus on Cuban entities and sub-entities, so as it currently stands, the intention of the Secretary's decision is for them to be the – those against whom action is taken, not those who are engaged in joint ventures, at this time.

MODERATOR: Thank you. We'll go the next question.

OPERATOR: We will now go to the line of Nick Wadhams from Bloomberg News. Please, go ahead.

QUESTION: Hi, thanks very much. Given your answer that this will not target foreign companies, can you explain a little bit how this will be anything more than a purely symbolic move?

And then second, why do you keep shortening the exemption? Routinely it was six months prior, then the most recent exemption was 45 days, and now you've gone to 30 days. Does this signal that you're not going to keep issuing this exemption? Thanks.

SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL: Thank you very much. So with respect to the timeline, the Secretary has determined that 30 days is an appropriate time span at this time, during which period we will continue to assess the impact that it has had, and also in line with those two principles, which is U.S.

national interest and expediting a return to democracy.

By limiting implementation of Title III to Cuban entities and sub-entities on the CRL, as mentioned, it does not allow Title III litigation against existing third-country investors in properties on the Cuba Restricted List. However, part of the shortening period is so that we can make a determination as to how this is affecting the calculus of others, and we will use this 30-day period as we used the previous 45-day period to encourage any person who is doing business in Cuba to reconsider whether they are trafficking in confiscated property. We cannot make a judgment or prejudge what the Secretary's decision will be at the end of this 30-day period in terms of where we move from here.

MODERATOR: We'll go to the next question, please.

OPERATOR: We will now go to the line of Juan Lopez from CNN. Please, go ahead.

QUESTION: Yes, thank you for the call. So basically, what you're announcing today is that you're taking another 30 days before you notify that the measures will be implemented. So it won't be, as we thought, March 17th, 18th. It'll be way after April. And you said not joint ventures. So who – you mentioned U.S. citizens being able to be a part of these – this process. Who can they sue if they can't sue these joint ventures when most of those entities in Cuba that operate hotels and all other – all of these type of companies are joint ventures?

SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL: Thank you very much. So to clarify, we are saying that we are restricting the implementation of Title III to Cuban entities and sub-entities on the Cuba Restricted List. If those entities are engaged in joint ventures, it doesn't mean that the entities in the joint ventures are not able to sue. It just means that – or not able to be sued. It just means that the suit itself is brought against the Cuban entities and sub-entities.

And with respect to the 30-day period, this basically says beginning on March – the Secretary's decision indicates that beginning on March 19th U.S. claimants can begin bringing those suits against Cuban and – Cuban entities and Cuban sub-entities in U.S. federal courts. And then during that 30-day period – following that 30-day period, we will monitor the impact of that suspension and assess whether a further suspension is necessary to the interests of the United States.

MODERATOR: Thank you. We'll go to the next question.

OPERATOR: Our next question comes from Beatriz Pascual from EFE. Please, go ahead.

QUESTION: Hi. I was wondering if you have talked with your European partners about this, and what is their opinion on the matter, if there has been a dialogue. And some entities – so the measure only affects Cuban entities, but I was wondering if it could affect also entities associated with those Cuban

entities. Like, if you could develop a little bit on that, that would be helpful. Thank you.

SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL: Thank you very much for that question. So in terms of our allies in the EU, Canada, and elsewhere, obviously we have engaged with them. We've consulted with our international partners and have taken those into consideration. The Secretary was very clear that part of their concerns were a factor in his decision-making process. It is part of, of course, the U.S. national interest to assess where our partners are on this issue. We also are continuing to engage them going forward to explain this policy and to make sure that they are in the loop with respect to any future decisions that come under Title III.

With respect to the second question, you're correct. This is only allowing action against Cuban entities and Cuban sub-entities on the CRL, and it is not intended to affect European companies that are currently doing business in Cuba.

MODERATOR: Thank you. We'll go to the next question.

OPERATOR: Now go to the line of Karen DeYoung from *Washington Post*. Please, go ahead.

QUESTION: Yes, hello. I just have a couple questions. One, to – again, sorry to be so dense, but to clarify on this joint venture thing. You said if there are joint ventures, it doesn't mean that the entities in the joint ventures are not able to be sued; it just means the suit itself is brought against the Cuban entities and sub-entities. I'm just not quite clear what that means.

And secondly, there have been some people, some claimants who have already been certified by U.S. courts as eligible to sue if and when this provision was lifted. Can you clarify that a little bit, tell me how many there are, and also if and when Cuban Americans who are now U.S. citizens will be eligible?

SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL: Thanks very much for that question. So with respect to certification, this is not limited – this decision is not limited only to certified claims, and so you may be aware that there's a 1996 assessment by the State Department on how many certified and uncertified claims were out there, and so that had estimated approximately 75,000 to 200,000 potential claims that could be at play here. Of course, because we have restricted this exclusively to the Cuban entities and sub-entities on the Cuba Restricted List, that affects the final determination of how many claims are out there.

Again, on the question of joint ventures, you can – the shortest way of putting it is that you can sue the Cuban entity or the Cuban sub-entity. This action does not authorize the suit of a European, a Japanese, any other company from other countries. It's only action brought against a Cuban entity or the Cuban sub-entity on a property on the Cuba Restricted List.

MODERATOR: Go to the next question, please.

OPERATOR: We will now go to the line of Christina Smith from Voice of America. Please, go ahead.

QUESTION: Hello. Thank you. I was wondering if this measure or this decision from Secretary Pompeo was made on the basis of what's going on in Venezuela. Is this to put pressure on the Maduro government?

SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL: Thanks for that question. So the determination by the Secretary was made based off an analysis of the two statutory requirements in the LIBERTAD Act, the first of which being it – waivers only authorized in the case of a U.S. national interest as well as whether a waiver allows for an expedited transition to democracy. Those were the factors that the Secretary took under consideration.

MODERATOR: Thank you. We'll go to the next question.

OPERATOR: Michele Keleman from NPR. Please, go ahead.

QUESTION: (Inaudible) of the 200,000 potential claims, are you expecting any actual lawsuits coming out of this more restricted version of Title III, any percentage of that up to 200,000? And then secondly, the – have – has this administration had any discussions with Cuba about claims and compensations? The foreign ministry has said that they are open to such a dialogue.

SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL: Thanks very much for that question. So with respect to your first one, it's hard to say the exact number of lawsuits. This would be dependent on private action, so we can't speculate on that. And with respect to your second question, not under this current administration.

MODERATOR: Thank you. We'll go to the next question, please.

OPERATOR: We will now go to the line of Kylie Atwood, CBS. Please, go ahead.

QUESTION: Yeah, hi, thanks for doing this. Quick question: Could you just clarify what you said at the top about Cuban military intelligence and security forces and exactly how that plays into this? I was just a little confused. Thank you.

SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL: Sure, no problem. So the mention of those entities is because those are the entities on the – basically, the Cuba Restricted List identifies entities and sub-entities under the control of those authorities, so the military intelligence and security services. And so because we are – we have an exemption to the waiver for those Cuban entities and sub-entities on the Cuba Restricted List, that's why we mentioned the Cuban military and intelligence and security forces.

MODERATOR: Thank you. We'll go to the next question.

OPERATOR: Our next question comes from Andrew O'Reilly from Fox News. Please, go ahead.

QUESTION: Yeah, thanks for taking the call. I just – just wondering – following up on some of my colleagues have said about the kind of role that

this will play when brought to the courts or when U.S. citizens or former Cuban citizens bring these suits to federal courts. It seems – and correct me if I'm wrong here, but it seems like it would be a symbolic thing more than anything legally binding to Cuba. Can you just kind of describe kind of what the process would be and what the government hopes to get out of this?

SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL: Sure, thanks very much. So the importance of this action and the historic nature of it is because this is the first time that we are not fully suspending the ability to bring suits. So as you're aware, the Cuban Government stole property from thousands of private citizens and businesses, and this action for the first time is holding the Cuban Government and especially, as mentioned, these forces – security forces, intelligence and military forces – accountable. It's finally giving claimants a measure of recourse and the opportunity to bring suits against these entities.

MODERATOR: All right, thank you. We have time for one last question.

OPERATOR: All right. We will go to the line of Karen DeYoung with *Washington Post*. Please, go ahead.

QUESTION: Hi. Sorry, it's me again. I just – the question I asked about whether this applies only to people who were U.S. citizens at the time of the confiscation or also to Cubans who were Cuban citizens at the time but are now U.S. citizens.

SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL: Thank you very much. Yes, it applies to all of the above. It is not just restricted to those who were U.S. citizens at the time.

MODERATOR: Thank you. Thank you, everyone, for joining us today. The embargo on this call is now lifted. As a reminder, the attribution is on background to a senior State Department official. Thanks, everyone. Have an enjoyable afternoon.

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[Press Releases: Interview With Clay](#)

Masters of Morning Edition, Iowa Public Radio

Interview

Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Via Teleconference

March 4, 2019

SECRETARY POMPEO: Good morning. This is Mike speaking.

QUESTION: Yeah, hi, Secretary Pompeo. Clay Masters, Iowa Public Radio.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Hi, Clay. How are you this morning?

QUESTION: Doing well. Just interested first just to kind of have you explain what you're going to be doing in Iowa today.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yeah, so I'm actually here with Ambassador Branstad. It was kind of his idea for me to come out. And we want to do three things really. First, we want to talk about what the State Department does for American citizens, right. They're our first client, and I think sometimes we've not done a good job explaining what American diplomats do, why they do it, how it matters to the people of America, and we – and Iowa is a perfect example of us – of the work that we do. And in that context we'll talk about Iowa ag and how it is the Trump administration, including the State Department, are working on behalf of Iowa farmers. I'll get a chance to be with some young farmers at the FFA, and then over at the World Food Prize facility later in the afternoon.

And then finally, I want to make sure that we have a diverse workforce at the State Department, and one of those things is to make sure we have people from all across America. So I want to introduce Iowans to the opportunity to serve as a diplomat for the greatest nation in the history of civilization. It's a noble calling; it's a lot of fun. We need talented, bright, young people to take the Foreign Service test and join the diplomatic corps, and I want to open up the eyes for some Iowans about that opportunity.

QUESTION: So Secretary, I'm curious here just speaking on Chinese trade tariffs and concerns over trade here in Iowa. Iowa State University's Center for Agricultural Rural Development found overall losses in Iowa's gross state product are calculated to be at a loss about \$1-2 billion. Big hits for the

soybean industry, upwards of \$891 million. I mean, pretty alarming impacts. Do you think these calculations are correct and do they concern you?

SECRETARY POMPEO: I'm always concerned when an American industry, an important American industry like the agricultural industry, isn't doing top drawer, right, not excelling and growing. Frankly, this is the result of long neglect. The Chinese have been stealing our intellectual property, they've been denying Iowa agriculture farmers the chance to compete with tariffs, non-tariff barriers too, saying our food wasn't safe. It's the safest food in the world. President Trump has taken this on in a way previous administrations simply refused to do. These are difficult challenges.

But if we get this right, if we stop the Chinese from stealing tens of billions of dollars a year worth of Iowa intellectual property, if we stop the Chinese from preventing Iowa farmers from selling the products into this enormous and growing market, then that next generation, a generation I'm going to get to spend some time with today, will have these farms. They'll have the opportunity. They'll be able to compete on a free and fair basis, and I'm confident that when Iowa farmers get a chance to compete on that basis, a free, level playing field, they'll crush it.

QUESTION: Also curious here too, in a tweet, the President said he'd asked China to immediately remove tariffs on U.S. agriculture, citing progress in talks between the two nations. And he's refrained from increasing U.S. tariffs on Chinese goods to 25 percent, as he said he would. Does this public disclosing of dealings with China hinder negotiations for you at the State Department? I mean, is he doing too much of this on Twitter? Would you prefer he limit that?

SECRETARY POMPEO: No, not at all. Frankly, this administration has been very effective at negotiating with the Chinese. We're the first administration to take this on. It's a difficult problem, but there was no other path to success for Iowa farmers but to take on this challenge. And so on Friday of last week, there had been some progress made in the negotiations and the President asked China if they would take these tariffs off. While we don't have the deal done yet, he thought it appropriate to make that ask. I hope that they will. We've not heard back from them, or at least hadn't the last time I checked in. We've got to get this right. We have to fix this unfair trade situation. It has to be even and reciprocal. And President Trump's determined to achieve that.

QUESTION: What kind of a relationship have you had with Ambassador Branstad, and what has he brought to the role since he's become U.S. Ambassador to China?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yeah, so your former governor is a great man, a great leader. He – by the way, he knew China from his time here as governor, and I'm sure has learned a great deal more now during his service in Beijing. He's actually with me here today in Iowa. We'll be traveling together talking to Iowans about all the things that the State Department is doing for the people of Iowa. He's been a great representative for the United States in China, in Beijing. He's been a great representative for the people of Iowa

there, and I've enjoyed working with him.

QUESTION: Secretary Pompeo, I know your time is limited. Anything else that you feel it's important to stress about this visit here to Iowa?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yes. I want to make sure every Iowan understands that the State Department is out working for them. There are – they're literally our primary focus. We want to keep every Iowan safe. That's our primary focus is American national security. And so whether it's challenges in Africa or Asia or Europe, the State Department is on to be working to make sure that Iowans are safe and secure, and that Iowans have a chance to compete. Not just farmers but manufacturers, every business ought to have the chance to sell their products all around the world, and the State Department plays an important role in achieving that.

QUESTION: All right. Secretary Pompeo, safe travels. I appreciate the time.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you, sir. You have a great day.

QUESTION: All right, take care, bye.

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[Press Releases: Interview With Cynthia Fodor of KCCI](#)

Interview
Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Des Moines, Iowa
March 4, 2019

QUESTION: Good morning, Eric. The Secretary arrived here shortly and he is with us right now. And we are so excited to have you here in Des Moines, Iowa. Mike Pompeo, thank you for joining us and –

SECRETARY POMPEO: Cynthia, it's great to be with you.

QUESTION: Of all the hot spots in the world right now – we have Syria, Iran, Venezuela, you just got back from Hanoi and dealing with the North Korea – Mr. Secretary, why are you here in Des Moines, Iowa this morning on a record cold day?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So I have lots of great reasons to be here. First, I think it's important to share with the American people who is the first client of the United States Department of State, what it is we do, why we do it, how we are important to American national security, keeping Iowans safe, and I want to talk with them about that.

I'm going to get a chance to spend a lot of time with the agricultural community today. I want to talk about the State Department's role in promoting and assisting in success of people here in the heartland who are growers and farmers and ranchers. And then finally, I want a diverse workforce at the State Department, and I want to see if I can't convince a few young Iowans that being a diplomat on behalf of the United States of America is a noble calling and to come join the team.

QUESTION: Well, we certainly have a lot of Iowans who have – who are now on the national stage or have been, and Governor Branstad is one – Ambassador Branstad now is one of those, and he is back with you. And I understand you will be talking about China today. Of course, you know how important this is to Iowa agriculture and farmers, and we are hearing this morning reports that we are fairly close to a trade deal with China. How close are we, and where do those negotiations stand right now?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So I can't tell you exactly how close we are, but real progress has been made for sure. Ambassador Branstad has been a great asset for the United States working in Beijing helping the Chinese understand that we have to have free, fair, reciprocal trade. Iowa farmers, Kansas farmers – the place that I'm from – have to have the opportunity to sell their products, and they can't do it in a way that presents risks that the Chinese are going to steal their intellectual property or take trade secrets from our amazing, innovative companies that do lots of hard work and invest lots of money in R&D. Ambassador Branstad has taken that message to the Chinese, and we are very hopeful that we'll get a good trade deal laid down in the days and weeks ahead.

QUESTION: Does it seem somewhat imminent? I know on Friday President Trump asked for – asked the Chinese to lift the tariffs on ag commodities. What has their response been to that?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So I haven't seen any formal response to them yet – from them yet, but remember, that's the mission set. When the Trump administration came in, agriculture companies all across the country, including here in

Iowa, couldn't sell most of their products into these countries. There were tariffs; there were non-trade tariff barriers as well. And President Trump has taken on the task of pushing back, saying that's not fair, that's not fair to the people of Kansas, the people of Iowa, the people of Nebraska, who work so hard. They could sell their products here, but we couldn't sell our products there, and so we're trying to get that rectified, get that fixed, make it fair and reciprocal. I think we're on the cusp of doing that, and I hope all those tariffs will go away, all those barriers. And then when Iowa farmers compete on a level playing field, I know how that goes; America will be very successful.

QUESTION: Yeah, they have said all along that we want trade, not aid.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Amen.

QUESTION: Do you think the markets will fully rebound for American farmers?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So I've been around ag markets a long time, and there's – I wasn't a farmer myself, but family's got a farm down in Winfield, so I know there's the cyclical pricing. Prices move. What Iowa farmers depend on, and they ought to be able to count on from America and American leaders, is that we will fight for them, we will work for them, we'll get them a fair shot at competing, and then I know they'll take it the rest of the way. They'll take risks, they'll work their tails off, and they'll get it done.

QUESTION: Now I understand this afternoon you're going to be speaking to ag leaders and hundreds of farmers at the World Food Prize voting, and you're going to be making a major policy announcement. Can you give us a preview?

SECRETARY POMPEO: I can't say much, but I've been looking forward to this now for weeks since we've got it all set. I'm going to get to not only speak there, but this morning with a bunch of young farmers from the FFA –

QUESTION: And what's your message to them?

SECRETARY POMPEO: My message to them is the Trump administration is going to make sure that their farm is there for them and for their children and grandchildren. Generational farming, family farming, is something that I know so well is important to President Trump, and we're going to take on the challenges, the challenges not only from China but other countries who treat us unfairly, and make sure that generations of farming can emanate from places like Kansas and Iowa, and we'll still be feeding the world 20, 40, 60 years from now.

QUESTION: So it's a message of optimism. And farmers tell me all the time they have to be optimistic if they're going to be a farmer. Thank you very much for joining us today.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Cynthia, thank you, ma'am.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, we hope you have a wonderful day here in Iowa.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you.

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[Press Releases: Interview With Sabrina Ahmed of WOI](#)

Interview
Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Des Moines, Iowa
March 4, 2019

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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