

Press Releases: Interview With Barbara Plett Usher of BBC

Interview
Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

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QUESTION: You may have been told, Mr. Secretary, that I want to mostly focus on North Korea, but just a quick question about the latest news: We understand that the Security Council meeting next week is about nonproliferation. The President had just tweeted that he's going to chair a meeting on Iran. So what's the meeting about?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So Iran will certainly be a topic. The meeting is on a broader set of nonproliferation issues, but the world should know Iran leads the charge when it comes to the risk of proliferation. They continue to be the world's largest state sponsor of terror and they continue the programs that have threatened the world for so long. The President's determined to push back against them, and the meeting that he will chair next week will be centered on ensuring that nonproliferation is at the top of the world's agenda.

QUESTION: So let's talk about North Korea. There have been developments this week. Kim Jong-un has said he's ready for rapid denuclearization, but as you know, he first wants the U.S. to declare a formal end to the Korea War. South Korean president has said that's a good idea. Is the U.S. prepared to do that?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So I've been great about this: I'm not going to talk about the negotiations, where they stand, give any details that we choose not to make public. But I think it's important for the world to remember: This is a country that threatened the world with nuclear weapons and missile systems. The world then made a decision to vote a set of UN Security Council resolutions that mandated the denuclearization of North Korea. The two leaders met, and Chairman Kim promised President Trump that he would do it, and my task and the task of others is to ensure that we implement the agreement from Singapore.

QUESTION: So Kim Jong-un wants another summit with Mr. Trump. What does he

have to do to get it?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yeah, I mean, I think it's fine. The two leaders are going to have to make lots of things happen. They're the decision makers in each of the two countries. I'm going to travel to Pyongyang before too long if everything falls in place and schedules all work. We'll continue to work to solve this vexing problem. And then the two leaders will continue to build upon the negotiations that are had at other levels and through other channels.

QUESTION: So it's in the works?

SECRETARY POMPEO: It's in the works. We're hoping everything falls together and it makes good sense here before too terribly long.

QUESTION: Given the way that things are moving, do you think you can say that there's no longer a nuclear threat from North Korea?

SECRETARY POMPEO: No, there's still a threat. We still have work to do. But the good news is the threat is reduced from where it was. No test and no missile launches. To complete out a nuclear program, any good engineer will tell you you have to conduct tests, you still – there's work to do. When we took office, the world was closer to war with North Korea than it is today. That's a big step forward. But we're going to keep the economic sanctions in place until such time as North Korea is fully and verifiably denuclearized. That's the agenda that President Trump has set out, it's what he agreed to with Chairman Kim, and we're on our way to achieving that end state.

QUESTION: He has set out the agenda, but of course it was he who tweeted that there was no longer nuclear threat from North Korea.

SECRETARY POMPEO: I know the tweet very well. The President was saying that the risk is reduced, that the effort that North Korea had been engaged in to rapidly seek to perfect their missile system and their weapons system, their nuclear weapons system, that risk had been greatly reduced as a result of the efforts that this President undertook.

QUESTION: But by expressing his views in real time publicly – everyone can see them – doesn't he – isn't there a danger that he gives away the game? I mean, it seems as if Kim Jong-un has picked up on that. He gets ahead of the policymaking. That's the view of allies, anyway.

SECRETARY POMPEO: That's not what the allies tell me. Let's step back just one moment. Whatever means, whatever modalities this administration has used to achieve the denuclearization of North Korea, it has proven more effective than at any time in America's history. So one can critique my style, the President's style, our different modes of operating. This much we can say: For the first time yesterday, a North Korean party paper talked about denuclearization and a peaceful, denuclearized Korean Peninsula. That's just one example of the progress that we have made today. So I'm very proud of what we've done and the means by which we have done it. I think President Trump is putting us in a position to get to the end that the world so richly

deserves.

QUESTION: You haven't been tempted to take any documents off his table, have you?

SECRETARY POMPEO: I find that question offensive; I truly do. I've worked with this President closely, perhaps as closely as any other cabinet member. I briefed him almost every day as CIA director. This is a President who is thoughtful, who takes information, who deliberates, who asks hard questions and tosses out ideas about how we might think about things differently. No, I'm working diligently to deliver the foreign policy that President Trump is setting forth for America. It's a challenge. The previous administration left the world in a dangerous place. Leading from behind has real consequences and our allies knew that, and they are thankful for the new approach that President Trump has brought to American foreign policy.

QUESTION: You mentioned your position as the CIA director. In order to do a deal, you'll need to know when Kim Jong-un is lying. How will you know that?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yeah, I'm not going to talk about what we know or don't know. The best way to know if we're at the end is what we've talked about, verification, right? This is the *sine qua non* of the end of the discussion. It's when we can fully verify that the North Korean peninsula – the North Korean country has made the strategic decision to take all of their nuclear weapons program and stand down. And at that time, sanctions will be relieved and as President Trump has said, there'll be a true brighter future for North Korea and its people.

QUESTION: Mr. Pompeo, thank you very much for speaking with us.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you very much. It was great to be with you. Good to see you.

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