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Congressman Jason Smith's Capitol Report - With the World Watching

MAY 16TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

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May 11, 2018***

Tough Negotiations. They were a staple of President Trump's time as an executive and businessman and they have followed him all the way to the White House. Where predecessors have capitulated, the Trump Administration is proving a tough and apt negotiator when foreign leaders come knocking at the door. Whether it be sitting down with the leaders of Mexico, Canada, China and Japan to negotiate fairer deals for American workers and farmers, traveling to Europe to put real and meaningful preconditions for the continued use of U.S. assistance dollars, dealing with the dysfunctional United Nations, or most recently using both the carrot and stick in dealing with North Korea and Iran, the President is changing America's role in international affairs for the better.

This week we watched 3 Americans previously held captive in North Korea step back onto U.S. soil for the first time in years. Tony Kim & Kim Hak-Song joined President Trump on the tarmac at roughly 3am after landing back in the U.S., they had been held in North Korea for 12 months each. They were joined by Kim Dong Chul, an American who had been held in North Korea against his will for over 2 ½ years. What contrast. We all sadly remember the images of Otto Warmbier's seemingly lifeless body being wheeled off a plane in Cincinnati, Ohio almost one year ago. While the

tragedy of that situation only serves to further highlight the ruthlessness and brutality of a regime which continues to have little to no regard for the rule of law or basic human rights, what we witnessed this week was an important first step to what may very well serve as a larger conversation for saving the lives of millions of North Koreans, South Koreans and individuals around the globe. A concession of this magnitude was an important moment clearing the way for meaningful and substantive talks about a denuclearized North Korea; talks which are set to occur between President Trump and the leader of North Korea, Kim Jong-un, next month.

Also this week, roughly 4,000 miles away, another country has been posed with serious questions about their future. Iran's continued pursuit of nuclear capabilities, development of weapons of catastrophic proportions, refusal to release held American hostages and aggressiveness towards important U.S. allies like Israel resulted in President Trump vacating the failed U.S. – Iran deal of 2015. It was a deal predicated with secret side deals not disclosed to the American public, a deal which allowed the nuclear ambitions of Iran to grow, and a deal which allowed for continued aggressive actions like the detaining of five new Americans in Iran since the deal's signing. With the end of that deal comes the reintroduction of crippling economic sanctions which will serve to isolate, deplete and place strain on the crumbling Iran economy - the same type of sanctions which have finally brought North Korea to the negotiating table. It is my sincere hope that any future deals with Iran would remove their ability to manufacture nuclear weapons today, tomorrow or years from now, as well as involve the release of the five American hostages they are still holding.

While some have characterized our President's foreign affair philosophy as 'predictably unpredictable' or a doctrine of 'maximum pressure', one constant holds true, President Trump is a seasoned negotiator who brings a lifetime of business experience when he sits across the table from foreign leaders. The tactics, persistence and follow-through of President Trump will once again be on the international world stage next week as the U.S. Embassy in Israel formally begins operating out of Jerusalem, an action one U.S. President after the next has promised to take, but failed to do. We have a long way to go in securing a denuclearized North Korea, peace in the Middle East and the return of more Americans unjustly held abroad, but this week was an important step and one we should all reflect upon.

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