

Pat Robertson Finds Out What Jeb Bush Really Thinks About the Campaign

After all the polls, and all the campaigning, in just a few weeks, Republican voters will finally start to have their say in Iowa and New Hampshire.

On Monday, Dr. Pat Robertson spoke with one of the key figures in the Republican presidential race, former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush about the crisis in the Middle East, Islamic terrorism, President Barack Obama's foreign policy, and why—despite his weaknesses—the Republican candidates aren't going after the current Republican front-runner Donald Trump.

Donald Trump

Jeb Bush: Well, people have tried, including myself and the simple fact is that he controlled these businesses and claims that it was being an effective business person to go bankrupt when in fact, not only did he lose money, but more importantly a lot of small businesses lost money, a lot of creditors lost money. A lot of employees lost their jobs and banks that lent him money foolishly lost money as well.

That's not the sign of a successful person, that's a sign on someone who's failed. And he failed three times as you mentioned. It's across the spectrum of his life that concerns me.

Look, the guy's a great marketer. He's an incredible showman. He blocks the sun in terms of political activity. But he's not a conservative, and until recently he was a close friend of the Clintons, gave them money, both to the foundation and to the campaign. His views on taxes, or regulations, guns, abortion, on many other issues do not make him a conservative.

This is all a game. I'm not sure what the end result is but I don't believe he's a serious candidate. He's a great marketer, but I don't believe he's a serious candidate, and I don't believe he should be president of the United States.

Pat Robertson: It looks like you could get some people who were laid off to go on camera and get some emotion. There doesn't seem to be anyone doing that. I don't understand it.

Bush: Well, I think part of this is the mainstream media loves the attention that he gives them. We're all part of some kind of reality TV program, Dr. Robertson, it's kind of a very unusual situation.

But as I said, look, he's had success in his business career, for sure, and he's had some real abject failures. And he sloughs it off and there's no investigative reporting to point out the obvious.

Saudi Arabia and Iran

Robertson: In the news, the divide between the Sunnis and Shias is profound and has ruptured between Saudi Arabia and Iran. Do you think the U.S. should get involved, or stay on the sidelines and let them fight it out?

Bush: Well, we should not allow for a religious war in the Middle East. It would be devastating.

Imagine a radical Islamic terror group on top of Mecca and Medina, which is one of their ultimate goals. Imagine controlling the oil reserves and the financial resources of Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia has existed and been supported by a security umbrella of the United States for more than 50 years, and now that's been torn asunder with the agreement with Iran. And as we legitimize the Iranian regime, the Saudis feel the U.S. does not have their back anymore. And that security of

American leadership, once it was abandoned by this president, is partially the reason why we have this upheaval.

And nobody can condone the execution of – of anyone – for political views, which is what's happened in Saudi Arabia. But this should not be a surprise, when the United States abandoned, basically, the commitment made to the Persian Gulf Arab countries.

You see now the result of this in Yemen and other places where you see this upheaval. And Iran continues to be the largest state sponsor of terror in the world.

This agreement, which is a legacy-building objective for President Obama, is an abject failure and his legacy will be tarnished by it.

Robertson: As president, would you repudiate that deal? Actually, it hasn't been vetted by the Senate – what legal status will it have?

Bush: It's an agreement, it's not a treaty, and it can be undone, exactly for the reasons you just described. And certainly irrespective of the agreement, we have a responsibility to also enforce resolutions and sanctions on other elements of our relationship with Iran.

They've begun to launch ballistic missile testing, which is a direct violation. They continue to hold Americans hostage in their country. We got nothing in return in that regard. They suppress their own people.

And as I said they will now have relief of economic sanctions to have over a \$100 billion to continue to support Hezbollah and the groups in Yemen and other parts, and in Syria, where they are propping up the Assad regime. And we have to confront their ambitions and make sure the U.S. re-engages in this part of the world or we're going to have chaos. And the chaos will not be anything we can pull back and not worry about it. We

have to worry about it. If not us, who?

War against ISIS

Robertson: The war against ISIS – the president studiously avoids the term “Islamic terrorism.” How would you fight ISIS?

Bush: Well, I had a chance in August before the tragedy of Paris and before the tragic killings of San Bernardino to lay out a plan, and it would be to hit them in the caliphate. To restrict their financial resources and do all the things of course we need to do, but also militarily destroy them.

And I believe we can do that by embedding our existing troops in Iraq with the Iraqi military, by directly arming the Kurds, by re-engaging with the Sunni tribal leaders, by getting the lawyers off the backs of the war fighters.

We have this incredible number of restrictions on the war fighting, because as you’ve said, correctly, this is – the president can’t even call it what it is, Islamic terrorism. And they’ve declared war on us and we have restrictions as though the civil liberties of these people have to be taken into consideration.

And in Syria we need a no-fly zone and safe zones to provide protection for the refugees, but more importantly to provide a united front to destroy ISIS in the caliphate and bring about regime change in Syria.

And that will require American leadership. Not as the world’s policeman, but leading in a way that garners a unified effort amongst the Turks, the Jordanians, the Saudis, the Emiratis, Egyptians. And it should be Syrian led, and Sunni dominated, but the United States has to be engaged with our special operators and our air force capabilities.

We need to be engaged with much more intelligence capabilities

than what we have today. And if I were president of the United States, I would ask the commanders not to put restrictions on them, I would ask them what the options are for most effectively stopping ISIS and go about it.

Robertson: As I understand it, sorties go out loaded with bombs, but because of environmental concerns, they have to turn back and keep their ordinance on board.

Bush: It has been. That's been part of the problem. We've been sending out fliers to truck drivers who are selling illicit oil to Turkey and actually to the Assad regime, if you can believe that, we send fliers out to warn them that they're about to be bombed, as if they're not complicit in being part of the ISIS brigade.

And secondly, there's two or three levels of approvals necessary before ordinance can be dropped. And many times the intelligence capability that we have is not as strong as it needs to be and the target goes away.

Some of that is improving now. Up until recently 75 percent of sorties went back to base without dropping their ordinances, and now that's improved to about 50 percent as best I can tell. But that's still not as serious an effort as we need to undertake.

This president just cannot get to the point where he recognizes that this is a threat to our national security, and he's incrementally moving toward where he needs to be, but not in a way that American leadership can be counted on.

Arming the Kurds

Robertson: The Kurds have been staunch allies. They're the only fighting force that's been successful. The Kurds want a country of their own. Do you have any thoughts about that?

Bush: Look, the world is incredibly complex over there, and I

think the first step is to provide greater autonomy for the Kurdish region in Iraq. There's competing forces inside of a potential Kurdistan as well that makes the possibility of a unified effort quite complicated.

I think we need to engage in a way that doesn't dictate the outcome but to provide greater autonomy in Iraq because the federal government until proven otherwise is not capable of providing basic services for people.

And I think the Kurds have earned that support. And I think we should directly arm them. They are as you said our closest ally, and they're a trained fighting force and have been quite effective.

Gun Restrictions

Robertson: Turning to domestic issues – the president is moving on guns, unilaterally, without any approval from Congress. How did you handle guns when you were governor of Florida?

Bush: Well, I had an A+ rating with the NRA, because we separated the use of guns for illegal purposes, where there were severe penalties. We passed a law called 10/20/life where if you committed a crime with a gun, it was a mandatory 10 year sentence; if you used it, it was 20; and if you wounded or killed somebody, it was life.

We separated that from law abiding citizens. In Florida today there are 1.5, close to 1.6 million concealed weapon permit holders. That's more than any state by far in the country. We created laws that protect law abiding citizens to be able to embrace their Second Amendment rights and separated where it should be.

One of the obligations of state, local, or federal government is to keep us safe. And in the case of the state, it's to pass laws that puts severe penalties on the use of guns when you're

committing crimes. And we saw dramatic reductions in crime. And at the same time we protected Second Amendment rights in a way that was the envy of the rest of the country.

That approach still applies today. This president's doing the exact opposite. His first impulse when there's a tragedy – whether it's San Bernardino, or one of these acts of derangement that have taken place in very visible ways – is to put more restrictions on law-abiding gun owners. And the net effect is it wouldn't have changed the tragedy from taking place, and it would have created an infringement on rights.

And now by trying to do this by executive order, and we'll find out shortly what the specifics of this are, the net result will be that more people will continue to believe that the federal government is not serious about applying the rule of law.

And as president of the United States, I would repeal all of these unauthorized, unconstitutional executive orders that the president has imposed, whether it's the EPA, or DAPA or DACA the immigration laws he doesn't have the authority to do, or the gun restrictions he doesn't have the authority to do.

The Congress is the place where laws have to be passed and the president signs them into law. Our democracy is being imperiled every time the president ignores, whether it's a treaty as it relates to Iran, or ignores Congress to go around them. This is not America at its best. America at its best is one that respects our Constitution and the rule of law.

Supreme Court

Robertson: The Supreme Court is going to have some vacancies... Do you have any criteria you have established for choosing judges for the federal courts and especially the Supreme Court?

Bush: Well, first of all they have to apply the Constitution

and not substitute their own political views with that of the Constitution. If you start with that precedent and that principle, you can get judges to understand that there is an important role for the Judiciary, but it is not to supplant the legislature or to supplant the executive.

Secondly, it's important to appoint people who have a proven record. The conventional wisdom of the times over the last 20 years is appoint someone who hasn't had a record because it will be easier to get them through. I think we have learned the lessons of that, because sometimes judges veer off from their expressed principles. And someone that has a proven, consistent track record of respecting the Constitution as a judge, I think, is hugely important.

So the third point is the president should pick someone with a proven record and then fight, and fight and fight because the fight will be bigger with someone with a proven record. The Left views these things as life and death matters as it relates to politics, so the president has to make a commitment to the nominee that the president has their back.

And that's what I would do. That's what I did when I was governor, appointing proven jurists to the Supreme Court, and it's exactly what I would do as president of the United States.

Dealing with Congress

Robertson: Harry Reid did what was called the "nuclear option." The Senate, instead of a majority vote, it has to be 60 percent vote. How would you handle that?

Bush: Look, I learned to be respectful of the legislative process as a governor, and I would be respectful as president of the United States. But we're in perilous times right now, and I think there has to be recognition of that. How we tax, how we regulate our entitlement system, certainly these questions of judicial nominations, we cannot have gridlock.

We cannot continue to work outside what the Constitution provides. As president I will shift as much power back to the states. Because the 10 Amendment is as important as the First Amendment. And I believe that's the more effective way to govern.

But there are things that Washington needs to get done. And we can't just talk about it anymore. We have to begin to solve problems. And judicial nominations would be at the top of the list. So I hope the Senate would recognize the importance of this going forward.

GOP Presidential Race

Robertson: The game is on. Iowa is going to be tough for you. You've spent a lot of time in New Hampshire. What would it take? How does it look for you up there?

Bush: It looks good. And Iowa looks better than expectations as well. And you're right, these numbers are pretty small for someone who lives in Virginia or Florida. And if you have a great organization, and voter contact is the name of the game now, you can exceed expectations. And we have a national campaign beyond the first four states in February where we're well poised, particularly in New Hampshire.

I think it's important to recognize that. I feel confident about where we are. We're going to have to start seeing movement now. The fact is there are a lot of good people running. I just think my proven record and the ideas I have going forward are the best going forward and the best to beat Hillary Clinton. And I'm going to express that view with heart and conviction over the next six weeks and I beleive I'll be moving forward.

And I appreciate the prayers and support for me and my family as we go through this journey. It is not arduous, Dr. Robertson, it's an honor and privilege to be running for the presidency of the United States.

Robertson: Lindsey Graham has pulled out of the race... Is he going to endorse you or is that too much to hope?

Bush: Well, a lot of his supporters in New Hampshire and South Carolina have signed up and I'm pleased with that. He had a strong group of veterans and military leaders who respected his leadership on national security issues. So he's a great guy, and I would love to have his support, but there are no insights today on whether he will endorse.

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