THE PRESIDENT'S CHOICE · THE FIRST TERM · BOOK FIVE

Mike Pompeo

Trusted Leadership for America First

The Achievements of a Great Choice, from Director of the CIA to the Seventieth Secretary of State

by Robert Miller

Free Sample · A Note to the Reader, Introduction, Prologue, and Chapter One

The President's Choice · The First Term · Book Five

International Publishing Corporation

Washington, D.C.

Copyright © 2026 by Robert Miller. All rights reserved.

An independent work. It has not been authorized, reviewed, or endorsed by its subject, by President Donald J. Trump, or by the White House.

A Note to the Reader

This book belongs to a series built on a simple premise: a president is measured in large part by the people he chooses. Every administration announces its appointments with confidence, and every administration promises that its nominees are the best available. Only time and results can confirm whether that promise was kept. The President's Choice series looks back at the first term of President Donald J. Trump and asks a straightforward question about each of the men and women he placed in positions of trust: did the choice prove sound?

In the case of Michael Richard Pompeo, the answer is written across an unusually wide record. He was the first graduate in his class at the United States Military Academy. He was a cavalry officer who patrolled the edge of the Iron Curtain in the final years of the Cold War. He was an editor of the Harvard Law Review, a founder of an aerospace manufacturing company in Wichita, Kansas, the president of an oilfield equipment business, and a four-term member of the United States House of Representatives who earned a seat on the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. President Trump then asked him to lead the Central Intelligence Agency, and after fifteen months at Langley, asked him to become the seventieth Secretary of State.

This volume concentrates on the achievements of that life and that service. It is deliberately a book of appreciation. There are many places where a reader can find the arguments and disputes of the era; this is not one of them. Here the focus is on what was built, what was won, who was brought home, and what was defended. The reader will find the Korea Mission Center at the CIA and the secret Easter journey to Pyongyang; the release of American detainees from North Korea, Turkey, and elsewhere; the campaign of maximum pressure on the Islamic Republic of Iran; the opening of the United States Embassy in Jerusalem; the Abraham Accords; the clear-eyed confrontation with the Chinese Communist Party; the defense of religious freedom on a

global scale; and the extraordinary effort to bring more than one hundred thousand Americans home when the world closed its borders in 2020.

Above all, this book makes the case that President Trump made a great decision in November 2016 when he chose a congressman from Kansas to run the nation's premier intelligence service. That decision shaped everything that followed. The CIA years established the trust between the President and Mike Pompeo that later carried into the State Department, and they produced results of their own that deserve a fuller accounting than they usually receive.

The chapters move in order through five parts: the formation of the man, his service in the House, his leadership of the Central Intelligence Agency, his tenure as Secretary of State, and the lessons and legacy of that record. A chronology at the end gives the reader a quick reference to the key dates.

The President chose. The record answered. This is the story of that answer.

Introduction

The Measure of a Choice

Every new President inherits a government of extraordinary size and complexity. The executive branch employs millions of people and spends trillions of dollars. Its decisions touch the life of every American and reach into every corner of the world. No President can manage this enterprise alone. He governs through the people he appoints, and the quality of his administration depends on the quality of those people.

That is why the choices a President makes in the weeks after his election matter so much. In a matter of days, he must fill the most important positions in the government: the Cabinet secretaries, the

agency heads, the senior advisers who will translate his promises into policy. Some of these choices will prove inspired. Others will disappoint. The difference often becomes clear only years later, when the record can be examined as a whole.

The position of Director of the Central Intelligence Agency is among the most consequential of these appointments. The Director leads the nation's premier human intelligence service, an institution whose officers work in secret around the world to uncover the plans of America's adversaries. The Director oversees covert actions directed by the President. The Director advises the President on threats that may never become public but that can shape the fate of nations. A strong Director makes the President wiser and the country safer. A weak one can leave the President blind.

The position of Secretary of State is, by tradition, the most senior in the Cabinet. The Secretary is the President's chief adviser on foreign affairs, the nation's leading diplomat, and the manager of a global network of embassies and consulates. The Secretary speaks for the United States in capitals around the world. A strong Secretary amplifies the President's voice and advances his agenda. A weak one dilutes the President's message and squanders American influence.

Mike Pompeo held both of these positions in a single presidential term. He was chosen first for the CIA and then for the State Department. That fact alone says something important about the President's assessment of his performance. Presidents do not promote officials who have failed them. They promote those who have proven themselves.

This book measures the choice by its results. It asks what Pompeo accomplished at the CIA and at the State Department, and whether those accomplishments justified the confidence the President placed in him. It examines his preparation for service, from West Point to Congress, to understand why he was ready for the responsibilities he

assumed. And it considers the qualities of character and leadership that made him effective.

The emphasis throughout is on achievement. The reader will find here an account of what was built and won: a more aggressive and effective intelligence service; a direct and trusted channel of intelligence to the President; a dedicated mission center focused on the gravest threat of the moment; a secret journey that opened the door to historic diplomacy; Americans brought home from captivity; a regime in Tehran deprived of the resources to fund terror; a new peace between Israel and its Arab neighbors; a clear-eyed reckoning with the ambitions of the Chinese Communist Party; alliances strengthened in Europe and Asia; the persecuted defended; and more than one hundred thousand Americans brought home during a pandemic.

These achievements were not the work of one man alone. They were the product of a President's vision, a team's dedication, and the efforts of thousands of intelligence officers, diplomats, soldiers, and civil servants. But leadership matters, and Mike Pompeo's leadership was indispensable to them. The President chose him to lead, and he led.

It is fitting that this volume gives special attention to the CIA appointment. That decision, made in November 2016, is often remembered only as a prelude to Pompeo's tenure at the State Department. It deserves more. The fifteen months at Langley produced achievements of their own, and they built the relationship of trust between the President and Pompeo that made everything else possible. When the President later sent his Secretary of State to negotiate with adversaries and reassure allies, he sent a man whose judgment he had tested every morning in the Oval Office. The great decision of November 2016 was the foundation on which a great record was built.

The chapters that follow tell that story from the beginning.

Prologue

The Call from Trump Tower

In the weeks after the 2016 election, the lobby of Trump Tower on Fifth Avenue became one of the most watched places in the world. Cameras waited at the elevator banks. Reporters logged every visitor. Governors, generals, business executives, and members of Congress came and went as the President-elect assembled the team that would carry his agenda into government. Each arrival set off a round of speculation. Each departure was studied for clues.

Among those who made the trip in mid-November was a three-term congressman from the Fourth District of Kansas. He was not a household name. Outside of Wichita, outside the corridors of the House Intelligence Committee, and outside the circle of conservative policy thinkers who had come to respect his work, few Americans could have picked Mike Pompeo out of a crowd. He had endorsed another candidate during the primaries. He had no long personal history with Donald Trump. By the conventional logic of Washington appointments, he was an unlikely choice for any senior post.

But President-elect Trump was not looking for conventional logic. He was looking for people who would deliver. And in the course of a single meeting, he saw in Mike Pompeo something that made him decide quickly. Here was a man who had finished first at West Point, who had commanded soldiers, who had built businesses with his own hands and his own capital, and who had spent six years studying the most sensitive intelligence matters facing the country. Here was someone who spoke directly, prepared thoroughly, and did not waste a busy man's time. On November 18, 2016, the transition announced that President-elect Trump intended to nominate Representative Mike Pompeo to serve as Director of the Central Intelligence Agency.

The announcement surprised many observers. It should not have. The President-elect had identified a quality that would define Pompeo's service in every role that followed: an ability to translate intelligence and policy into clear choices, and then to carry those choices out. In the statement accompanying the nomination, the President-elect praised Pompeo's service as a soldier and his work on the Intelligence Committee, and expressed confidence that he would be a brilliant and unrelenting leader for the intelligence community. Those words would be tested over the following four years. They would hold.

Pompeo would later describe the moment with characteristic understatement. He had come to New York expecting a conversation. He left with a mission. He returned to Kansas, spoke with his wife Susan and his son Nick, and began preparing for confirmation hearings. Within weeks he was meeting with senators, reviewing agency briefings, and studying the organizational charts of an institution that employed tens of thousands of people around the globe.

The choice made in Trump Tower that November was the beginning of one of the most productive partnerships of the first Trump term. It would take Mike Pompeo from the seventh floor at Langley to the seventh floor of the Harry S. Truman Building, from the briefing table in the Oval Office to the negotiating table in Singapore, from secret flights into Pyongyang to public ceremonies on the South Lawn of the White House where Israel and its Arab neighbors signed the Abraham Accords.

To understand why that choice worked so well, one must go back to the beginning: to Orange County, California, to a family that valued hard work, and to a young man who decided early that excellence was not an aspiration but a habit.

Part One

Formation

Chapter One

Orange County Beginnings

Michael Richard Pompeo was born on December 30, 1963, in Orange, California. The America of his birth was a country at the height of its postwar confidence and on the edge of profound change. President John F. Kennedy had been killed only weeks earlier. The space program was racing toward the Moon. Southern California was booming, its orange groves giving way to subdivisions, aerospace plants, and the freeways that tied them together. Orange County in particular was becoming a symbol of a certain kind of American aspiration: hardworking, family-centered, patriotic, and optimistic about what an ordinary person could build.

The Pompeo family fit that picture. His father, Wayne, worked in the machine shops and manufacturing businesses that sustained so much of the region's economy. His mother, Dorothy, kept the household running and saw to it that her children were raised with a sense of responsibility and faith. The family was of Italian descent on his father's side, part of the great wave of immigrant families who had come to America with nothing but their willingness to work, and who had found in this country the opportunity to rise. His paternal great-grandparents had emigrated from the small town of Pacentro, in the Abruzzo region of Italy, around the turn of the twentieth century. Pompeo would later speak with pride of that heritage. His mother's side of the family had deep roots in the farm country of south-central Kansas, and as a boy he spent summers on a family farm there, an early connection to the heartland he would one day represent.

The home was not wealthy, but it was secure, disciplined, and full of expectations. In the Pompeo household, chores were done, homework was finished, and promises were kept. Those values sound simple. They were also foundational. Again and again in his later career, colleagues would comment on the same traits: he did what he said he would do, he prepared more thoroughly than anyone else in the room, and he did not look for excuses. Those habits were learned at a kitchen table in Southern California long before they were tested at West Point or in the Situation Room.

A Student in Fountain Valley

Pompeo attended Los Amigos High School in Fountain Valley, a public school serving a solid middle-class community. He was a strong student and an athlete, playing basketball and competing with the intensity that would mark his later work. Teachers remembered a young man who was curious, quick, and serious about his studies, but not humorless. He enjoyed a good argument and a good joke in equal measure.

He also showed early signs of the analytical bent that would lead him into engineering. Mathematics and science came naturally to him. He liked problems that had answers, systems that could be understood, and machines that could be improved. Growing up around his father's work, he absorbed an appreciation for the practical side of engineering: the tolerances, the specifications, the difference between a part that almost fits and a part that works. That appreciation would later serve him well when he founded an aerospace manufacturing company, and it would shape his approach to running large organizations. In his view, an agency was a system, and every component had to function to specification for the whole to succeed.

Fountain Valley in the late 1970s and early 1980s was not a place of privilege or connections. Students who wanted to reach the highest levels had to earn their way there. Pompeo understood that. He set his

sights high and worked accordingly. By his senior year, he had decided that he wanted to serve his country, and that the best place to begin that service was the United States Military Academy at West Point.

The Decision to Serve

The decision to apply to West Point said a great deal about the young man and about the moment in which he made it. The late 1970s were not a time of great popularity for the military. The Vietnam War had ended badly. Defense budgets had been cut. Recruitment was difficult, and the services were struggling with morale and readiness. Many talented young Americans looked elsewhere for their futures.

Pompeo looked toward service. He was drawn by the challenge and by the purpose. West Point offered the most rigorous combination of academic, physical, and leadership training available to an American eighteen-year-old. It also offered a commitment: graduates owed the Army years of active duty in return for their education. For a young man who wanted to test himself and give something back, it was the obvious choice.

Admission to West Point is famously difficult. Candidates must secure a nomination, usually from a member of Congress, and then meet demanding standards in academics, physical fitness, and character. The process is designed to identify young people who can lead others under pressure. Pompeo met every requirement. In the summer of 1982, he reported to the Academy on the Hudson River to begin the long, grueling summer of Cadet Basic Training known to generations of cadets as Beast Barracks.

It is worth pausing on what that choice meant. The country was entering the Reagan years. The Cold War was intensifying. The Soviet Union still held Eastern Europe in its grip, and American forces in West Germany stood on the front line of a confrontation that could turn catastrophic at any moment. A young man who entered West

Point in 1982 knew that he might one day be asked to stand in that line. Mike Pompeo chose that path freely, and he would walk it to its end.

Faith and Formation

Faith was part of the Pompeo household, and it would grow to become central to his life. Like many young people, he would come to his own deep personal commitment later, during his years at West Point, through fellow cadets and a Bible study that changed the direction of his inner life. But the groundwork was laid in childhood, in a family that believed in God, in the dignity of work, and in the obligation to treat others decently.

Pompeo would later speak openly about how his faith shaped his public service. He did not see a conflict between conviction and competence. He believed that a person of faith had an obligation to bring excellence to every task, and that humility before God was compatible with confidence in the work. That combination of humility and confidence would become one of his defining features. He could walk into a negotiation with a hardened adversary and hold his ground without bluster, because he knew who he was and what he believed.

What Orange County Gave Him

When Mike Pompeo left Southern California for the Hudson Valley in 1982, he carried with him a set of convictions that would remain remarkably stable over the next four decades. He believed that America was a good country, perhaps the best the world had ever seen, and that it was worth defending. He believed that hard work was rewarded, and that excuses were not. He believed that families and faith communities were the foundation of a healthy society. And he believed that a person who had been given much owed much in return.

Those convictions were not abstract. They were lived. They would shape his decision to serve in the Army, to build a business in the heartland rather than remain in a prestigious Washington law firm, to run for Congress at a moment when the country seemed to be drifting, and to accept the call from President Trump when it came. They would also shape the way he led. People who worked for Pompeo at the CIA and at the State Department often remarked on how much he cared about the institutions themselves and about the ordinary employees who made them work. That care began in a family where everyone pulled his weight and everyone mattered.

There is a temptation, when writing about senior officials, to treat their early lives as a prelude, something to be passed over quickly on the way to the important part. In Pompeo's case, that would be a mistake. The qualities that made President Trump's choice so successful were not acquired in Washington. They were formed long before, in a place and a family that taught a young man to aim high, work hard, and serve.

A Generation's Inheritance

Pompeo belonged to a generation that came of age between two eras. Born before the great social upheavals of the late 1960s, he grew up in their aftermath, watching a country debate its purpose and its place in the world. He was old enough to remember the energy crisis, the Iranian hostage crisis that humiliated the United States in 1979 and 1980, and the sense that American power was in retreat. He was young enough to be shaped by the recovery that followed: the restoration of confidence under President Reagan, the rebuilding of the military, and the eventual victory of the free world in the Cold War.

That experience left a lasting mark. The image of American hostages held in Tehran for 444 days, and of a government that seemed unable to bring them home, became for many in his generation a symbol of what happens when America is weak. Decades later, as Secretary of

State, Mike Pompeo would make the return of Americans held abroad a personal priority, and he would lead the most vigorous campaign of pressure against the Islamic Republic of Iran that any administration had ever mounted. It is not difficult to see in those commitments the memory of a teenager in Orange County watching the evening news.

Likewise, the revival of American strength in the 1980s showed him what principled leadership could accomplish. President Reagan had spoken plainly about the Soviet Union, rebuilt the nation's defenses, and stood with allies, and the result was not war but victory. Pompeo would carry that lesson into his own service. He believed that clarity about adversaries, combined with strength and steadfast alliances, produced peace rather than conflict. The Abraham Accords, the Singapore summit, and the restoration of deterrence against Iran would all reflect that conviction.

The Measure of a Beginning

Orange County did not make Mike Pompeo famous. It made him ready. It gave him a work ethic, a faith, a love of country, and a sense that the ordinary American family was the center of the national story. When President Trump later spoke of the forgotten men and women of America, he was describing people very much like the Pompeos of Southern California, families who worked hard, played by the rules, raised their children to serve, and asked only that their government respect them in return.

In choosing Mike Pompeo, President Trump chose a man who had come from those families and never forgotten them. That connection would matter. It gave Pompeo a natural understanding of the President's priorities and an instinctive loyalty to the people the America First agenda was meant to serve. It also gave him credibility with the workforce of the agencies he led, many of whom came from similar backgrounds and recognized in him someone who respected what they did.

The young man who reported to West Point in the summer of 1982 had no idea where his path would lead. But he was prepared to walk it with discipline and purpose. Four years later, he would graduate at the top of one of the most demanding institutions in the world.

About the Author

Robert Miller is the President and Treasurer of International Publishing Corporation of Washington, D.C., and the author of its China Series. He is the Executive Director of Vets Working for Vets, Inc. (vetsworkingforvets.com), a Washington, D.C., nonprofit organization, and he serves as International Defense and Government Relations Advisor for G3 Global Solutions LLC (g3globalsolutions.com).

Mr. Miller is a United States Army veteran of the Vietnam War era. He served from 1970 to 1976 as a military policeman with the 545th and 709th Military Police Battalions in Germany and the United States, and later as an Army Criminal Investigation Division (CID) narcotics undercover operative in Frankfurt, achieving the rank of Sergeant, and he received an honorable discharge. After his military service he held police commissions with two agencies, serving as a commissioned Special Police Officer with the New Orleans Police Department from 1977 to 1979 and as Honorary Police Captain of the Ocean Springs, Mississippi, Police Department from 1979 to 1981.

He served as Civic Bureau Chairman of the Young Men's Business Club of New Orleans from 1976 to 1977, and as Religion Director and host of a religious radio program for WNPS, the NBC affiliate radio station in New Orleans, from 1975 to 1977. In 1986 he received the Key to the City of Butler, Pennsylvania.

He holds two law degrees, a Bachelor of Laws (LL.B.) and a Juris Doctor (J.D.), and has led legal services firms in Washington, D.C. A justice reform advocate since 2004 with Constitutional Law Advocates, he has helped free more than 100 people from prison over the past twenty years. A Grand Master holding the seventh-degree black belt in Taekwondo and Hapkido, he earned his first black belt in 1969 and taught Asian and Eastern philosophy for more than five decades. He is the co-author of The Metaphysics of Creative

Consciousness series and the author of The President's Choice Series, of which this book is a part. He lives in Washington, D.C.

CONTINUE READING

The President’s Choice

Portraits of the people who served
President Donald J. Trump.

Mike Pompeo — The President’s Choice · The First Term · Book Five — publication date and price to be announced.

ipcnews.org · ipc.asia

orders@ipcnews.org

International Publishing Corporation

Washington, D.C.

© 2026 Robert Miller. All rights reserved.