

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2017

**Remarks Following a Security Briefing and an Exchange With Reporters in
Bedminster, New Jersey**

August 10, 2017

The President. Thank you very much. We appreciate it. We are having a meeting today. We actually had a much larger group than this. This is the finals. But we discussed many things. And one of them obviously was North Korea. We discussed Venezuela. We discussed Afghanistan and the Middle East, generally. We had some very good meetings, some very good ideas, very good thoughts, and a lot of decisions were made. This was a very important day, actually. Made a lot of decisions.

With that, if you have any questions. Yes?

Afghanistan

Q. Did you make any decision on Afghanistan, whether to add additional troops?

The President. Yes, we're getting close. We're getting very close. It's a very big decision for me. I took over a mess, and we're going to make it a lot less messy. But that has been a place—17 years—our longest war, as I read in one of your columns. And frankly, it's going to be a decision that's going to be made very soon.

National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster

Q. And do you have full confidence in your National Security Adviser?

The President. Yes, I do. General McMaster?

Q. Yes.

The President. Absolutely. . He's our friend. He's my friend. And he's a very talented man. I like him, and I respect him.

*The President's Twitter Announcement Prohibiting Transgender Individuals From
Serving in the U.S. Armed Forces*

Q. Sir, why did you decide to announce the transgender ban reversal a couple of weeks ago? Are you betraying a community that you pledged to support during the campaign?

The President. No, no. Look, I have great respect for the community. I think I have great support—or I've had great support from that community. I got a lot of votes. But the transgender—the military is working on it now. They're doing the work. It's been a very difficult situation. And I think I'm doing a lot of people a favor by coming out and just saying it. As you know, it's been a very complicated issue for the military. It's been a very confusing issue for the military. And I think I'm doing the military a great favor.

Russia's Expulsion of U.S. Diplomatic Personnel

Q. Mr. President, do you have any response to the Russian President expelling 755 workers from our Embassies?

The President. No. I want to thank him, because we're trying to cut down on payroll. And as far as I'm concerned, I'm very thankful that he let go of a large number of people, because

now we have a smaller payroll. There's no real reason for them to go back. So he—I greatly appreciate the fact that they've been able to cut our payroll for the United States.

Q. Is that your official response?

The President. We'll save a lot of money.

Former Trump Presidential Campaign Chairman Paul J. Manafort, Jr.

Q. Mr. President, was it appropriate for the FBI to raid the home of Paul Manafort predawn, in the early morning—[inaudible]?

The President. I thought it was a very, very strong signal or whatever. I know Mr. Manafort. I haven't spoken to him in a long time, but I know him. He was with the campaign, as you know, for a very short period of time, relatively short period of time. But I've always known him to be a good man.

Q. He was the chairman.

The President. I thought it was a very, you know—they do that very seldom. So I was surprised to see it. I was very, very surprised to see it. We haven't really been involved.

Q. Have you spoken to the FBI Director about it?

The President. Excuse me?

Q. Have you spoken to the FBI Director about it or the Attorney General?

The President. No, I have not. I have not. But to do that early in the morning, whether or not it was appropriate, you'd have to ask them. I've always found Paul Manafort to be a very decent man. And he's like a lot of other people, probably makes consultant fees from all over the place. Who knows? I don't know. But I thought that was a very—that was pretty tough stuff——

Q. Mr. President, speaking of——

The President. To wake him up, perhaps his family was there, I think that's pretty tough stuff.

Attorney General Jefferson B. Sessions III/White House Chief of Staff John F. Kelly/Border Security/The President's Accomplishments/Deregulation

Q. Mr. President, speaking of the Attorney General, have you—how would you categorize your relationship currently with Attorney General Sessions? Have you guys spoken about some of the differences you've had in the past?

The President. It's fine. It is what it is. It's fine. He's working hard on the border. I'm very proud of what we've done on the border. I'm very proud of General Kelly, what he's done on the border. One of the reasons he's my Chief of Staff right now is because he did such an outstanding job at the border. We're down 78 percent. Nobody thought that would be—I mean, in the old days, with other administrations, if you were down 1 percent, it was considered a big thing. We're down 78 percent at the border, and nobody thought that was possible. So I'm very proud of General Kelly. He's now Chief of Staff.

At the same time, I'm very proud of what we've done over the last 6 months, between Supreme Court, between tremendous amounts of legislation that's been passed. We had 42 to 48 bills passed. I'm not talking about just Executive orders, I'm talking about bills passed. We

had massive Executive orders. We got rid of record-setting amounts of regulations, and a lot of it is statutory, where it's a 90-day period, then you have to wait. Then, it's another 90-day period, you have to wait 30 days. Much more is coming out.

And I believe in regulation. You have to have some regulation. But we're going to have a small percentage of regulation compared to what we have. And I think that's why you see business enthusiasm is the highest it's been in 18 years; why unemployment is the lowest it's been in 18 years. Again, the unemployment rate just came out; it's the lowest it's been in 18 years. And with that being said, we have companies moving into the United States, whether it's Foxconn. You saw the two large auto companies moving back; probably, they'll go to Michigan, but they're negotiating with various States.

We have had—we have done a lot in a short period of time. So I'm very proud of it. I think that General Kelly is going to be a fantastic Chief of Staff, however.

U.S. Military Presence in Asia/North Korea/Korean Worker's Party Chairman Kim Jong Un of North Korea

Q. Mr. President, are you going to increase the U.S. military presence in Asia?

The President. We are going to look at what's happening in Asia. We're looking at it right now. We're constantly looking at it. I don't like to signal what I'm going to be doing, but we are certainly looking at it. And obviously, we're spending a lot of time looking at, in particular, North Korea. And we are preparing for many different, alternative events at North Korea—if—he has disrespected our country greatly. He has said things that are horrific. And with me, he's not getting away with it. He got away with it for a long time, between him and his family. He's not getting away with it. It's a whole new ballgame.

And he's not going to be saying those things, and he's certainly not going to be doing those things. I read about, "We're in Guam by August 15." Let's see what he does with Guam. He does something in Guam, it will be an event the likes of which nobody has seen before, what will happen in North Korea.

Korean Worker's Party Chairman Kim Jong Un of North Korea

Q. And when you say that, what do you mean?

The President. You'll see. You'll see. And he'll see. He will see.

Q. Is that a dare?

The President. It's not a dare, it's a statement. It has nothing to do with dare. That's a statement. He's not going to go around threatening Guam, and he's not going to threaten the United States. And he's not going to threaten Japan, and he's not going to threaten South Korea. No, that's not a dare, as you say. That is a statement of fact.

Denuclearization/U.S. Nuclear Arsenal

Q. Mr. President, can you talk about the nuclear posture and what your priorities are there?

The President. Yes. Nuclear to me—number one: I would like to denuke the world. I know that President Obama said global warming is the biggest threat. I totally disagree. I say that it's a simple one: Nuclear is our greatest threat worldwide. Not even a question, not even close. So I'd like to denuke the world. I would like Russia and the United States and China and Pakistan and many other countries that have nuclear weapons, get rid of them.

But until such time as they do, we will be the most powerful nuclear nation on Earth by far. The first order I gave to my generals, as you know—you know, Mike—my first order was: I want this, our nuclear arsenal, to be the biggest and the finest in the world. And we spent a lot of money, a lot of time, and a lot of effort. And it's in tip-top shape and getting better and getting stronger. And until such time as this scourge disappears, we will be so much better and so much stronger than anybody else. And nobody, including North Korea, is going to be threatening us with anything.

Q. Sir, what specifically have you changed in the nuclear arsenal? And the reason I ask is that a lot of experts yesterday, in response to your tweet, said that modernizing the arsenal takes many years; it can't be done in 6 months. It's a long process that's only just begun——

The President. We've done a lot of modernization, but we've done a lot of renovation. And we have it now in very, very good shape. And it will be in much better shape over the next 6 months to a year.

Q. Mr. President——

The President. It's a very important thing. Actually, it was the first—military is very important to me. As you know, I did extremely well with the military vote, Mike and I.

But we are—my first order was, we have to do the military, but before we do the military per se, we're going to do the nuclear. And we are in very strong shape. We are going to be increasing our budget by many billions of dollars because of North Korea and other reasons having to do with the antimissile. So we are going to be increasing our budget by many billions of dollars. We'll probably be able to report that over the next week.

As you know, we reduced it by 5 percent, but I've decided I don't want that. We're going to be increasing the antimissiles by a substantial amount of billions of dollars.

Iran

Q. Mr. President, can you share with us your latest thoughts on Iran, speaking of nuclear deals, and the—whether you feel like they are in compliance or will be in compliance?

The President. I don't think Iran is in compliance. We wrote them a very tough letter to the—as you know, to the Congress. I personally don't think they're in compliance. But we have time, and we're going to see. We also put down a lot of defaults or potential default situations. I don't think they're living up to the spirit of the agreement. President Obama in his wisdom gave them \$150 billion. He gave them \$1.8 billion in cash, which is—that's a hard one to figure. But that was his decision. I think it's a horrible agreement. But they are not in compliance with the agreement, and they are certainly not in the spirit of the agreement in compliance.

And I think you'll see some very strong things taking place if they don't get themselves in compliance. But I do not believe they are in compliance right now.

Leaking of Classified Information

Q. Mr. President, what's the latest on the leak investigation that the Attorney General announced late last week? And is there any separate investigation that you're looking at——

The President. Yes, sure. We're looking. We're always looking. You have two leaks. You have the leaks coming out of intelligence and various departments having to do with Syria, having to do with all sorts of different places, having to do, frankly, with North Korea. And those are very serious. And then, you have the leaks where people want to love me, and they're

all fighting for love. [*Laughter*] Those are not very important, but certainly, we don't like them. Those are little, inner-White House leaks. They're not very important. But actually, I'm somewhat honored by them.

But the important leaks to me—and they're leaks that the Attorney General is looking at very strongly—are the leaks coming out of intelligence. And we have to stop them for the security and the national security of our country.

Department of Justice Special Counsel Robert S. Mueller III/Russian Interference in 2016 Presidential Election

Q. Mr. President, are you passing notes to the Special Counsel, Bob Mueller? Can you talk a little bit about what those——

The President. No, not notes. We're working with them. I mean, we have a situation which is very unusual. Everybody said there's no collusion. You look at the counsels that come in. We have a Senate hearing, we have Judiciary, we have Intelligence, and we have a House hearing. And everybody walks out, even the enemies, and they said, no, well there is no collusion, there's no collusion.

So they're investigating something that never happened. There was no collusion between us and Russia. In fact, the opposite. Russia spent a lot of money on fighting me. And if you think about it, I want a strong military. You see our budget is up by—it will be hundreds of billions of dollars soon, our military budget. Russia doesn't like that. Hillary was going to cut the budget substantially, the military budget. Russia is—very important for Russia—oil. Oil and gas. We are now an exporter—because of an incredible 6 months that I have—an exporter of oil and gas. That's bad for Russia.

I always said, I don't think Russia wants me, because I want a strong military and I want low energy prices. Energy is a disaster—low energy prices is a disaster for Russia. Additionally, it seems that Russia spent a lot of money on that false report, and that was Russian money, and I think it was Democrat money too. You could say that was collusion. Plus, the Democrats colluded on the Ukraine. So they colluded. And then, when you get down to it, why isn't the FBI looking at the DNC server? You have a server that they refuse—the Democrats refuse to give to the FBI. Now, I don't know how the FBI can investigate something if the DNC, the Democrats, refuse to give the server.

So we have an investigation of something that never took place. And all I say is, work with them, because this is an event that never took place.

Now, as far as somebody else, where—did they file the right papers or did they forget to file a paper? You know, I guarantee if you went around to look at everybody that made a speech or whatever these people did, that's up to them. Did they do something wrong because they didn't file the right document or whatever? Perhaps. You'll have to look at them. But I guarantee you this: Probably, a lot of people in Washington did the same thing.

Bipartisanship/Infrastructure

Q. Mr. President, given your harsh criticism of Democrats just now, how are you going to bring them in on things like infrastructure or health care reform?

The President. Well, we'll have to see. I'm not sure that we will bring them in. I mean, maybe we'll bring them in, maybe not. I think the infrastructure bill will be bipartisan. In fact, frankly, it may have more support from the Democrats. I want a very strong infrastructure bill.

We've, as of this moment, spent over \$6 trillion in the Middle East. As far as I'm concerned, when I say "spent," we've wasted \$6 trillion in the Middle East, and yet we can't fix our roads and our bridges and our schools and our airports. And I think that's a very sad situation. So I'm very strong on infrastructure, and a lot of Republicans are, but I know a lot of Democrats are also. I think that will work out. I think it's going to work out very well.

Department of Justice Special Counsel Robert S. Mueller III/Russian Interference in 2016 Presidential Election

Q. Mr. President, you have sought or thought about or considered leading the dismissal of the Special Counsel. Is there anything that Bob Mueller could do that you would—send you in that direction?

The President. I haven't given it any thought. I mean, I've been reading about it from you people. You say, oh, I'm going to dismiss him. No, I'm not dismissing anybody. I mean, I want them to get on with the task, but I also want the Senate and the House to come out with their findings.

Now, judging from the people leaving the meetings—leaks—but they leave the meetings all the time, and they say, no, we haven't found any collusion. There is no collusion. You know why? Because I don't speak to Russians.

Look, I won because I suppose I was a much better candidate than her. I won because I went to Wisconsin, I went to Michigan, I won Pennsylvania. I fought a smart battle. That's why I win. I didn't win because of Russia. Russia had nothing to do with me winning. The thing that—we had a great team, and I guess I did a good job. And you know what, honestly, they spent much more money than I did, by a lot. You know that. They spent a lot more money, and honestly, they did not do a very good job of campaigning.

Senate Majority Leader A. Mitchell McConnell

Q. And one more question about Senator—Senate Leader McConnell. We talked about him—you talked about him outside a little bit earlier, but have you reached out to him since your phone call yesterday?

The President. No.

Secretary of Transportation Elaine L. Chao/Senate Majority Leader A. Mitchell McConnell/Governor James C. Justice II of West Virginia/Domestic Manufacturing

Q. And have you given any consideration to asking his wife, your Transportation Secretary, to help bridge whatever divide you guys—

The President. Elaine is doing a very good job. We're very proud of Elaine as Secretary of Transportation, as you know—as you said, Mitch's wife. She is doing a very, very good job. I'm very disappointed in Mitch. But if he gets these bills passed, I'll be very happy with him. And I'll be the first to admit it. But honestly, repeal and replace of Obamacare should have taken place, and it should have been on my desk virtually the first week that I was there or the first day that I was there. I've been hearing about it for 7 years.

So repeal and replace should have taken place. The tax bill, tax cuts, tax reform, hopefully, they get that done. I hope they get it done. And the other thing would be the infrastructure bill.

In addition to that—you know, we've passed a lot of things. We've passed accountability with the VA. We've passed a lot. We're doing a lot of great work at the VA. And we're doing a lot of great work all over. You look at what's happening with the coal industry where they're putting on—I mean, I looked at West Virginia the other day—I was in West Virginia making a speech, and they are doing great as a State. The great Governor of West Virginia, Jim—who you saw—he just became a Republican. He left. This is the first time in many, many years that a thing like that's happened. He just left the Democratic Party, and he became a Republican, which was a great moment. Hasn't happened in many years.

So we're very, very happy with what's happened. We think it's been an incredible 6 months. We've done a lot of record-setting business. It's incredible. You look at what's going on with the economy. And you know, to me, very important, you look at the enthusiasm of businesses. You look at companies moving back in. You just saw on Friday the two big car companies that are coming in. You saw last week, Foxconn. They make the Apple iPhones, they make all of the desktops. They make—they're the biggest in the world. They're coming into Wisconsin with an unbelievable plant like we've never seen before.

And I actually said to Tim Cook of Apple—I said, you know, Tim, I won't consider myself successful as President unless I see you start building those big, beautiful plants that you have all over China, you start building them in the United States. And he's going to do that.

U.S. Intelligence Community/Federal Bureau of Investigation Director Christopher A. Wray/2003 Invasion of Iraq

Q. Mr. President, you were critical of the intelligence in the run-up to the Iraq war. Should we question the intelligence now we're hearing about North Korea?

The President. Well, it's different intelligence. I have Mike Pompeo. I have great confidence in him. That doesn't mean I had confidence in his predecessor. Okay? Which I didn't, actually, although——

Q. You called the intelligence—[inaudible].

The President. Although he did say good things about me. He did say he had no information or no anything on collusion. So I shouldn't maybe say that, but I will say it. But I have tremendous confidence in Mike Pompeo. Dan Coats, fantastic. I mean, we have people. I think your new head of the FBI is going to be—I think I've done a great service for this country. I think that Christopher will do a fantastic job as the head of the FBI.

So look, I have—nobody has greater respect for intelligence than Donald Trump, but you have to have the right leaders. I think we have great leaders right now. And you can look at the intelligence over the years. It was intelligence that got people to make one of the worst decisions ever made in the history of our country: going into Iraq. Because they said there were no weapons. You know, you look at it—it ended up being there were no weapons of mass destruction. They said—I mean, listening to them, weapons of mass destruction were all over the place, but they were not there. That was intelligence.

I have great respect for intelligence as led by the people that I have in charge now. We have great people, and I think it's going to lead us to tremendous victories. And that's what we need, so——

U.S. Intelligence Community/North Korea

Q. What is that intelligence telling you about North Korea and the nuclear——

The President. It's telling me a lot of things, but what—you'll probably find out about it before anybody else, right? [Laughter]

Q. Well, tell us now.

The President. With your leaks. We've got to stop the leaks. The leaks are very dangerous for our country. But no, I have great respect for the intelligence community. And I think with the leadership we have right now, hopefully, it will be a very, very successful 8 years for this country. And then, after that, we'll continue onward.

But you have a lot of things we have to straighten out. You have the Middle East; you have North Korea. We have a lot of places of tremendous conflict and tremendous danger for this country.

I will say, getting the 15-to-nothing vote at the United Nations from the Security Council the other day, that's something that very few Presidents would have been able to get. And I have great respect for the fact that China and Russia went along with it. That was a tremendous day for the United States. I think it will have a strong impact on North Korea. I don't know that it will be the end-all, but I think it will be a very, very—I think it will have a big impact on North Korea and what they're doing.

Thank you all very much. Thank you. Thank you very much. Appreciate it. Thanks.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:41 p.m. at the Trump National Golf Club Bedminster. In his remarks, he referred to President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia; White House Chief of Staff John F. Kelly, in his former capacity as Secretary of Homeland Security; Vice President Michael R. Pence; former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, in her capacity as the 2016 Democratic Presidential nominee; Timothy D. Cook, chief executive officer, Apple Inc.; Michael R. Pompeo, Director, and John O. Brennan, former Director, Central Intelligence Agency; and Director of National Intelligence Daniel R. Coats.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Security briefing; Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters :: Bedminster, NJ.

Locations: Bedminster, NJ.

Names: Brennan, John O.; Chao, Elaine L.; Clinton, Hillary Rodham; Coats, Daniel R.; Cook, Timothy D.; Justice, James C., II; Kelly, John F.; Kim Jong Un; Manafort, Paul J., Jr.; McConnell, A. Mitchell; McMaster, H.R.; Mueller, Robert S., III; Obama, Barack; Pence, Michael R.; Pompeo, Michael R.; Putin, Vladimir Vladimirovich; Sessions, Jefferson B., III; Wray, Christopher A.

Subjects: Afghanistan : U.S. military forces :: Deployment; Armed Forces, U.S. : Funding; Armed Forces, U.S. : Servicemembers :: Transgender servicemembers, disallowance from service in U.S. military; Arms and munitions : Nuclear weapons and material :: Nonproliferation efforts; Arms and munitions : Nuclear weapons and material :: U.S. nuclear arsenal modernization; Assistants to the President :: National Security Adviser; Business and industry : Domestic investment, promotion efforts; Central Intelligence Agency; Congress : Bipartisanship; Congress : Senate :: Majority leader; Defense and national security : Border security; Defense and national security : Classified national security information; Defense and national security : Intelligence; Defense and national security : Missile defense; Democratic Party : Democratic National Committee; Economy, national : Improvement; Elections : 2016 Presidential and congressional elections; Employment and unemployment : Unemployment

rate; Energy : Domestic production, promotion efforts; Government organization and employees : Accountability and transparency, strengthening efforts; Government organization and employees : Federal regulations, review; Health and medical care : Health insurance reforms; Immigration and naturalization : Illegal immigration; Intelligence, Office of the Director of National; Iran : Nuclear program, Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action; Justice, Department of : Attorney General; Justice, Department of : Bureau of Investigation, Federal; Justice, Department of : Special Counsel; New Jersey : President's visits; North Korea : Ballistic missiles, testing and development; North Korea : International and U.S. sanctions; North Korea : Korean Worker's Party Chairman; North Korea : Nuclear weapons development; Russia : President; Russia : U.S. diplomatic staff, expulsion of workers; Russia : U.S. elections, interference; Taxation : Tax Code, reform; Transportation : Infrastructure, national, improvement efforts; Transportation, Department of : Secretary; Venezuela : Political unrest and violence; West Virginia : Governor; White House Office : Assistants to the President :: Chief of Staff; White House Office : Vice President; Wisconsin : Foxconn Technology Group, plans to build manufacturing facility.

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