

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2017

The President's News Conference With Amir Sabah al-Ahmad al-Jabir al-Sabah of Kuwait

September 7, 2017

President Trump. Good afternoon, and thank you for all being here. It's my great honor to welcome His Highness the Amir of Kuwait to the White House. The United States and Kuwait share a strong and enduring partnership. We recently commenced [commemorated]^{*} the 27th day of remembrance of Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait, which we all remember so well. The United States is proud to have contributed to the liberation of Kuwait and for the friendship we have built together in the years since.

Today we reaffirm our commitment to our shared security interests and recognize Kuwait's critical contributions to regional stability. We also thank Kuwait for its humanitarian leadership and for its partnership in the fight to destroy ISIS. During my trip to Saudi Arabia, I spoke to the leaders of more than 50 Arab and Muslim nations about the need to confront our shared enemies: murderous terror groups that threaten all civilized people. Every responsible nation must work together to strip these groups of their territory, their financing, and the false allure of their evil ideology.

I applaud Kuwait for its role in this effort and encourage all nations in the region to do their fair share in defeating those who wage war on the innocent. Each nation in the region must decide what kind of future they want for their own children: one of violence or one of peace. That also means confronting those, such as the Iranian regime, who support terror groups and radical militias.

Cooperation between America and Kuwait has never been stronger—never, ever. The FBI and the Kuwaiti Government are expanding our counterterrorism and intelligence-sharing efforts. We are making progress on promoting Kuwaiti investments in the United States. They're making tremendous investments in our country. They have great confidence in our country. We're also entering a bilateral agreement with Kuwait regarding customs enforcement.

During the same period and the same trip to Saudi Arabia—which was my great honor representing our incredible country—His Highness personally asked me to expedite a \$5 billion agreement for the sale of American F/A-18 Super Hornet fighting jets for Kuwait. I am pleased to report that the State Department has now authorized this transfer and purchase, which will not only strengthen our mutual security, but will greatly benefit American workers.

Kuwaiti's investments in America through its sovereign wealth fund are profitable for Kuwaiti people, and they create many, many jobs in the American workforce. I am pleased to report this year that Kuwait has taken delivery of 10 American-made Boeing 777 airliners. They're beauties. American workers build the best planes in the world by far, and we want them to be made available for those countries that want them. And Kuwait has been a big buyer of commercial airliners made by Boeing and others.

Our partnership extends beyond shared economic and security interests. We're signing a memorandum to deepen the close educational ties between our two countries, enhancing

^{*} White House correction.

English language, and that's what we're going to be doing—we're enhancing the whole relationship through the use of the English language. And that is something that's very exciting, I think, for both of us.

I want to thank His Highness for his leadership role and the role he's playing to help the nations of the Gulf Cooperation Council follow through on their pledges from all over. Because we went to Saudi Arabia, and the pledges of ending terrorist financing came from every country in that magnificent room, on that magnificent day. And we are addressing the ongoing GCC dispute, and the Amir is leading those discussions, and hopefully, it will be resolved very soon.

We call on our and Egyptian allies to focus on our commitments at that Saudi Arabia summit to continue our joint efforts to drive out and defeat terrorists. Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Egypt are all essential U.S. partners in this effort. We have great relationships with all of them right now, maybe better than we've ever had. We will be most successful with a united GCC.

Tomorrow Secretary of State Tillerson and Foreign Minister al-Sabah will chair the second U.S.-Kuwaiti Strategic Dialogue. By strengthening communications with allies like Kuwait, we send a strong message to both terrorist organizations and regional aggressors that they cannot win—they will not win; they cannot win against us; and our military is getting stronger and stronger and stronger—and that those who cherish and value human life will always prevail.

I want to thank His Highness for joining us here today. The United States values its close friendship with Kuwait and its people, and we look forward to strengthening these bonds even further. Together, we will show the world that the forces of destruction and extremism are no match for the blessings of prosperity and peace.

Thank you very much. I appreciate that. Thank you.

Amir Sabah. My dear President, Mr. President Donald Trump, Your Excellencies and Highnesses, and ladies and gentlemen: I'm delighted, and my delegation, to be here today in Washington, this great city, in response to the invitation that His Excellency, my friend President Trump, has extended to me.

I would like, at the outset, to reaffirm and resend once again our condolences to the President and the people—the American people about the victims of Harvey Hurricane that hit Texas. And we are deeply affected by the human losses and the huge destruction in public facilities and property.

I pray to God almighty that He would make this, the coming hurricane that is about to hit Florida, for it to be a harbinger of goodness, not evil. I wish and hope that the losses would not be harmful to the American people or—and would not cause further sadness and grief for those who will fall victim to this hurricane.

Once again, we reaffirm that we stand by our friends in the U.S. in fighting and confronting this issue. We have held deep and comprehensive discussions that reflect the depth of our bilateral and historic relationship and advanced relationships in all levels—at the political, economic, and military and security levels—in order to serve the mutual interests of our two countries and people.

I here would like to commend the commitment that we have sensed here on the part of the U.S. about the security of the state of Kuwait. And within the framework of these relations,

we are—we remember with great gratitude the great role that the U.S. played when it assumed the leadership of the international coalition that liberated my country from the throes of the invading Iraqi forces and restored its freedom. And this memory will remain forever in the minds of the Kuwaiti people.

We also highly value the strategic relations between our two countries. We have discussed the situation in the country, foremost among which is the unfortunate dispute between our brothers in the Gulf region and our efforts to contain it and the international support that we have received for these efforts.

We have also discussed our common efforts, in cooperation with the international community, in fighting terrorism and ending the sources of funding for it. And in this regard, I would like to commend the prominent role that the United States plays in combating terrorism, especially the recent victories against terrorism. And we have also discussed the situation in Iraq and the catastrophic situation in Syria and Yemen and Syria—and Libya. And we affirm the need to end their fighting there through dialogue between the various disputing parties. And we have affirmed the necessity of the Security Council to shoulder its responsibility in maintaining international peace and stability, which represents the—because the continuation of those struggles, it continues to be a threat.

With respect to the Palestinian question, we have praised the U.S.—the recent U.S. efforts to move the peace process, and we affirmed the need to join efforts in order to reach a comprehensive and lasting solution to this problem on the basis of a two-state solution and in accordance with the international legitimacy resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative.

Once again, I thank His Excellency, the President, for his kind invitation to us and for his kind hospitality. And we look forward to meeting with His Excellency, the President, in the state of Kuwait within the framework of our efforts to further enhance our relations and build on our strategic relationship in the service of the interests of both countries and peoples.

Thank you, Mr. President.

President Trump. All right, we'll take a couple of questions. Go ahead. Yes.

Actually, we'll go to somebody else this time, John [John Roberts, Fox News]. [*Laughter*] You've been doing enough, John.

Go ahead, sure. CBS.

North Korea/U.S. Military Spending

Q. Thanks. Mr. President, on the question of North Korea, the country feels that a crisis is coming. Some lawmakers, Lindsey Graham among them, have almost described the situation as inevitably leading to war. I don't want to ask you if you think it's inevitable. What I do want to ask you is, as President of the United States, would you tolerate a nuclearized North Korea that is contained and deterred, but still nuclear? Or would it have to abandon nuclear weapons? And would military action on the part of the United States be one of the options necessary to achieve that goal?

President Trump. Military action would certainly be an option. Is it inevitable? Nothing is inevitable. It would be great if something else could be worked out. We would have to look at all of the details, all of the facts. But we've had Presidents for 25 years now—they've been talking, talking, talking—and the day after an agreement is reached, new work begins in North Korea, continuation on nuclear.

So I would prefer not going the route of the military, but it's something certainly that could happen. Our military has never been stronger. We are in a position now—and you know the new orders. You see the new numbers just like I see the new numbers. It's been tens of billions of dollars more in investment. And each day, new equipment is delivered, new and beautiful equipment, the best in the world, the best anywhere in the world, by far. Hopefully we're not going to have to use it on North Korea. If we do use it on North Korea, it will be a very sad day for North Korea.

Do you have a question for the Amir?

North Korea

Q. Sir, follow-up: Is it acceptable for you, as President, for North Korea to be nuclearized, but contained and deterred? Is that a strategy you would like——

President Trump. We're going to see what it is. I don't negotiate with you——

Q. ——to prefer?

President Trump. No, I'm not negotiating with you. Maybe we'll have a chance to negotiate with somebody else, but I don't put my negotiations on the table. Unlike past administrations, I don't talk about them. But I can tell you that North Korea is behaving badly, and it's got to stop.

Okay, a question for the Amir?

Q. Your Excellency, you mentioned in a general sense the situation with Qatar. How optimistic are you about it being resolved, and what role would you like the President of the United States to play in achieving a resolution?

Amir Sabah. We hope—we still have hope that the dispute would be resolved between Qatar and its neighborly countries in the GCC. Especially that our brothers—our friends in the U.S. and our other friends are assisting us in resolving this issue, I am optimistic that the solution will come in the near—in the very near future, God willing.

President Trump. Question for the——yes, for the Amir first, yes.

United Arab Emirates/Saudi Arabia/Qatar

Q. My question is for you, Mr. President, first.

President Trump. Oh.

Q. Kuwait News Agency.

[*At this point, the reporter spoke in Arabic, and her remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

Do you support the Kuwaiti mediation role between Qatar and the four countries? And do you support the holding of a conference that will include all parties in Kuwait? Thank you.

President Trump. Well, I do appreciate and respect the mediation. I would be willing to be the mediator. I was telling the Amir before that if I can help between U.A.E. and Saudi Arabia, where I have a very great relationship—I spoke with the King yesterday, King Salman, who is a friend of mine, and we spoke on unrelated subjects, but we had a long conversation. If I can help mediate between Qatar and, in particular, the U.A.E. and Saudi Arabia, I would be willing to do so. And I think you'd have a deal worked out very quickly.

I think it's something that's going to get solved fairly easily. Kuwait has been really the leader of getting it solved, and we appreciate that very much. But I do believe that we'll solve it. If we don't solve it, I will be a mediator right here in the White House. We'll come together. Very quickly, I think, we'll have something solved.

Q. Ahmad—[inaudible]. Mr. Amir, in light of the regional conditions in the region, has there been an assertion on the role of the U.S.'s commitment to the security of the state of Kuwait? Thank you.

Amir Sabah. Thank you. And you have heard now what His Excellency, the President, has said about the relations between Kuwait and the U.S. and its assertion of its commitment to the security of Kuwait. And this is not something new.

And don't forget that the United States has managed with its other coalition—allies when Kuwait was occupied; it liberated Kuwait from Iraq within a few months. And this is something that the Kuwaiti people remember very well and everybody also. And we here thank the United States and the American people for that.

President Trump. Thank you. Go ahead.

Arab-Israeli Peace Process/Syria

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Nadia Bilbassy with Al Arabiya Television. You dispatched a team to Israel and Palestine, and you're about to meet the leaders of both countries in the U.N. soon. Do we expect a new American initiative to move the process forward?

And if I may, sir, the U.N. had just published a report about Syria's Asad regime using chemical weapons. They said that basically he used it more than dozens—two dozen times. Does that mean that President Asad is immune now from any prosecution? And what can you do to stop the further use of chemical weapons? Thank you.

President Trump. Well, first of all, the Palestinians and the Israelis, we are discussing; we are working. They say it is the world's most complex and difficult deal. You know that. But it is something that could happen. I believe that the relationships that we have with both can help. It's a—an event that's just never taken place. Sometimes, people think they're close, and it never happens, or it never happens successfully.

I think we have a chance of doing it. I think the Palestinians would like to see it happen. I think the Israelis would like to see it happen. And usually, when you have two groups that would like to see something happen, good things can happen.

So I think there is a chance that there could be peace. But again, I say that a little bit reluctantly. We're going to give it our best. We have tremendous talent working on that particular transaction. As you know, David Friedman, the Ambassador, is very much involved. We have a great group of people. We'll see what happens.

As far as the chemical weapons, I find it hard to believe that after what we did the last time, that Asad would do that again. I haven't heard what you just said, but I find that a little bit difficult to believe. But nothing would change. We would be extremely upset if he was using chemical weapons.

As far as Syria is concerned, we have very little to do with Syria other than killing ISIS. What we do is, we kill ISIS. And we have succeeded in that respect. We have done better in 8 months of my Presidency than the previous 8 years against ISIS. So ISIS is rapidly

disappearing, as you know, and that's because of our great military. The military has been absolutely incredible in terms of what they've done with ISIS in Iraq and in Syria.

Do you have a question for the Amir?

Terrorism

[*The reporter spoke in Arabic, and her remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

Q. Yes. Mr.—to the Amir, all the parties are holding onto their own positions with respect to Qatar. Where do you see a breakthrough in this dispute? Do you see any indications to make us believe that this crisis will come to an end?

Amir Sabah. The hope has not ended yet. I would like to affirm that Qatar is ready to meet all the demands that were put—the 13 demands that were presented and is ready to sit at the table to negotiate and to discuss with us all everything related to the dispute between the parties—the Gulf parties.

As you know, we have 13 demands that were presented, and we know that not all of these 13 demands are acceptable. But if we were to sit down together and discuss these 13 demands—and we have indeed accepted them, and Qatar has accepted them—we would be able to resolve all 13 demands, all the issues and points that harm and relate to the dispute between the countries of the region and anything that harms the interests of our other friends.

Thank you.

President Trump. This all began because of the fact that there has been massive funding of terrorism by certain countries. And what I want is, I want to stop the funding of terrorism, and we're going to stop the funding of terrorism. And if they don't stop the funding of terrorism, I don't want them to come together. But I think they will. Okay?

You have a question? Your people have a question, yes. Go ahead. To the Amir.

Q. Your Highness, Said Saeed from Al Jazeera, Mr. President. We talk about Kuwaiti mediation and supporting Kuwaiti mediation. Are the talks and the meeting that happened in Kuwait, which received U.S. and international support—is there, in reality, something clear and a breakthrough that has been accomplished in this crisis? Are we about to see at the beginning of a breakthrough? Or, Your Highness, are the things—issues so complicated? We talked about a deep discussion about all the issues. What is the real issues—issue and complicated issue at the heart of this dispute? We would like to find some information—where is the problem here—so that we can solve it. Thank you.

Amir Sabah. First of all, I would like to say, there is no problem that cannot be resolved. True, it's complicated, but when we meet at one table—around one table, and now we have an affirmation from the country to which some demands were presented by its brotherly nations in the Gulf region, when we hear that it's ready to discuss all these demands. We are not among those countries, but we are guarantors, and we can guarantee that we will pressure Qatar, because it's not in the interest of Qatar to remain outside the flock. Rather, it should join its brothers in the GCC.

As you know, thank God, the wisdom of our brothers in the Gulf region—they should appreciate the situation we're in today—the situation in Syria, in Iraq, and in Syria—and in Libya. Now is the time that we have to forget all these differences. It's true we have gone—we are descended into some not very healthy issues, especially in the media, but in spite of all of

that, we were one of the most people to be affected by this situation, by what our brothers in Qatar have done.

But when that happened, and before this dispute came into existence, we met with our brothers in Qatar and put an end to this issue. And this is now a normal issue. We met in Riyadh, in the presence of President Trump, and there was no one who—to say that there was a dispute between us. But suddenly, this dispute came into existence. Thank God, now, what is important is that we have stopped any military action.

And these disputes, as I said, they are complicated. And we have seen the media campaign that is totally unacceptable to the people, because the media coming out of this country are—is against the people, not the rulers. And for that reasons, we have received from Qatar a letter in response to the letter I sent them, and they are willing to sit down at the table and discuss all these demands, which the other parties have put down.

And we're talking about 13 demands, and I'm certain that all these 13 demands, some of them—a great part of them—will be resolved, and the other part, we—and perhaps, we might not accept them, because anything that effects sovereignty we would not accept. But we are very hopeful. We have great hope in our friends in the U.S. that they will assist them to restore things to where they used to be.

President Trump. Well, that is a problem that we will get resolved, and I'm very, very honored and happy to know that you have problems with the media also. [*Laughter*]

Thank you everybody. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 2:21 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to King Salman bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia; and President Bashar al-Asad of Syria. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist organization. Amir Sabah and several reporters spoke in Arabic, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Categories: Interviews With the News Media : Joint news conferences :: Kuwait, Amir Sabah.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Asad, Bashar al-; Friedman, David M.; Sabah al-Ahmad al-Jabir al-Sabah, Amir; Salman bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud, King; Tillerson, Rex W.

Subjects: Armed Forces, U.S. : Funding; Commerce, international : U.S. exports :: Expansion; Communications : News media, Presidential interviews; Employment and unemployment : Job creation and growth; Iran : Terrorism, sponsorship; Iraq : Security cooperation with U.S; Israel : U.S. Ambassador; Justice, Department of : Bureau of Investigation, Federal; Kuwait : Amir; Kuwait : Relations with U.S.; Kuwait : Security cooperation with U.S.; Middle East : Arab-Israeli conflict, peace process; Middle East : Counterterrorism efforts; Middle East : Gulf Cooperation Council; North Korea : International diplomatic efforts; North Korea : Nuclear weapons development; Qatar : Diplomatic conflict with Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, and Egypt; Saudi Arabia : King; State, Department of : Secretary; Syria : Civil war and sectarian conflict; Syria : President; Syria : U.S. and coalition airstrikes; Terrorism : Counterterrorism efforts; Terrorism : Global threat; Terrorism : Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist organization.

DCPD Number: DCPD201700615.