

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2017

Remarks in an Exchange With Reporters Aboard Air Force One En Route to Hanoi, Vietnam

November 11, 2017

The President. Everybody okay? Everybody happy? Everybody healthy? Two more days, no problem.

It's been a—I think it's been a great trip. In certain ways, it's been very epic. I think things have happened that have been really amazing. Prime Minister Abe came up to me just at the end, and he said that since you left South Korea and Japan, that those two countries are now getting along much, much better. That's from Prime Minister Abe: that there's been a real bonding between South Korea and Japan. So that was great.

And we had a time in China. You were there. Were most of you there? Jennifer [Jennifer Jacobs, Bloomberg]?

The President's Travel to Asia

Q. We all were, sir.

The President. They say in the history of people coming to China, there's been nothing like that. And I believe it.

Did you see the show? Did most of you see the show or part of the show afterwards? It was incredible.

Q. We saw the opera, but not the——

The President. The opera was great too, but the following night—that was the first time that theater has been used at the Forbidden City in over a hundred years. You know that. They prepared the theater for that, the first time in over a hundred years.

No, it was an amazing—we have an amazing feeling toward each other. And he's for China; I'm for U.S.A. You know, it's one of those things. But we have a great feeling.

So it's been really very incredible. And then, today was excellent. Today was a different kind of a thing. It's a conference.

And then, tonight they're having a state dinner in Hanoi. And we then go to the Philippines, which was a rough trip the last time. That was a rough Presidential trip, but this won't be. And we're staying the extra day because they have the two conferences; they have first day, and they have the second day. And the second day, a lot of people say is very important. And I said, you know what, if I'm there, I should do it.

But it's gone really well. I've really enjoyed it. Developed some new friendships, some really good friendships. But the three countries we've stopped in, the original three are—they're really in our camp, and we're in their camp.

President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia/Syria

Q. How were your discussions with Vladimir Putin? Did you discuss Syria? And apparently, they've issued a joint statement that——

The President. We issued a joint statement. We're going to be—have you seen the statement yet?

White House Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders. It's going out—it's on the way.

The President. So I think it will go out. You'll see it in a little while.

Press Secretary Sanders. It may be out, now that you guys—now that we're in the air.

The President. It's going to save tremendous numbers of lives. And we did that very quickly. We agreed very quickly.

As you know, we saw each other last night just for a picture, and that was the first time. And then, today we had a roundtable with numerous countries. You have a list of the countries, obviously. Right? You have a list.

And we spoke intermittently during that roundtable. We seem to have a very good feeling for each other and a good relationship considering we don't know each other well. I think it's a very good relationship.

We had two or three very short conversations because of the meeting, the fact that we're at a meeting. But during those conversations, we talked about Syria and deconflicting, et cetera. You know, we have areas where troops are facing—our troops—I mean, their troops are facing our troops, and there's nothing in between.

And we issued a statement—a joint statement. It was just approved, and I think people are going to be extremely happy with it and also very impressed with it.

President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia/2016 U.S. Presidential Election/Russia-U.S. Relations

Q. Did Russia's attempts to meddle in U.S. elections come up in the conversation?

The President. He said he didn't meddle. He said he didn't meddle. I asked him again. You can only ask so many times. But I just asked him again, and he said he absolutely did not meddle in our election. He did not do what they're saying he did. And he said——

Q. Do you believe him?

The President. Well, look, I can't stand there and argue with him. I'd rather have him get out of Syria, to be honest with you. I'd rather have him—you know, work with him on the Ukraine than standing and arguing about whether or not—because that whole thing was set up by the Democrats.

I mean, they ought to look at Podesta. They ought to look at all of the things that they've done with the phony dossier. Those are the big events. Those are the big events.

But Putin said he did not do what they said he did. And you know, there are those that say, if he did do it, he wouldn't have gotten caught, all right? Which is a very interesting statement. But we have a—you know, we have a good feeling toward getting things done.

If we had a relationship with Russia, that would be a good thing. In fact, it would be a great thing, not a bad thing. Because he could really help us in North Korea. We have a big problem with North Korea. And China is helping us. And because of the lack of a relationship that we have with Russia because of this artificial thing that's happening with this Democratic-inspired thing, we could really be helped a lot, tremendously, with Russia having to do with North Korea.

And you know, you're talking about millions and millions of lives. This isn't baby stuff. This is the real deal. And if Russia helped us, in addition to China, that problem would go away a lot faster.

President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia/2016 U.S. Presidential Election/Russia-U.S. Relations

Q. How did you bring up the issue of election meddling? Did you ask him a question?

The President. He just—every time he sees me, he says, "I didn't do that." And I believe—I really believe that when he tells me that, he means it. But he says, "I didn't do that." I think he's very insulted by it, if you want to know the truth.

Don't forget, all he said is, he never did that, he didn't do that. I think he's very insulted by it, which is not a good thing for our country. Because again, if we had a relationship with Russia, North Korea—which is our single biggest problem right now—North Korea, it would be helped a lot. I think I'm doing very well with respect to China. They've cut off financing; they've cut off bank lines; they've cut off lots of oil and lots of other things, lots of trade. And it's having a big impact. But Russia, on the other hand, may be making up the difference. And if they are, that's not a good thing.

So having a relationship with Russia would be a great thing—not a good thing—it would be a great thing, especially as it relates to North Korea.

And I'll say this, Hillary had her stupid reset button that she spelled the word wrong, but she doesn't have what it takes to have that kind of a relationship where you could call or you could do something and they would pull back from North Korea or they'd pull back from Syria or maybe pull back from Ukraine. I mean, if we could solve the Ukraine problem——

But this is really an artificial barrier that's put in front of us for solving problems with Russia, and he says that very strongly. He really seems to be insulted by it, and he says he didn't do it. So——

President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia/2016 U.S. Presidential Election/Russia-U.S. Relations/U.S. Intelligence Agencies

Q. [Inaudible]—do you believe him——

The President. Excuse me?

Q. Even if he—[inaudible]—one-on-one, do you believe him?

The President. I think that he is very, very strong in the fact that he didn't do it. And then you look, and you look at what's going on with Podesta, and you look at what's going on with the server from the DNC and why didn't the FBI take it, why did they leave it; why did a third party look at the server and not the FBI—if you look at all of this stuff, and you say, what's going on here?

And then, you hear it's 17 agencies. Well, it's three. And one is Brennan, and one is whatever. I mean, give me a break. They're political hacks. So you look at it—I mean, you have Brennan, you have Clapper, and you have Comey. Comey is proven now to be a liar, and he's proven to be a leaker.

So you look at that, and you have President Putin very strongly, vehemently says he had nothing to do with that. Now, you're not going to get into an argument. You're going to start talking about Syria and the Ukraine.

The President's Relations With Foreign Leaders

Q. You seem to have a fairly warm relationship with a number of——

The President. I do.

Q. ——totalitarian or authoritarian leaders——

The President. And others.

Q. And others. So Putin, Xi, leader of the Philippines. Do you think you—what do you think—do you think you understand them in a certain way or relate to them in a way that other Presidents haven't?

The President. I don't know. They had a story today in one of the papers about China. China likes me. China likes me. And I get along with them; I get along with others too.

I get along very well with Angela. You people don't write that. I actually get along really well with Angela. You know, they had that handshaking event. I was with her for a long time before that. And somebody shouts out, "shake her hand, shake her hand." And I didn't hear them. So by not shaking her hand, they said—I have a great relationship with her. I have a great relationship with Theresa May. I have a great relationship with Justin Trudeau, who I just left.

I think I—I'll be honest with you, I think I have a great relationship with every single one of them. Every person in that room today—you had what, 15, or so, or 18? Asia-Pacific——

President Xi Jinping of China/China-U.S. Trade Relations

Q. Well, 21 including you.

The President. Everyone in that room, I have a good relationship. They're very different people, but everyone. And I do have a very good relationship with Xi, obviously. It's the biggest state—it's the biggest state entrance and the biggest state dinner they've ever had, by far, in China. He called it a state-plus. Like he said it—he actually said, state-plus-plus, which is very interesting.

But he's—you know, look, again, he's a strong person. He's a very smart person. I like him a lot; he likes me. But you know, we represent two very different countries. But we get along very well. And that's a good thing that we along; that's not a bad thing.

And on trade, you know, it was—most of the news covered it fairly. Some didn't. When I said it's not your fault—because I was saying how China has been hurting us on trade for many decades, for many years—and it really is. It's not his fault. We should have been doing that. But we didn't do it. It's the fault of the administrations that preceded me. And we're not going to do that anymore; we're going to be very tough on trade. And he understands that.

Human Rights in China/The President's Relations With Foreign Leaders/U.S. Foreign Policy/Russia-U.S. Relations/Investigation Into Russia's Interference in 2016 Presidential Election

Q. In the past, American Presidents have felt the obligation to raise issues about human rights abuses. Do you feel like that's an obligation and that's something that you feel is important to do?

The President. Well, I do. But I also raise issues on many other things. I mean, I have an obligation—we lost, last year, with China, depending on the way you do your numbers, because

you can do them a numbers of way—anywhere from \$350 [billion]^{*} to \$504 billion. That's with one country. I'm going to fix that. And I've got to fix what we have with Mexico, who was there today too, who I also have a very good relationship with. And I have a great relationship with France. Some of you were in France with me, with the Eiffel Tower dinner. We have a great relationship with Emmanuel.

So I think that's the thing. I've actually been getting—I always said it, I think—I said, I think one of my strong suits is going to be foreign affairs. And we're actually getting very good marks having to do with foreign affairs. There's nobody that I can think of that I don't have a very good relationship with.

But when we can—I mean, you'll be seeing the release that's put out. But we can save many, many, many lives by making a deal with Russia having to do with Syria and then, ultimately, getting Syria solved and getting Ukraine solved and doing other things, having a good relationship with Russia is a great, great thing.

And this artificial Democratic hit job gets in the way. It gets in the way. And that's a shame, because people will die because of it. And it's a pure hit job. And it's artificially induced. And it's a shame. But anyway.

Republican Senatorial Candidate Roy S. Moore of Alabama/The President's Television Viewing Habits

Q. If we could ask you about Roy Moore. Is it time to pitch him overboard?

The President. Well, again, I've been with you folks, so I haven't gotten to see too much. And believe it or not, even when I'm in Washington and New York, I do not watch much television. I know they like to say—people that don't know me, they like to say I watch television. People with fake sources—you know, fake reporters, fake sources. But I don't get to watch much television, primarily because of documents. I'm reading documents a lot, and different things.

I actually read much more—I read you people much more than I watch television. But anyway—but so I have not seen very much about him, about it. And you know, I put out a statement yesterday that he'll do the right thing, that—he was interviewed.

Republican Senatorial Candidate Roy S. Moore of Alabama

Q. But four women have come forward and accused him of inappropriately touching them, basically making advances when they were underage, including a 14-year-old. I mean, at what point—and you said, "if he did it." But at what point do you decide if he did it? It's right now their word against his.

The President. Honestly, I'd have to look at it and I'd have to see. Because again, I'm dealing with the President of China, the President of Russia, I'm dealing with the folks over here. So I haven't devoted—I haven't been able to devote very much time to it.

And I've been at—I mean, you people are just as strong as me. You're following me all over the place. I mean, we are going to lots of meetings, right? And by the way, anybody that took the bet, pick up your money, okay? And the hard stuff was that. Really hard.

The President's Travel to Asia

^{*} White House correction.

Q. What was the bet again?

The President. Well, a lot of people said it's almost physically impossible for someone to go through 12 days.

What I didn't want to do was come back, because I would have had to come back. And we would have been on this plane again in 5 weeks from now exactly to do 4 days. We were going to do 4 days and 4 days. And this way we did 12, and we hit the big conferences, which is a big asset. So anyway.

Republican Senatorial Candidate Roy S. Moore of Alabama

Q. So you're not yet prepared to say that Roy Moore should——

The President. I will see it when—I mean, I basically put out a statement which was obvious. So I'll stick with statement for now, but I'll have further comment as we go down the road. I have to get back into the country to see what's happening.

President Xi Jinping of China/North Korea

Q. Is there one thing that you were pressing President Xi on that you can say you're going to take away, where he changed his mind or agreed to something that you're looking to do specifically on North Korea?

The President. President Xi made a statement. If you read his statement yesterday—were you all there when he was speaking and made the statement in the big room—the Great Room?

He made a statement that he's committed to stopping the nuclearization of North Korea. That's a big statement. He made that statement, and a lot of people didn't—they didn't pick that up. I don't think it was—because it was part of the speech. And somehow, a lot people—to me, that was a very big statement. I even looked up—because I'm sitting waiting to speak—and I said, wow, that's a big statement. He made that statement in his speech yesterday or the day before, when he made—you know, when we were speaking together. He put a statement out, Sarah, that said he's committed to making that happen. That's a big statement.

You know, he was, through this process—he's the most powerful Chinese leader since Mao Zedong. Some people say more powerful than Mao. With that being said, I really believe he's a good person, he's a good man, he wants to do right, he's representing his people. He's strong, he's very strong. But you know, you look at some of what you saw was very impressive. It was very impressive.

President Xi Jinping of China/North Korea

Q. What's the next thing you'd like to see him do on Korea?

The President. Oh, I'd like to have him ratchet it up, and I think he's doing that. We had a long talk about it.

Q. But ratchet it up with what?

The President. And I was with him for hours. You know, I was with him—like I sat with him. You were there at the beginning of that evening, right? Of the——

Q. No.

The President. Oh, really?

Q. I wasn't pool.

The President. Well, I was sitting with him. We were together for hours. And the day before, we were together for hours. And we get along very well. You know, it's easy to be with him for hours. Whereas, if you don't have chemistry, you people know, you can't be with somebody for 2 minutes. And we talked a lot about North Korea. We talked about a lot of things. We talked a lot about North Korea.

No, I think he's going to ratchet it up. I did not speak to President Putin about it, because we just had these little segments that we were talking about Syria. But President Putin would be tremendously helpful—tremendously helpful—if I had Russia and China helping us with North Korea, I think that would solve it. But this artificial barrier gets in the way. I call it the "artificial Democrat barrier." It gets in the way, which is a shame.

President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia/Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan

Q. So you didn't have time to ask Putin specific things on North Korea?

The President. I wasn't able to—because I really didn't, Jennifer [Jennifer Jacobs, Bloomberg News]. I really just—we did, like, little snippets in between. We didn't have a planned meeting. We spoke, but we didn't have a planned meeting.

Q. Where did you leave it with President Putin? Are you looking for another meeting? Him coming to the U.S.? Or are you——

The President. We'll have a meeting. I think we have the potential to have a very good relationship. I don't know him like I know President Xi because I've spent a lot of time with President Xi, but I think we have the potential to have a very, very good relationship. I have it with Abe. I have it with Abe. Very good.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan

Q. Did you see Abe fall at the sand trap?

The President. I didn't. I say this: If that was him, he is one of the greatest gymnasts, because the way he—[laughter]—it was, like, a perfect—I never saw anything like that.

No, wasn't it amazing? And he was standing up. I told him—I said, I'm not going to ask—because it was shot from a helicopter. I said, I will not ask if that's you, but if it was, I'm very impressed because you're better than any gymnast I've ever seen.

Investigation Into Russia's Interference in the 2016 Presidential Election/President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia

Q. What do you mean by "artificial Democratic barrier"? I mean, you and Putin can't warm up because of this investigation? Or what——

The President. There's an artificial barrier that puts in the way by the Democrats. It's a fake barrier. There was no collusion. Everybody knows there was no collusion. I mean, you speak to these people—I saw Dianne Feinstein the other day, and I respect her. She was on television the other day saying there's no collusion. The Democrats—the Republicans come out screaming it, but the Democrats come out, and they say, "No, there's no collusion." There is no collusion. There's nothing.

And I think it's a shame that something like that can destroy a very important potential relationship between two countries that are very important countries. Russia could really help

us. And the Democrats wanted to have a good relationship with Russia, but they couldn't do it, because they didn't have the talent to do it. They didn't have the chemistry to do it. They didn't have what it takes to do it. You know, there is a talent to that.

But I think Putin and I—President Putin and I would have a great relationship, and that would be great for both countries. And it would take a lot of the danger out, because we're really—you know, this is a dangerous time. This isn't small stuff. This is a very dangerous time. And having a great relationship or even a good relationship with the President of Russia—Hillary tried it, and she failed. Nobody mentions that. They act like, you know—it's so terrible. She did that reset button; it was a joke. But she tried, and she failed.

Obama tried and he failed. Couldn't have it, because he didn't have chemistry. They didn't have the right chemistry. And you know what? I understand that, because there are some people I don't have chemistry with. Let's see, some of you are right here. *[Laughter]* There are some people I don't—you know, sometimes, if you don't have chemistry with somebody, you don't.

But Obama did not have the right chemistry with Putin. And Hillary was way over her head.

Press Secretary Sanders. Let's take one more, and then let them have lunch.

Trade

Q. Were you able to get any commitments—when it comes to the trade balance, some of the issues you talk about like intellectual property theft—did he make any commitments there to make changes?

The President. You know, the intellectual property—you're talking about \$300 billion a year. It's tremendous. We talked about it. But I said, we're friends, but this is a different administration than you've had for the last 30 years. For the last 30 years, China—and in all fairness, and other countries. Look, we have a \$71 billion trade deficit with Mexico. We have a \$70 billion trade deficit with Japan. We have a \$30 billion trade deficit with South Korea. I could go through a whole list. There are few countries we have a surplus with, and those countries it's like a \$2 surplus. It's disgraceful.

And I don't blame any of those countries. I blame the people that we had representing us who didn't know what they were doing. Because they should have never let it happen.

Proposed Merger Between AT&T and Time Warner Inc.

Q. I'd like to ask a question on AT&T and CNN. Do you want AT&T to sell CNN for the——

The President. Well, I didn't make the decision. That was made by a man who's actually a very respected person—a very, very respected person.

I did make a comment in the past as to what I think. I do feel that you should have as many news outlets as you can, especially since so many of them are fake. This way, at least you can get your word out. But I do believe you should have as many news outlets as you can.

Now, with that being said, I didn't make a statement on it, but I made that statement long before at the very early part. So we'll see how that—it will probably end up being maybe litigation, maybe not. We'll see how it all plays out.

Social Media/China/North Korea/Trade

Q. Did you talk to Xi about opening China to Twitter and other social media?

The President. About what?

Q. Opening China to Twitter.

The President. I mentioned it very briefly. Honestly, it wasn't number one on my list. Number one on my list with him was North Korea and trade. Those are the two I really spoke. I mentioned it, you know, briefly, but we'll talk. I'm going to have plenty of time to talk. He'll come here next time.

This all started in Florida, and it's a great feeling to have that kind of a relationship where you can really help your country. Because we can really help our country, and he can really help his country.

But we're going to be very tough on trade. This is not going to be like it was in the past. I did tell him that. This is not going to be the old days. This is a whole different thing going on.

And you know, it's not acceptable what's been happening with trade, generally. China, yes—but generally. And I can think of almost no examples where it's good. It's all bad. We had the worst negotiators, whether it's the Iran deal or any other thing. We had the worst—our trade deals are so bad. Last year, we lost \$800 billion, right? Yes, \$800 [billion],^{*} approximately. Check it. But approximately \$800 billion on trade. Why?

U.S. Trade Representative Robert E. Lighthizer

Q. You put your own guys in there now. So what did you get from him?

The President. I have a great team. Bob Lighthizer. Bob Lighthizer is—he's going to town. And he works with me. He works with me. But Bob is going to town.

So I hope you're all enjoying yourselves. Tonight we're going to Hanoi.

Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Summit Meeting

Q. Any highlights from APEC? Do you have any asks for the other countries?

The President. I think the APEC was just—good, very collegial.

Q. Did anyone ask you for specific things?

The President. No, but I told them we're going to have much tougher trade policies now, because, you know, they have barriers. We don't. I'm not only talking about tariffs. They have non-tariff barriers, and we don't. I said, you got to remove them.

Good to be with you. Good to be with you.

We'll talk to you——

Q. Thank you for coming back.

The President. I'll see you in Hanoi. Are you all going up?

Q. Yes, sir.

Q. We are.

^{*} White House correction.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:35 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to John D. Podesta, former campaign chairman for 2016 Democratic Presidential nominee Hillary Rodham Clinton; Mrs. Clinton, in her former capacity as Secretary of State; John O. Brennan, former Director, Central Intelligence Agency; former Director of National Intelligence James R. Clapper, Jr.; James B. Comey, Jr., former Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation; Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany; Prime Minister Theresa May of the United Kingdom; Prime Minister Justin P.J. Trudeau of Canada; President Emmanuel Macron of France; Sen. Dianne Feinstein; former President Barack Obama; and Randall L. Stephenson, chairman, chief executive officer, and president, AT&T. Reporters referred to President Rodrigo Duterte of the Philippines; and Leigh Corfman, Wendy Miller, Debbie Wesson Gibson, and Gloria Thacker Deason, who accused Alabama senatorial candidate Roy S. Moore of inappropriate advances with them when they were minors. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Categories: Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters :: Air Force One en route to Hanoi, Vietnam.

Locations: Air Force One.

Names: Abe, Shinzo; Brennan, John O.; Clapper, James R., Jr.; Clinton, Hillary Rodham; Comey, James B., Jr.; Feinstein, Dianne; Lighthizer, Robert E.; Macron, Emmanuel; May, Theresa; Merkel, Angela; Moore, Roy S.; Obama, Barack; Podesta, John D.; Putin, Vladimir Vladimirovich; Sanders, Sarah Huckabee; Stephenson, Randall L.; Trudeau, Justin P.J.; Xi Jinping.

Subjects: Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC); ATT&T, proposed merger with Time Warner, Inc.; Canada : Prime Minister; China : North Korea, role; China : President; China : Relations with U.S.; China : Trade with U.S.; Commerce, international : Free and fair trade; Commerce, international : Intellectual property law, strengthening efforts; Communications : News media :: Accuracy and fairness; Communications : News media :: Presidential interviews; Democratic Party : Democratic National Committee; Foreign policy, U.S. : Diplomatic efforts, expansion; France : President; France : Relations with U.S.; German : Chancellor; Iran : Nuclear program, Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action; Japan : President; Japan : Prime Minister; Japan : Relations with South Korea; Justice, Department of : Bureau of Investigation, Federal; North Korea : China, role; North Korea : International and U.S. sanctions; North Korea : International diplomatic efforts; North Korea : Nuclear weapons development; Philippines : Relations with U.S.; Russia : North Korea, role; Russia : President; Russia : Relations with U.S.; Russia : Syria, role; Russia : U.S. elections, interference; Russia : Ukraine, role; South Korea : Relations with Japan; Syria : Civil war and sectarian conflict; Trade Representative, Office of the U.S.; Ukraine : Political unrest and violence; United Kingdom : Prime Minister; White House Office : Assistants to the President :: Press Secretary.

DCPD Number: DCPD201700845.