

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2018

The President's News Conference With Prime Minister Stefan Löfven of Sweden
March 6, 2018

President Trump. Thank you very much. Thank you. I'm honored to be joined by Prime Minister Löfven of Sweden at our first meeting in the White House. Sweden is one of our oldest and closest partners and was among the first European nations to offer the United States an unsolicited treaty of friendship, a treaty signed, believe it or not, in 1783. That's a long time ago.

My daughter Ivanka had a wonderful time watching American and Swedish athletes compete in the recent men's curling final at the Olympics. [*Laughter*]

Prime Minister Löfven. [*Inaudible*]

President Trump. That was something, huh? That was a little upset. But that wasn't expected, but that's okay. We'll take it. Right? All of the athletes should be immensely proud of the great job they did.

The Prime Minister and I have just concluded a series of very productive meetings. The relationship between the United States and Sweden is one based on shared values, including respect for individual rights, the rule of law, and human dignity. These common principles are the foundation of our partnership. And we have had a great partnership for many years.

We look forward to exploring further opportunities to increase our security and our cooperation in every other way. And we encourage nations around the world to share responsibility for our common defense. We appreciate Sweden's leadership on the United Nations Security Council and look very much forward to working together in the coming months.

The United States is also grateful to Sweden for advocating for Americans detained in North Korea. I particularly want to thank the Swedish Government for its assistance in securing the release of American college student Otto Warmbier last year. Terrible, tragic event. We continue to pray for Otto's parents Fred and Cindy—two terrific people—over the tragic death of their son.

And we remain determined to achieve a denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. And there's been a lot of news on that today. Hopefully, it's positive. Hopefully, it will lead to a very positive result.

In economic matters, we are striving for a relationship grounded in fairness and reciprocity. The United States is one of the largest investors in Sweden, and the Swedish investments in the United States support over 200,000 American jobs.

Earlier this afternoon I heard from several Swedish business executives, some of the greatest in the world. Where are you, folks? Please. Some of the great executives in the world, people I've known for a long time and certainly know of. And they're investing tremendous amounts of money in the United States and supporting, also, vocational training for American workers. We are grateful for those investments, and we are committed to working with Sweden to pursue even greater economic cooperation.

We're also continuing to pursue bilateral agreements to advance mutual prosperity. I'm pleased that Sweden intends to procure the Patriot air and missile defense system—finest in the world—in a deal worth over \$3 billion. This system will increase stability and security in the Baltic Sea region.

A strong and balanced economic relationship strengthens security and prosperity in both of our countries. And this is just the beginning. We have a lot of things that we're working on. And we're working on them, really, very hard.

Mr. Prime Minister, I want to thank you again for joining us. And I want to thank your great staff, who we've met with, and your great business leaders. It was a very interesting and productive meeting.

The longstanding friendship between our people, anchored in our shared beliefs and values, has greatly enriched both of our countries. And this is just the beginning. Our relationship has never been better. An honor to have you here. Thank you. Thank you very much.

Prime Minister Löfven. Thank you, Mr. President, for a warm and generous welcome. It is a true pleasure to be here at the White House. This year, Sweden and the United States celebrate 200 years of diplomatic relations, and this meeting reaffirms the strength of our relations.

History has shown that our two nations share fundamental values and interests, such as democracy and human rights. We also share a strong partnership that continues to evolve.

Today we have discussed how to further strengthen our countries' prosperity and security. As for prosperity, Sweden is one of the largest per capita investors in the United States, and my country may not be big, but we support, directly and indirectly, almost 1 million jobs in the United States. And some key executives of the companies that provides these jobs are also here with me at this visit.

At the same time, the United States is our most important foreign employer, and many U.S. companies play a vital role in providing investment and creating jobs in Sweden. President Trump and I have discussed how our nations can support jobs and growth. It's a crucial issue.

For Sweden, that means embracing new sustainable technologies which permit our economy to grow and at the same time reducing emissions and also how we can secure good jobs in a labor market constantly changing due to automation and digitalization.

Sweden and the United States are two of the most innovative economies in the world, and we see great opportunities ahead. Swedish prosperity is built on cooperation, competitiveness, and free trade, and I am convinced that increased tariffs will hurt us all in the long run. And as a Swede, I, of course, support the efforts of the European Union to achieve trade with fewer obstacles and as few as possible.

Turning to security, the President and I have discussed some key regional and global security challenges, such as the situation on the Korean Peninsula, but also the developments in Sweden's neighborhood. We have also addressed the constructive cooperation between Sweden and the United States in the United Nations Security Council.

I would like to underline that the transatlantic link is strong, and it remains crucial to responding to global security challenges. Sweden is a military nonaligned country, but we build security in partnership with others, and we greatly value our broad security and defense cooperation with the United States.

And one important example of that is our joint efforts to fight and combat terrorism. Sweden and the United States stands shoulder to shoulder in the global coalition against ISIS and also in the resolute support mission in Afghanistan. And these vital military efforts must go hand in hand with strong political, diplomatic, and also civilian support to create sustainable results.

So, in conclusion, as we celebrate 200 years of diplomatic relations, we're also planning for shared prosperity and security for many, many years to come. And once again, I thank you, Mr.

President, for a constructive and successful meeting and for the very warm welcome that both my delegation and I received. Thank you so much.

President Trump. Thank you very much. Appreciate it. Thank you very much.

John [John Roberts, Fox News].

Trade/U.S. Tariffs on Steel and Aluminum Imports

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. You spoke about North Korea in the Oval Office, so I'd like to turn to trade if I could. My understanding is that the Prime Minister came to you with a message from the European Union Commission President saying, if you put tariffs on steel and aluminum, we'll slap you back with punitive tariffs on bourbon and jeans and the motorcycles that you talk about from Wisconsin. Are you still planning on going ahead with these tariffs? There are some people in your party who have suggested it's not a good idea.

And, Prime Minister Löfven, what's your perspective on tariffs? And what message did you convey to the President from Sweden and from the European Union? Thank you.

President Trump. Well, the United States has been taken advantage of by other countries, both friendly and not so friendly, for many, many decades. And we have a trade deficit of \$800 billion a year, and that's not going to happen with me. We have been mistreated by many, sometimes fairly, but there are, really, very few instances where that's taken place.

And I don't blame the countries. I blame our leadership for allowing it to happen. When I was with President Xi in China—as an example, we lose \$500 billion a year on trade. We have a deficit of approximately \$500 billion a year with China. And we're doing things with China which are very strong, but they understand it. But I was with him, and I said to him in public, I said: "Look, I'm not blaming you. I blame our people for not doing a better job, for allowing this to happen."

But it's like that with many countries, other than smaller—the European Union has been particularly tough on the United States. They make it almost impossible for us to do business with them, and yet they send their cars and everything else back into the United States. And they can do whatever they'd like, but if they do that, then we put a big tax of 25 percent on their cars. And believe me, they won't be doing it very long. The European Union has not treated us well, and it's been a very, very unfair trade situation.

I'm here to protect—and one of the reasons I was elected is, I'm protecting our workers, I'm protecting our companies. And I'm not going to let that happen. So we're doing tariffs on steel. We cannot lose our steel industry. It's a fraction of what it once was. And we can't lose our aluminum industry, also a fraction of what it once was.

And our country is doing well. The massive tax cuts and all of the deregulation has really kicked us into gear. But I have to work on trade deals. We're working on NAFTA right now. And if we're able to make a deal with Canada and Mexico in NAFTA, then there will be no reason to do the tariffs with Canada and Mexico.

But again, other countries we won't have that choice, and—unless they can do something for us. As an example, if the European Union takes off some of the horrible barriers that make it impossible for our product to go into there, then we can start talking. Otherwise, we're going to leave it the way it is.

So the fact is, we've been mistreated as a country for many years, and it's just not going to happen any longer.

Trade/U.S. Tariffs on Steel and Aluminum Imports

Q. How do you avoid this escalating—how do you avoid this escalating into a trade war?

President Trump. Well, it's—we'll have to see. You know, when we're behind on every single country, trade wars aren't so bad. You understand what I mean by that? When we're down by \$30 billion, \$40 billion, \$60 billion, \$100 billion, the trade war hurts them; it doesn't hurt us. So we'll see what happens.

You know, you can also take it—in some cases, we lose on trade, plus we give them military where we're subsidizing them tremendously. So not only do we lose on trade, we lose on military, so—and hence we have these massive deficit numbers in our country. We're going to straighten it out. And we'll do it in a very loving way. It will be a loving, loving way. They'll like us better, and they will respect us much more. Because even they say—right now they say, "We can't believe we've gotten away." I mean, two countries have said, "We cannot believe, to be honest with you, we've gotten away with this so long." Now, one of them made that statement before I got elected. He said, "I can't believe I made that statement before I got elected." But it's one of those things.

We have to straighten it out. We really have no choice.

China-U.S. Trade/U.S. Tariffs on Steel and Aluminum Imports

Q. And, Mr. Prime Minister, how forceful was your message to the President on what the consequences will be if he goes ahead with tariffs?

Prime Minister Löfven. First, trade is a European Union mandate, so we're a member of the European Union. It's a European mandate to handle the trade issues. But as a member of the European Union, I think it's important for us to try to find a way to cooperate between the European Union and the United States.

I fully understand and respect the President's view that we have to look after his own country—the country that you're leading. I understand that fully. That's my primary task as well. But for me, leading a small country, depending on open trade, we—the best way for us is to do that with others, because our export equals to 50 percent of our GDP. So for us, it is crucially important that we have this open and free trade.

Today, also, I believe that the supply chains are very, very complicated to see. I know that, for example, when we sell our fighter aircraft, which is a very good aircraft, the content is perhaps 50-percent American. So we want this to be resolved in cooperation. And when it comes to steel, yes, we have an overcapacity in the world. That's obvious. But at the same time, it is China that is producing about 50 percent of the steel in the world, so—and European Union perhaps 10 percent and less than that.

So, to summarize, I think it was a pity. Again, it's a European Union mandate. But it was a pity, also, that the T-TIP negotiations ended, because perhaps with negotiations and talks, we can come into a situation where the European Union and the United States can cooperate. I think that would be a very good solution.

President Trump. Just to add maybe a little bit further: If you talk China, I've watched where the reporters have been writing, 2 percent of our steel comes from China. Well, that's not right. They transship all through other countries. And you'll see that a country that doesn't even have a steel mill is sending us 3 percent steel for our country. And many countries are doing it, but it comes from China.

So China doesn't send us 2 percent; they send us a much, much higher level than that. But it's called transshipping. So it doesn't look good when it all comes out of China, so they send it

through other countries, and it comes to us. And it's putting our steel mills out of business. Our aluminum mills are going out of business. And we need steel, and we need aluminum.

And you know there's a theory that if a country doesn't have steel, it doesn't have a country. And it's true. So this is more than just pure economics. This is about defense. This is about the country itself.

But again, remember this: We lose \$800 billion a year in trade. And I think I was elected, at least partially, on this issue. And I've been saying it for 25 years: Our country has been taken advantage of by everybody. By everybody. Almost everybody. And we cannot let that happen any longer, not for our companies and not, most importantly, for our workers. So we're not going to let it happen.

Please.

Prime Minister Löfven. Okay. Tina [Tina MagnergårdBjers, TT News Agency], TT News Agency.

Sweden-U.S. Relations/Immigration

Q. So, Mr. President, thank you for hosting us. You mentioned that Sweden has helped the United States with North Korea. How do you see your collaboration in the future to create a future of a peaceful Korean Peninsula? How do you see Sweden's role there? How do you both view the collaboration?

And as a follow-up to that, as I may, Mr. President, I know that you follow the development in Sweden closely, especially when it comes to immigration politics. Now that you've spent some time with our Prime Minister, how do you view Sweden in general? What is your take? And also, on our immigration politics? Thank you.

President Trump. I think you have a wonderful Prime Minister, I have to say. We've gotten to know each other. Certainly, you have a problem with the immigration. It's caused problems in Sweden. I was one of the first ones to say it. I took a little heat, but that was okay, because I proved to be right. But you do have a problem, and I know the problem will slowly disappear, hopefully, rapidly disappear.

But as far as our relationship with Sweden, it's going to be only stronger, only better, both in a military sense and a trading sense, and economic sense. You know, Sweden is, I think, the largest—the eighth largest investor in the United States. And they like me very much because the market is up almost 40 percent since election day. So I've made a lot of these business geniuses look even better. So they like Trump. But you know, it's been up very substantially.

But I believe Sweden is about the eighth largest investor in the United States, and that's quite an achievement.

North Korea/Sweden-U.S. Relations

Q. What about the collaboration on North Korea?

President Trump. We've been working on North Korea. Sweden has somewhat of a relationship with North Korea. We've been working with North Korea. As I said, Otto was really brought home, unfortunately in very poor condition, but Otto was brought home largely with the help of Sweden. They're terrific, terrific people. People from Sweden, the Swedish people, are fantastic people. I have many friends in New York and Washington from Sweden, and they are fantastic people.

Thank you.

Q. And, Mr. Prime Minister, how do you view Sweden and North Korea and the U.S.?

Prime Minister Löfven. We have to find a dialogue. I know it's not easy, but that's the way it has to be. It's a very dangerous situation, and we need all to be very concerned about the development of nuclear weapons.

But we must look at the Peninsula, the region, the world, and this has to do with world peace or something else. So the key actors is obviously the two countries, South and North Korea, as well as the United States and other big countries. They are the key actors.

We've said that we can provide—we can be a channel or do whatever we can to see that the dialogue is smooth. Not being naïve. It's not up to us to solve this problem, but we can definitely, with our long presence on the Peninsula—both in South and North. We have an Embassy in Pyongyang, for example. We've had that since 1973.

So with that relation with North Korea, I believe that they trust us. We are a nonaligning country, and—a non—military nonaligning country. And I think if we can—if the President decides, the key actors decide if they want us to help out, we'll be there.

President Trump. They really have been terrific. Really terrific.

Saagar Enjeti, Daily Caller. Please, Saagar.

North Korea

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Since it's my first time before you, I thought you might indulge me with two questions. First, sir, do you believe that North Korea's recent willingness to talk is sincere, or is it an effort to buy time for their nuclear program? And to what do you owe this recent openness to talk?

President Trump. Me. No, I think that—[laughter]. Nobody got that. [Laughter] I think that they are sincere, but I think they're sincere also because the sanctions and what we're doing with respect to North Korea, including, you know, the great help that we've been given from China. And they can do more, but I think they've done more than, certainly, they've ever done for our country before. So China has been a big help. I think that's been a factor.

But the sanctions have been very, very strong and very biting. And we don't want that to happen. So I really believe they are sincere. I hope they're sincere. We're going to soon find out.

White House Staff

Q. Also, sir, you tweeted today that you would like to see some change in the people around you. Does that include your Attorney General, Jeff Sessions, or either of your Cabinet secretaries?

President Trump. No, I don't really talk about that. I just said that the White House has tremendous energy. It has tremendous spirit. It is a great place to be working.

Many, many people want every single job. You know, I read where, "Oh, gee, maybe people don't want to work for Trump." And believe me, everybody wants to work in the White House. They all want a piece of that Oval Office; they want a piece of the West Wing. And not only in terms of it looks great on their résumé, it's just a great place to work.

It's got tremendous energy. It's tough. I like conflict. I like having two people with different points of view, and I certainly have that. And then, I make a decision. But I like watching it, I like seeing it, and I think it's the best way to go. I like different points of view.

But the White House has a tremendous energy, and we have tremendous talent. Yes, there will be people—I'm not going to be specific—but there will be people that change. They always

change. Sometimes, they want to go out and do something else. But they all want to be in the White House. So many people want to come in. I have a choice of anybody. I could take any position in the White House, and I'll have a choice of the 10 top people having to do with that position. Everybody wants to be there.

And they love this White House because we have energy like rarely before. Okay? Thank you very much.

Q. Thank you, sir.

President Trump. Please.

Q. Mr. Prime Minister, last year you criticized the President for drawing a link between immigrant crime and the recent arrivals of refugees. This week, one of our own flagship papers, the New York Times, actually profiled a link between hand grenade violence and immigrant gangs in your country. Do you stand by your criticism of the President?

Prime Minister Löfven. First, Sweden, we have our share of domestic challenges, no doubt about that. So—and we inherited a legislation that was not sustainable legislation on migration, which meant that, in 2015, we received 163,000 refugees seeking refuge. Bear in mind, we're a country of 10 million inhabitants. So that was a lot. Seventy percent of them came from September to December, which meant it was a dramatic increase.

We changed the legislation so now we have decreased the number of refugees entering Sweden, and we're also putting pressure on the other European Union countries to take their share of the responsibility. This is not a responsibility for one, two, three, or four countries. It is a shared responsibility. We're working with that now, within the European Union.

So—and we, of course—we also have problems with crime, organized crime, in Sweden—shootings. But it's not like you have these no-go zones. We have dealt with it. I'm dealing with it every day, allocating more resources to the police, more policemen trained, more resources to the security police, tougher law on crime, tougher law on terrorism, supporting terrorism. So we do a lot to combat that.

And we can also see some results now in our three major cities—decreased shootings—because we're attacking the organized crime very tough. And we'll keep on doing that because there is no space in Sweden for organized crime, because they decrease freedom for ordinary people.

At the same time, Sweden has a high growth. Unemployment is going down; employment is going up. We have high investment rates. We're allocating resources to the welfare. We have a strong, strong economy with a surplus—a huge surplus—that we're now using to develop our society with, for example, the welfare that we want.

So the pictures we need to be—it's two pictures. Yes, we have our share of domestic problems and challenges, no doubt about that. But we're dealing with them. And we also have a good foundation for dealing with them, not least with the strong economy and the shrinking unemployment.

Q. Thank you, sir.

Prime Minister Löfven. Okay. So it's Kaisa, Swedish Radio.

Russia's Interference in 2016 Presidential Election/2018 Congressional Elections

Q. Thank you. This is an election year for both of our countries, and I want to ask you, Mr. Trump: What do you think Sweden should learn from how the Russian influence campaign affected the Presidential election in the U.S.?

President Trump. Well, the Russians had no impact on our votes whatsoever. But certainly, there was meddling, and probably, there was meddling from other countries and maybe other individuals. And I think you have to be really watching very closely. You don't want your system of votes to be compromised in any way. And we won't allow that to happen.

We're doing a very, very deep study, and we're coming out with some, I think, very strong suggestions on the '18 election. I think we're going to do very well on the '18 election, although, historically, those in the White House have a little bit of a dip. But I think we're going to do well because the economy is so good and because we're protecting our job, like—our jobs are being protected, finally, like with what we're doing with the tariffs.

But the big thing would be the tax cut and the regulations cuts. Also, the judges. I mean, we have outstanding judges: Judge Gorsuch in the Supreme Court and many, many judges going onto the bench all over the country.

So I think we're going to do very well, and I think it will be a tremendous surprise to people how well. It's—the economy is so good; jobs are so good. Black unemployment, Hispanic unemployment at alltime lows. I mean, we're really doing well.

So based on that, I guess we should do pretty well, and I hope so. But you have to be very vigilant. And one of the things we're learning is, it's always good—it's old-fashioned, but it's always good to have a paper backup system of voting. It's called "paper"—not highly complex computers—paper. And a lot of States are doing that. They're going to a paper backup, and I think that's a great idea.

But we're studying it very closely. Various agencies, including Homeland Security, are studying it very carefully.

U.S. Efforts To Combat Russian Interference in Future Elections

Q. But are you worried about Russia trying to meddle in the midterm election?

President Trump. No, because we'll counteract whatever they do. We'll counteract it very strongly. And we are having strong backup systems. And we've been working, actually—we haven't been given credit for this, but we've actually been working very hard on the '18 election and the '20 election coming up.

Thank you very much.

Q. Mr. Löfven, are you guys on the same page when it comes to evaluating the threat from Russia when it comes to meddling in elections, you think?

Prime Minister Löfven. Well, we both agree upon that the election in a country should—the result of the election in a country should be decided by nobody else but the voters in that country. And that is also our clear stance.

And that is why our intelligence agencies now also increase in their own capacity to detect and counter, whether it's hacker attacks or financing or producing or spreading propaganda, whatever it is. We are increasing our capacity to handle that. We are cooperating with other European Union countries. Some of our agencies are also cooperating with American counterparts. And this we will continue to do.

So any foreign power that believes that they can interfere with our election, we will find out, and we will call them out very clearly, loud.

Sweden-U.S. Relations

Q. And since this is the first time that you two meet, just the two of you, where did you find most common ground and where do you differ most on political issues?

Prime Minister Löfven. [Laughter] We—first, we—

President Trump. Maybe almost everything?

Prime Minister Löfven. [Laughter] Yes. We—no, first, we see—I mean, we both come from outside politics, into politics. I've spent perhaps 30 years in industry as a welder, but also as a trade unionist, but—trade union leader—spending 75, 80 percent of my time cooperating with the company leaders, with the employers' organization in an effort to strengthen our industry. So that's, perhaps, a similar background. Not similar—because it's different—but we come from outside politics.

But of course, also, friends differ from time to time. The Paris Agreement, the importance of the Paris Agreement, we stand by that. We think it's very important that we implement and fulfill the Paris Agreement because of the climate issue. And on that, we might differ. Tariffs as well.

But having said that, still we know that the relationship is a good—yes, so we can take—that we differ as well, because the values are there, and we cooperate very, very good on economic issues, making sure that we create jobs and growth, and also on security issues, both when it comes to combating terrorism, but also when it comes to defend ourselves.

Sweden-U.S. Trade

Q. Just finally, a follow-up for Mr. Trump, do you think that trade is where Sweden and the U.S. differ most right now?

President Trump. Oh, I think we have very good relationships on trade. We have had, and we are constantly in touch. We have, on the military, great cooperation, including design of various components of aircraft, et cetera. And we are—we were discussing that. We have some of the great makers of these components in the room with us today.

No, we have a very good relationship on trade, and we always will have. Sweden is a great country. It's small, but it's very sharp, I will tell you. They are very sharp.

Thank you very much, everybody. I appreciate it. Thank you.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 3:38 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to Assistant to the President Ivanka M. Trump. A reporter referred to President Jean-Claude Juncker of the European Commission.

Categories: Interviews With the News Media : Joint news conferences :: Sweden, Prime Minister Löfven.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Gorsuch, Neil M.; Löfven, Stefan; Trump, Ivanka M.; Warmbier, Cindy; Warmbier, Fred; Xi Jinping.

Subjects: China : North Korea, role; China : President; China : Trade with U.S.; Commerce, international : Aluminum and steel imports, U.S. tariffs; Commerce, international : Free and fair trade; Commerce, international : North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA); Communications : News media :: Presidential interviews ; Economy, national : Improvement; Elections : 2016 Presidential and congressional elections; Elections : 2018 congressional elections; Employment and unemployment : Unemployment rate; Europe : European Union :: Trade with U.S.; Government organization and employees : Federal regulations, review; Judiciary : Supreme Court :: Associate Justice; North Korea : Human rights issues; North Korea :

International and U.S. sanctions; North Korea : International diplomatic efforts; Russia : 2016 U.S. elections, interference; South Korea : 2018 Olympic Games in Pyeongchang; Sports : Olympic Games; Sweden : Investment and business ventures in U.S.; Sweden : Prime Minister; Sweden : Relations with U.S.; Sweden : Trade with U.S.; Taxation : Tax relief; United Nations : Security Council; White House Office : Assistants to the President :: Assistant to the President.

DCPD Number: DCPD201800141.