

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2019

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Chancellor Sebastian Kurz of Austria and an Exchange With Reporters

February 20, 2019

President Trump. Hello, everyone. Thank you very much. And it's great to be with the Chancellor of Austria. We have a tremendous relationship, long term, with Austria. And we're going to be discussing numerous things—immigration—today. But we're also discussing trade. We have a very big trade presence and a very good relationship on trade. We do a lot of business with each other.

And, Chancellor, it's very nice to have you. Thank you very much. Thank you. Please.

Chancellor Kurz. Thank you, Mr. President, for receiving us here in the U.S. and the White House. It's a pleasure for my delegation and for me to be here.

Austria, as you probably know, is—compared to the U.S.—a very small country, but we are a beautiful country.

President Trump. That's true.

Chancellor Kurz. We are a, economically, quite strong country. You would probably say a "great country." We are in the heart of the European Union, an active member state of the European Union. It's a small country. We need international cooperation, and therefore, I hope that we can discuss now our bilateral relations, but also the relations between the European Union and the United States of America. Of course, trade and how we can gain economic growth for the U.S., but also for Europe. And probably, international issues like Middle East, Korea—

President Trump. Right.

Chancellor Kurz. —and probably also Russia. Thank you for receiving us.

President Trump. Thank you very much. I appreciate it. Thank you.

European Union-U.S. Trade

Q. Mr. President, are you going to impose auto tariffs on the Europeans?

President Trump. Well, it's something we certainly think about. We're trying to make a deal. They're very tough to make a deal with, the EU. They've been very difficult over a period of time, over many, many years. And so it's something we think about, and we're negotiating with them. If we don't make the deal, we'll do the tariffs.

Q. The new report hasn't changed your mind about it at all? There's a new report from the Commerce Department.

President Trump. The new report is not that kind of a report. It's just really a study that's underway. We've studied it very carefully. We've seen the results. But the bottom-line result is whether or not we can make a deal with the EU that's fair. We lose about \$151 billion trading with the EU. That's a lot of money. And this has been going on for many years. They wouldn't meet with the Obama administration, and they're meeting with us. So we'll see what happens. We'll see what happens.

Chancellor Kurz. I——

Investigation Into Russia's Interference in 2016 Presidential Election

Q. Mr. President, should the Mueller report be released while you're abroad next week?

President Trump. That'll be totally up to the new Attorney General. He's a tremendous man, a tremendous person, who really respects this country and respects the Justice Department. So that'll be totally up to him, the new Attorney—the new Attorney General, yes.

Q. Mr. President, what do you expect from Austria?

Q. Should it be public? Should the report become public, do you think?

President Trump. No. I guess, from what I understand, that will be totally up to the Attorney General. Okay?

Q. Mr. President, what do you expect from Austria?

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Rights

Q. Mr. President, on your push to decriminalize homosexuality, are you doing that? And why?

President Trump. Say it?

Q. Your push to decriminalize homosexuality around the world.

President Trump. I don't know which report you're talking about. We have many reports. Anybody else?

Austria-U.S. Relations

Q. Mr. President, what do you expect from Austria? What do you expect from the Austrian Chancellor to do in European policy?

President Trump. Well, we're just going to have a great meeting. We have a great relationship, and our countries have a great relationship.

And he's a very young leader, I have to tell you. You are a young guy. That's pretty good.

Chancellor Kurz. But the problem with the age is getting better from day to day, so—
[laughter].

President Trump. That's right. Someday, you won't be saying it. [Laughter]

But we have a very good relationship and we have a great trade relationship, and that's pretty much what we're going to be talking about today.

Q. What can you learn from—Mr. President?

Director of National Intelligence Daniel R. Coats

Q. Are you considering replacing Dan Coats as your Director of National Intelligence?

President Trump. I haven't even thought about it.

Japan/North Korea

Q. Mr. President, you spoke to the Prime Minister of Japan today.

President Trump. I did.

Q. How hard is it going to be to get North Korea to completely, verifiably denuclearize, which I think you——

President Trump. Well, I spoke with——this morning, with Prime Minister Abe. I had a long conversation with him. We talked about the trip next week to Vietnam, which will be, I think, very successful. I think the first trip to Singapore was extremely successful.

We'll be meeting with Chairman Kim for 2 days, and I think we'll accomplish a lot. We started off with a very good meeting, and I think we'll continue that along. I don't think this will be the last meeting by any chance, but I do think that the relationship is very strong.

When we started, as you know, there were a lot of problems. There was the missiles going all over. There were hostages that were being held. There were remains that we wanted to get back. There were many, many things. Now there's no nuclear testing, no missiles going up. And we have a good relationship, a very good relationship, I'd say.

So I spoke with Prime Minister Abe of Japan about that, and we compared notes. And I think we are very much on the same wave length.

Q. But it's a——

President Trump. It was a good meeting, a good conversation.

North Korea

Q. They seem very reluctant—the North Koreans—to denuclearize. Do you think you'll be able to make any——

President Trump. No, I don't think they're reluctant. I think they want to do something. But I—you know, you've been talking about this for 80 years. They've been talking about this for many, many years, and no administration has done anything. They've gotten taken to the cleaners. And I think we have a really meaningful relationship. We'll see what happens.

The sanctions are on in full. As you know, I haven't taken sanctions off. I'd love to be able to, but in order to do that, we have to do something that's meaningful on the other side.

But Chairman Kim and I have a very good relationship. I wouldn't be surprised to see something work out. I really believe that, as an economic power, because of its location in between. I mean, you look on a map, and you see Russia, China, and right in the middle of everything is South Korea, but North Korea right smack in the middle. So you have Russia, China, and then South Korea. And this is right in the middle. Tremendous potential for economic well-being, long term. And I think he understands that very well. I think he might understand that better than anybody.

So they have a great, great potential as a country, and I think that's what they're looking to do. We'll see. But we've made a lot of progress. We've made a tremendous amount. That doesn't mean this is going to be the last meeting, because I don't believe it will. But we have subjects to discuss which will be very fruitful, I believe.

Q. Mr. President——

Former Federal Bureau of Investigation Deputy Director Andrew G. McCabe

Q. Do you have a comment on Andrew McCabe briefing McConnell and Paul Ryan and Devin Nunes, telling them about the investigation into you?

President Trump. Well, I think Andrew McCabe has made a fool out of himself over the last couple of days, and he really looks to me like sort of a poor man's J. Edgar Hoover. He's a—I think he's a disaster. And what he was trying to do was terrible, and he was caught. I'm very proud to say we caught him.

So we'll see what happens. But he is a disgraced man. He was terminated, not by me; he was terminated by others. The IG report was a disaster—a disaster—from his standpoint. Anybody reading the IG report would say, "How could a man like this be involved with the FBI?" And the FBI has some of the greatest people—some of the finest people you'll ever meet—but this man is a complete disaster.

Thank you all very much.

Q. But he says you told him——

President Trump. Thank you. Thank you very much.

Japan

Q. Are you going to Japan, Mr. President? Are you going to Japan in May?

President Trump. I will be at a certain time.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:52 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to; Attorney General William P. Barr; and Kim Hak-song, Tony Kim, and Kim Dong-chul, U.S. citizens formerly detained by North Korean officials who returned to the U.S. on May 10, 2018. Reporters referred to Department of Justice Special Counsel Robert S. Mueller III; Senate Majority Leader A. Mitchell McConnell; former Speaker of the House of Representatives Paul D. Ryan; and Rep. Devin G. Nunes, in his former capacity as chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence.

Categories: Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters :: White House; Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials : Austria, Chancellor Kurz.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Abe, Shinzo; Barr, William P.; Kim Dong-chul; Kim Hak-song; Kim Jong Un; Kim, Tony; Kurz, Sebastian; McCabe, Andrew G.; Obama, Barack.

Subjects: Austria : Chancellor; Austria : Relations with U.S.; Austria : Trade with U.S.; Europe : European Union :: Trade with U.S.; Japan : Prime Minister; Justice, Department of : Attorney General; Justice, Department of : Bureau of Investigation, Federal; North Korea : Chairman, State Affairs Commission; North Korea : Economic growth and development; North Korea : International diplomatic efforts; North Korea : Nuclear weapons development; Russia : 2016 U.S. elections, interference.

DCPD Number: DCPD201900093.