

The President's News Conference in Hanoi, Vietnam

February 28, 2019

The President. Well, thank you very much. I want to begin by thanking the Prime Minister and President of Vietnam. We're in Hanoi. It's an incredible city. And what's happened over the last 25 years has been incredible for the people of Vietnam. The job they've done—economic development—really something special. So I want to thank all of the people of Vietnam for having treated us so well.

We have, I think, reasonably attractive news from Pakistan and India. They've been going at it, and we've been involved in trying to have them stop. And we have some reasonably decent news. I think, hopefully, that's going to be coming to an end. It's been going on for a long time, decades and decades. There's a lot of dislike, unfortunately. So we've been in the middle, trying to help them both out, see if we can get some organization and some peace. And I think, probably, that's going to be happening.

We have—Venezuela, as you know, has been very much in the news, and we're sending supplies. Supplies are getting through a little bit more. It's not easy. It's hard to believe somebody would say, "Let's not do it." What difference would that make, except it's great for its people to let it get through. But we're sending a lot of supplies down to Venezuela. People are starving to death, and you would really think that the man in charge, currently, would let those supplies get through. We are getting them into some of the cities and some of the areas that need them the most. And it's not an easy job. It's very difficult, actually.

On North Korea, we just left Chairman Kim. We had a really, I think, a very productive time. We thought, and I thought, and Secretary Pompeo felt that it wasn't a good thing to be signing anything. I'm going to let Mike speak about it.

But we literally just left. We spent pretty much all day with Kim Jong Un, who is—he's quite a guy and quite a character. And I think our relationship is very strong. But at this time—we had some options, and at this time, we decided not to do any of the options. And we'll see where that goes.

But it was a very interesting 2 days. And I think, actually, it was a very productive 2 days. But sometimes, you have to walk, and this was just one of those times. And I'll let Mike speak to that for a couple of minutes, please.

Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo. Thank you, Mr. President. We had been working, our teams—the team that I brought to bear, as well as the North Koreans—for weeks to try and develop a path forward so at the summit we could make a big step, a big step along the way towards what the two leaders had agreed to back in Singapore, in June of last year.

We made real progress. And indeed, we made even more progress when the two leaders met over the last 24, 36 hours. Unfortunately, we didn't get all the way. We didn't get to something that ultimately made sense for the United States of America. I think Chairman Kim was hopeful that we would. We asked him to do more. He was unprepared to do that. But I'm still optimistic. I'm hopeful that the teams will get back together in the days and weeks ahead and continue to work out what's a very complex problem.

We have said, since the beginning, that this would take time. Our teams have gotten to know each other better. We know what the limits are. We know where some of the challenges are. And I think as we continue to work on this in the days and weeks ahead, we can make progress so that we can ultimately achieve what it is that the world wants, which is to denuclearize North Korea, to reduce risk for the American people and the people all around the world.

I wish we could have gotten a little bit further, but I'm very optimistic that the progress that we made—both in the runup to this summit, as well as the progress that the two leaders made over these past 2 days—put us in position to get a really good outcome.

And the President and Chairman Kim both felt good that they had made that progress, but couldn't quite get along the line any further to make a deal that would have been bigger at this point. I hope we'll do so in the weeks ahead.

Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you.

Q. Mr. President—

The President. All right, Major [Major Garrett, CBS News], please.

Economic Sanctions Against North Korea/North Korea's Nuclear Weapons Program

Q. Mr. President, has this process been more difficult—sorry, Mr. President. Has this process been more difficult than you thought? And was the North Korean demand for lifting of some sanctions the real sticking point here—

The President. Yes.

Q. —in that you did not want to do that, and they did? And will there be—

The President. It is about the sanctions. They—

Q. Will there be a third summit, Mr. President?

The President. Basically, they wanted the sanctions lifted in their entirety, and we couldn't do that. They were willing to denuke a large portion of the areas that we wanted, but we couldn't give up all of the sanctions for that.

So we continue to work, and we'll see. But we had to walk away from that particular suggestion. We had to walk away from that.

Q. Will all the sanctions that are currently in existence remain, sir?

The President. They're in place. You know, I was watching as a lot of you folks over the weeks have said, "Oh, we've given up"—we haven't given up anything. And frankly, I think we'll end up being very good friends with Chairman Kim and with North Korea, and I think they have tremendous potential. I've been telling everybody: They have tremendous potential. Unbelievable potential. But we're going to see.

But it was about sanctions. I mean, they wanted sanctions lifted, but they weren't willing to do an area that we wanted. They were willing to give us areas, but not the ones we wanted.

John [John Roberts, Fox News].

North Korea's Nuclear Weapons Program

Q. As we know, I mean, there's an incredibly complex set of issues that are at play here in terms of lifting the sanctions and what denuclearization is.

The President. Right.

Q. Did you get any distance toward, sort of, what Kim's vision of denuclearization is?

The President. Yes, we did. We did.

Q. Because there is a lot—a line of thinking that he wants to keep some nukes.

The President. Yes.

Q. I mean, would you allow him to do that? And if you can't——

The President. Well, I don't—John, I don't want to comment——

Q. If you can't get——

The President. Excuse me, I don't want to comment on that exactly, but he has a certain vision, and it's not exactly our vision, but it's a lot closer than it was a year ago. And I think, you know, eventually we'll get there. But for this particular visit, we decided that we had to walk, and we'll see what happens. Okay?

Q. Mr. President——

The President. Oh, look, we have a gentleman nobody has ever heard of that was—Sean Hannity [Sean Hannity, Fox News]. What are you doing here, Sean Hannity? Should we let him do a question? I don't know.

Yes, John, go ahead.

Sanctions Against North Korea/North Korea's Nuclear Weapons Program

Q. If I could just follow up.

The President. Yes.

Q. So if he wants the sanctions completely off, and you want more on denuclearization, how can you bridge that gap between now and the next time you might sit down with him?

The President. With time. It will be bridged, I think, at a certain point. But there is a gap. We have to have sanctions. And he wants to denuke, but he wants to just do areas that are less important than the areas that we want. We know that—we know the country very well, believe it or not. We know every inch of that country. And we have to get what we have to get, because that's a big give.

Yes, Sean. Please.

North Korea-U.S. Relations

Q. I work in radio and TV. The mike is on. Mr. President, thank you. Mr. Secretary, good to see you. Mr. President, if you could elaborate a little bit more. We have some history. President Reagan walked away in Reykjavik. A lot of condemnation at the time. And it ended up working out very well in the end for the United States.

Was this mostly your decision? Or—and what message would you want to send Chairman Kim, as he's listening to this press conference, about the future and your relationship?

The President. Well, Sean, I don't want to say it was my decision, because what purpose is that? I want to keep the relationship, and we will keep the relationship. We'll see what happens over the next period of time.

But, as you know, we got our hostages back. There's no more testing. And one of the things, importantly, that Chairman Kim promised me last night is, regardless, he's not going to do testing of rockets and nuclear. Not going to do testing. So you know, I trust him, and I take him at his word. I hope that's true.

But, in the meantime, we'll be talking. Mike will be speaking with his people. He's also developed a very good relationship with the people—really, the people representing North Korea. I haven't spoken to Prime Minister Abe yet. I haven't spoken to President Moon of South Korea. But we will, and we'll tell them it's a process and it's moving along. But we just felt it wasn't appropriate to sign an agreement today. We could have. I just felt it wasn't very appropriate.

Yes, Jonathan [Jonathan Karl, ABC News].

Q. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you.

*Former Attorney to the President Michael D. Cohen's Congressional
Testimony/Investigation Into Russia's Interference in 2016 Presidential Election*

Q. Two questions, if I may. First, did you learn anything new about Chairman Kim through this meeting?

And secondly, of course, while this was going on, the drama back in Washington, your former lawyer, Michael Cohen—who worked for you for 10 years; his office right next to yours, right by yours at Trump Tower—he called you a liar, a conman, a racist. What's your response to Michael Cohen?

The President. Well, it's incorrect. And you know, it's very interesting, because I tried to watch as much as I could. I wasn't able to watch too much because I've been a little bit busy. But I think having a fake hearing like that and having it in the middle of this very important summit is really a terrible thing. They could've made it 2 days later or next week, and it would've been even better. They would've had more time.

But having it during this very important summit is sort of incredible. And he lied a lot, but it was very interesting, because he didn't lie about one thing. He said no collusion with the Russian hoax. And I said, "I wonder why he didn't just lie about that, too, like he did about everything else?"

I mean, he lied about so many different things, and I was actually impressed that he didn't say, "Well, I think there was collusion for this reason or that." He didn't say that. He said, "No collusion." And I was, you know, a little impressed by that, frankly. Could've—he could've gone all out. He only went about 95 percent instead of 100 percent.

But the fact is, there is no collusion. And I call it the "witch hunt." This should never happen to another President. This is so bad for our country. So bad. You look at this whole hoax, it's a—I call it the Russian witch hunt and now add the word "hoax." It's a very, very bad thing for our country. But I was impressed with the fact that he—when—you know, because the most important question up there was the one on collusion. And he said he saw no collusion.

So we'll see what happens. But it was pretty shameful, I think.

Yes, ma'am. Please. Please.

Q. President Trump——

Q. President Trump——

The President. Go ahead. How about one of you, instead of three?

Q. Well, actually, I do have the microphone. I guess, so—well——

The President. Excuse me. Excuse me. Person in the front. Go ahead.

Q. Thank you, President Trump, for——

The President. No, no. No, not you. Excuse me. Yes, we'll get to you. Thank you.

North Korea-U.S. Relations

Q. Thank you, President Trump. Jane Tung from——[inaudible]——News and Guangdong Television. What was the atmosphere like when you walked away from the negotiation table? And——

The President. I think it was very good, very friendly. This wasn't a walk away, like you get up and walk out. No, this was very friendly. We shook hands. We—you know, there's a warmth that we have, and I hope that stays. I think it will.

But we are—you know, we're positioned to do something very special. This has been going on for many decades. This isn't me. You know, this was—this should've been solved during many Presidential runs. And you know, people talked about it; they never did anything. I get a kick out of so many people from past administrations telling me how to negotiate when they were there, in some cases, for 8 years; they did nothing.

But I think the relationship was very warm, and when we walked away it was a very friendly walk. Mike, you might want to speak to that for a second.

Secretary Pompeo. No, I agree. I talked with my counterparts as well. Look, we had hoped we could do more, but everyone is very focused on how we continue to build on this. We are certainly closer today than we were 36 hours ago. And we were closer then than we were a month or two before that. So real progress was made.

I think everyone had hoped we were—we could do it just a little bit better. But the departure was with an agreement that we would continue to work on what has been an incredibly difficult problem. Both sides are resolved to achieve it, and everyone walked away in that spirit.

North Korea-U.S. Relations

Q. And may I add: You and Chairman Kim are from very different political systems. You are from different generations. And what do you find——

The President. It's a very different system. I would say that's true.

Q. How do you find, you guys, in common? Because we saw the atmosphere——

The President. We just like each other. I mean, we have a good relationship. Yes. It's a totally different system, to put it mildly. But we like each other. A good relationship.

Go ahead. In the back. Go ahead.

North Korea's Nuclear Weapons Program

Q. Mr. President, do you think it was premature to have held the summit when all these things had not been tied down? I mean, in the White House schedule last night, it said signing agreement today. And I wonder whether—as a follow-up question, whether you could sketch out what the next few months look like. Thank you.

The President. You always have to be prepared to walk. I could've signed an agreement today, and then you people would've said: "Oh, what a terrible deal. What a terrible thing he did." No, you have to be prepared to walk. And you know, we were—there was a potential we could've signed something today. I could've a hundred percent signed something today. We actually had papers ready to be signed, but it just wasn't appropriate. I want to do it right. I'd much rather do it right than do it fast.

Yes, please. Go ahead. Go ahead. Go. First—go. Yes.

Q. [Inaudible]

The President. You have to speak up.

North Korea's Nuclear Weapons Program/North Korea's Economic Potential

Q. I'm a reporter from South Korea, and I appreciate your effort to advance denuclearization in Korean Peninsula. And could you elaborate on the options and the various ways that you discussed with Chairman Kim to advance denuclearization? Could you specify?

The President. We discussed many ways. And the denuclearization is a very important—it's a very important word. Become a very well used word. And a lot of people don't know what it means, but to me it's pretty obvious: We have to get rid of the nukes.

I think he's got a chance to have one of the most successful countries—rapidly, too—on Earth. Incredible country, incredible location. You're right between—if you think of it, you have, on one side, Russia and China, and on the other, you have South Korea, and you're surrounded by water and among the most beautiful shorelines in the world.

There is tremendous potential in North Korea, and I think he's going to lead it to a very important thing, economically. I think it's going to be an absolute economic power.

Yes. Go ahead. Please. Go ahead. Yes.

Q. Mr. President, David Sanger from the New York Times.

The President. I know, David.

North Korea's Nuclear Weapons Program

Q. Six months ago, when you spoke—or 8 months ago, in Singapore, you said, if you didn't have something in 6 months, we should come back and ask you about it. In that time, you have seen Chairman Kim increase the number of missiles he's produced and continue to produce more nuclear material. And that's been a pressure point on you, because he's showing you the arsenals getting larger while this is going on.

The President. Well, some people, David, are saying that, and some people are denying that. They have shots from above—way above—and some people are saying that, and some people aren't.

But I could've taken that out today, but I think you and others would've said we didn't get enough for what we'd be giving up. So—and you know, don't forget, we're partners with a lot of countries on this, if you think about it, with the sanctions. We have a whole big partnership with the United Nations and many countries, including Russia, China, and others. And then, of course, South Korea is very important to this whole thing, and Japan.

I don't want to do something that is going to violate the trust that we've built up. We have a very strong partnership.

North Korea's Nuclear Weapons Program/Sanctions Against North Korea

Q. So can you just give us a little more detail? Did you get into the question of actually dismantling the Yongbyon complex?

The President. I did. Yes. Absolutely.

Q. And does he seem willing, ultimately——

The President. Totally.

Q. ——to take all of that out?

The President. Sure. Totally.

Q. He does? He just wants all the sanctions off first?

The President. He would do that, but he wants the sanctions for that. And as you know, there's plenty left after that. And I just I felt it wasn't good. Mike and I spent a long time negotiating and talking about it to ourselves. And just—I felt that that particular, as you know, that facility, while very big, it wasn't enough to do what we were doing.

North Korea's Nuclear Weapons Program/Sanctions Against North Korea

Q. So he was willing to Yongbyon, but you wanted more than that? I assume, including——

The President. We had to have more than that, yes. We had to have more than that because there are other things that you haven't talked about, that you haven't written about, that we found. And we have to have—that was done a long time ago, but the people didn't know about.

Q. Including the uranium——

The President. And we brought—yes.

Q. Including the second uranium enrichment plant?

The President. Exactly. And we brought many, many points up that I think they were surprised that we knew. But we had to do more than just the one level. Because if we did the one level, and we gave up all of that leverage that's been taking a long time to build. And I want to tell you, by the way——

Q. So he was not willing to take out that second——

The President. David, I want to take off the sanctions so badly, because I want that country to grow. That country has got such potential, but they have to give up, or we could've done that deal.

Mike, do you want to speak to that?

Secretary Pompeo. Yes. Only, David, there are also timing and sequencing issues that were associated with that as well, which we didn't quite get across the finish line as well. But remember, too, even that facility, even the Yongbyon facility and all of its scope—which is important, for sure—still leaves missiles, still leaves warheads and weapons systems. So there's a lot of other elements that we just couldn't get to.

Q. And the listing of all of them.

Secretary Pompeo. Yes, sir. And a declaration. So all of those things, we couldn't quite get there today.

The President. That's right. Go ahead.

Q. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you.

North Korea's Nuclear Weapons Program/China-U.S. Trade

Q. I just wanted to clarify, when you talk about what you would willing to give up all of the sanctions for, are you still thinking that you want North Korea to give up everything to do complete, verifiable denuclearization——

The President. Well, I don't want to say that to you——

Q. ——before you lift sanctions?

The President. Yes. Yes. It's a good question. I don't want to say that to you, because I don't want to put myself in that position, from the standpoint of negotiation. But you know, we want a lot to be given up. And we're giving up.

And we'll have to—you know, we'll be helping them along economically, us and other—many other countries are going to be helping. They're going to be in there. They're prepared to help. I can tell you: Japan, South Korea, I think China. So many.

And speaking of China, we're very well on our way to doing something special, but we'll see. I mean, I am always prepared to walk. I'm never afraid to walk from a deal. And I would do that with China, too, if it didn't work out.

North Korea's Nuclear Weapons Program/Ballistic Missile Tests

Q. Are you concerned, if you're not able to reach an agreement, that the testing will start again? Or that while all of this time is passing by——

The President. Well, he said the testing—yes.

Q. ——they are continuing to develop their program?

The President. He said the testing will not start. He said that he's not going to do testing of rockets or missiles or anything having to do with nuclear. And all I can tell you is that's what he said. And we'll see.

Yes, go ahead. Please. Go ahead, please. In the back. Red. In the red.

Q. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Yes, thank you.

China/North Korea/Russia

Q. Jessica Stone from CGTN. I have a question about China, as you were talking about. You talk about China being willing, potentially, to help economically. And the fact that you've talked—or will talk to Presidents Moon and Prime Minister Abe, how would you describe China's role in facilitating the engagement that's happened, so far, between Pyongyang and Washington?

The President. I think China has been a big help, bigger than most people know. On the border, as you know, 93 percent of the goods coming into North Korea come through China. So there's a great power there. At the same time, I believe—I happen to believe that North Korea is calling its own shots. They're not taking orders from anybody. He's a very strong guy. And they're able to do things that are pretty amazing. But 93 percent still come in from China. China has an influence, and China has been a big help.

And Russia has been a big help too. As you know, there's a pretty small part of the border, but nevertheless significant, about 28 miles. And things can happen there too. And they've been a help.

Yes, go ahead, please.

China-U.S. Trade/U.S. Economy

Q. Thanks, President. Jen Chen with Shenzhen Media Group of China. In your meeting with Chairman Kim this morning and yesterday, did the topic of China come up? If so, what can you share with us today? And you probably will have the end of Mar-a-Lago summit in March with Chinese President Xi Jinping. What would you like accomplished with your agenda regarding China at that time? Thank you.

The President. We did talk about China today a lot. And he's getting along with China, and so are we. And we are—you know, we're—right now, you look at what's happened to our country; we've picked up trillions and trillions of dollars of net worth. Our stock market is almost at its alltime high. Our economy is incredible. Our unemployment numbers are among the best we've ever had in our history.

Individual groups like African American, women—you just take a look at any group; Hispanic, you saw that just came out—the best in history; African American, best in history. So many different numbers are coming out so good. So we have the strongest economy, probably, possibly that we've ever had.

Fiat Chrysler just announced that they're going to spend \$4.5 billion right next to Detroit, in Michigan. They're building a tremendous plant. It's actually an expansion of another plant. It's going to be—it's going to double up their jobs and even more than that. A lot of great things are happening.

And with China, they're having some difficulty, as you know. But I think that a lot of the difficulty is because of the tariffs that they're having. And in addition to that, we're putting a tremendous amount of money; you saw trade deficits went down last month. Everyone was trying to find out why. Well, we're taking in a lot of tariff money, and it's going right to the bottom line, and it has reduced the trade deficits.

So we'll see what happens with China. I think we have a very good chance. Their numbers are down. But I don't want that. I want their numbers—I want them to do great. But we've been losing anywhere from three hundred to five hundred billion dollars a year with China for many, many years.

And again, like other things, many Presidents should have done this before me, and nobody did. So we're doing it.

Go ahead. Go ahead, please.

Q. Me?

The President. Right here. This gentleman.

South Korea

Q. Chad O'Carroll from NK News, specialist in North Korea news.

The President. Good.

Q. What's your message for President Moon, who has effectively reached the glass ceiling, as far inter-Korean cooperation is concerned, due to sanctions? And what's next for U.S.-R.O.K. military drills?

The President. Well, I like President Moon very much. We have a great relationship. Believe it or not, I have a great relationship with almost every leader. A lot of people find that hard to understand, but I do. But some take advantage of our country like you wouldn't believe. And when they know I know it—which I know in every case—maybe it sort of freezes them up a little bit. But we do; we have a lot of good relationships.

We'll be calling President Moon very soon, as soon as I get by the phone, on the plane. And he'll be one of the first calls. I'll be calling Prime Minister Abe of Japan, telling him about where we are and what we're doing. But I'll be making those calls.

No, he's working very hard. President Moon is working very hard. He'd love to see a deal, and he's been very helpful.

Okay? Thank you. Go ahead, please.

China

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. I'm—[inaudible]—reporter from Global Times China. I would like to ask you, what are you expecting China to do in the next step to mediate the—your relationship with North Korea? Thank you.

The President. To use China?

Q. Yes, from China.

The President. Well, we do. I mean, China has been very helpful. President Xi is a great leader. He's a highly respected leader all over the world and especially in Asia. And he's helped us—Mike, I would say he's helped us a lot, right?

Secretary Pompeo. He has. Absolutely.

The President. We've—I actually called him just recently to say, "Hey, you know, whatever you can do on this." But he has been very helpful at the border, and he's been very, very helpful with, I think, North Korea generally. Could he be a little more helpful? Probably. But he's been excellent.

Go ahead, please. No—yes, please.

Q. Sorry. [Laughter] Maybe Hallie [Hallie Jackson, NBC News] next.

The President. That's okay. You're friends.

North Korea-U.S. Relations

Q. Thanks, Mr. President. Could you—did you commit with Chairman Kim to a next summit during your term?

The President. No, we haven't. No.

Q. Okay.

The President. We'll see. If it happens, it happens. I have not committed.

South Korea-U.S. Joint Military Exercises

Q. They are, at this point, some would say, a nuclear power. Do you accept North Korea as a nuclear-armed state, at least for the time being? And are you thinking about reimposing the military exercises with South Korea, or will you keep it a freeze-for-freeze?

The President. Well, you know, the military exercises, I gave that up quite a while ago because it costs us a hundred million dollars every time we do it. We fly these massive bombers in from Guam. And when I first started, a certain general said: "Oh, yes, sir, we fly them in from Guam. It's right next door." Well, right next door is 7 hours away. And then, they come, and they drop millions of dollars of bombs, and then they go back and—but we would spend—I mean, we spent hundreds of millions of dollars on those exercises, and I hated to see it.

I thought it was unfair. And frankly, I was, sort of, of the opinion that South Korea should help us with that. You know, we're protecting South Korea. I think they should help us with that. So those exercises are very expensive. And I was telling the generals—I said: Look, you know, exercising is fun, and it's nice, and I play—they play the war games. And I'm not saying it's not necessary, because at some levels it is, but at other levels, it's not. But it's a very, very expensive thing. And you know, we do have to think about that too.

But when they spend hundreds of millions of dollars on those exercises—and we don't get reimbursed—we're spending a tremendous amount of money on many countries, protecting countries that are very rich that can certainly afford to pay us and then some.

Q. May I get—

The President. And those countries—by the way, and those countries know that it's not right, but nobody has ever asked them before. But I've asked them, and we're doing—we're gaining a lot of money. We've picked up over a hundred billion dollars just in NATO over the last 2 years. A hundred billion dollars more has come in. And we're doing that with a lot of countries. You'll be seeing that a lot.

Yes, sir. Please.

Q. Mr. President, sir—

The President. Yes, one second, please.

2017 Death of Otto Warmbier Following Release From Detainment in North Korea

Q. Yes, thank you, Mr. President. You have a personal relationship—and I believe Vice President Pence does—with the family of Otto Warmbier.

The President. I do.

Q. I'm wondering—you've talked about, this week, about Kim Jong Un being "my friend"—you called him on Twitter. You said you have a great relationship. Have you, in Singapore or here, confronted Kim Jong Un about Otto Warmbier's death——

The President. I have. I have.

Q. ——and asked him to take responsibility? And what did he say to you? And why do you call him your friend?

The President. I have. And I have, and we have talked about it. And I really don't think it was in his interest at all. I know the Warmbier family very well. I think they're an incredible family. What happened is horrible. I really believe something very bad happened to him, and I don't think that the top leadership knew about it.

And when they had to send him home—by the way, I got the prisoners back. I got the hostages back. And Otto was one of the hostages, but Otto came back in shape that was not even to be talked about. I find it—I thought it was horrible. Now, the others came back extremely healthy. But Otto came back in a condition that was just terrible.

Q. Are you——

The President. And I will—I did speak about it, and I don't believe that he would've allowed that to happen. Just wasn't to his advantage to allow that to happen. Those prisons are rough. They're rough places. And bad things happened. But I really don't believe that he was—I don't believe he knew about it.

Q. Did he say—did he tell you that he did not—did Kim Jong Un tell you——

The President. He felt badly about it. I did speak to him. He felt very badly. But he knew the case very well, but he knew it later. And you know, you've got a lot of people. A big country. A lot of people. And in those prisons and those camps, you have a lot of people. And some really bad things happened to Otto. Some really, really bad things.

But he tells me——

Q. Why are you willing to talk——

The President. He tells me that he didn't know about it, and I will take him at his word.

Q. And——

The President. Yes, ma'am. Go ahead. Please. Please. Go ahead. In the back.

Q. Me?

The President. No, in the back. Behind you. Thank you.

Q. Mr. President—[inaudible]—Valentinovna, Sputnik News Agency. Have you discussed the issue of possible inspections to North Korea's nuclear sites during your negotiations?

The President. You're going to have to speak a little louder. And where are you from? Where are you from?

North Korea's Nuclear Weapons Program

Q. Russia, Sputnik News Agency.

The President. Okay.

Q. Have you discussed the issue of possible inspections to North Korea's nuclear sites during your talks with the Chairman?

The President. Why don't you answer that, Mike? I can't—I really——

Q. Inspections.

Secretary Pompeo. I didn't understand the question.

The President. Good.

Q. Inspections. Inspections of nuclear sites.

The President. I was worried about my hearing.

Q. Inspections, sir.

The President. Oh, inspections.

Q. International inspections. Yes.

The President. Oh, inspections. Inspections on North Korea? Oh, we'd be able—yeah.

Q. Yes. Inspections to the nuclear sites.

The President. We'd be able to do that very easily. We have that set up, so we would be able to do that very easily.

The inspections on North Korea will take place, and we'll—if we do something with them—we have a schedule set up that is very good. We know things that, as David was asking about certain places and certain sites—there are sites that people don't know about that we know about. We would be able to do inspections, we think, very, very successfully.

Yes, ma'am. Please. Please.

Q. Me?

The President. Yes, go ahead. Please. Yes.

Q. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. A lot of people here, by the way. This is a big group of people.

Q. Yes.

The President. Go ahead.

Arab-Israeli Peace Process

Q. Kann News Israel, Mr. President.

The President. Good. Good.

Q. Following this engagement with North Korea, you are trying to bring peace to the Middle East.

The President. Right.

Q. The peace plan is about to be introduced in the near future. And as you have mentioned before——

The President. Well, we hope. We hope. We're working hard on the peace plan, and we hope it will be good.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel/Arab-Israeli Peace Process

Q. I believe you do. But as you mentioned before, it will require Israel to make compromises to the Palestinians. As far as you know, is Prime Minister Netanyahu willing to make these compromises which are very much needed?

And a second question: Mr. Netanyahu is about to be indicted today in—with corruption allegations. Do you wish to tell him something on this occasion?

The President. Well, I just think he's been a great Prime Minister. And I don't know about his difficulty, but you're telling me something that, you know, the—people have been hearing about. But I don't know about that.

I can say this: that he's done a great job as Prime Minister. He's tough, he's smart, he's strong. He is very defensive. His military has been built up a lot. They buy a lot of equipment from the United States, and they pay for it. Of course, we give them tremendous, as you know, subsidy, also. Four billion dollars is a lot each year. But they are—they've been very good. They've been incredible, actually, in many ways. But there is a chance for peace between Israel and the Palestinians.

And you know, it's interesting, all of my life, I've heard that the toughest of all deals—when they talk about tough deals; we all like deals—but the toughest of all deals would be peace between Israel and Palestinians. They say it's like the impossible deal. I'd love to be able to produce it. We'll see what happens.

You know, we were paying the Palestinians a lot of money. And I ended that about 2 years ago, because they weren't saying the right things. And I said, why would we pay somebody that's not saying nice things about us and not really wanting to go to the peace table? And they've been much better. And we'll see what happens.

Q. But has Mr. Netanyahu made concessions?

The President. But I think we really—I think we have, actually, a good shot at peace between Israel and the Palestinians.

Q. Has Netanyahu made concessions?

The President. Yes, go ahead. Please. Sir.

North Korea-U.S. Relations/Japan-U.S. Trade

Q. Mr. President, I'm from China. My question is: Do you still believe it is possible that the North Korea and U.S. relations could be like the U.S. and the Vietnam relations in the future?

The President. You have to go again.

Q. Do you believe—do you still believe that it is possible that the relations between U.S. and North Korea, in the future, could be like the relations between the U.S. and Vietnam?

The President. Yea. I think we're going to have—yes. I mean, we have very, very good relations. And by the way, speaking of—you mentioned Japan—we have a lot of good things happening in Japan. We have trade talks started. For years, Japan has been sending millions and millions of cars in, and as you know, it's not been a very fair situation for the United States.

We're starting trade talks with Japan. They actually started about 3 months ago, and I think we'll have a very good deal for the United States. But that's been a very unfair situation. Prime Minister Abe understands that, and that's fine.

Yes, sir.

Q. Sir, Mr. President——

The President. Please. Back there.

North Korea's Nuclear Weapons Program

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. I'm—[inaudible]—with Shanghai Media Group. Do you think the next meeting could be soon or might take some time?

The President. Well, I can't tell you. I mean, it might be soon. It might not be for a long time. I can't tell you. I would hope it would be soon. But it may not be for a long time.

Q. And are you——

The President. I could've done—I could've done a deal today, but it would've been a deal that wouldn't have been a deal that—it would've been something that I wouldn't have been happy about, Mike would not have been happy about. We had some pretty big options. But we just felt it wasn't appropriate, and we really want to do it right.

Yes, in the back. In the back. Yes, ma'am. Please.

North Korea's Nuclear Weapons Program

Q. Debi Edward, ITV News. At which point did it become clear to you that you wouldn't be getting a deal here in Hanoi? The language from yourself and Kim Jong Un was very positive last night and even this morning. And therefore, was it a mistake to come here?

The President. No, I think the language was good all throughout. The language has been good even now. But you know, I don't go by language, because we had probably the toughest language in the history of diplomacy—if you call it diplomacy—at the beginning, and yet we became very friendly. I don't believe there was any tougher language ever than that.

But again, this was something that should've been handled by other Presidents long before me——

Q. Was it a——

The President. ——and long before they had the kind of power that they have. But it wasn't. It should've been done by many—I'm not just blaming the Obama administration, which, by the way, it did nothing—nothing—absolutely on North Korea. It allowed things that happened, and to happen, that were very inappropriate. But I'm not blaming the Obama administration. I'm blaming many administrations. Something should've happened.

But I don't think the rhetoric has been bad at all. Initially, it was horrible, but now it's been very good.

All right, one more. How about you? Go ahead. Please. Please. Go ahead.

Economic Sanctions Against North Korea

Q. Mr. President, thank you for the opportunity to—[inaudible]—from South Korea. Channel—[inaudible]—South Korean media outlet here. I'd like to ask you: You said that we do not particularly know when there will be—North Korean leader will be willing to come to

the table and take the actions that's been required. If that's the case, would the U.S. be willing to strengthen the sanctions and perhaps put the pressure on North Korea to move forward?

The President. I don't want to comment on that. I can just tell you this: that we have very strong sanctions. I don't want to talk about increasing sanctions. They're strong. They have a lot of great people in North Korea that have to live also. And that's important to me.

And I would say this: My whole attitude changed a lot because I got to know, as you know, Chairman Kim very well. And they have a point of view also.

So I don't really want to talk about that. I just think that, hopefully, for the sake of South Korea, for the sake of Japan, and frankly, for the sake of China—I was talking to President Xi, who really is a man that gets the respect of a lot of people—I say, "You can't love having a nuclear state right next to China." And he doesn't. He really doesn't. I will tell you, he would like to see that problem solved too. So that's it.

Well, ladies and gentleman, I'm about to get on a plane and fly back to a wonderful place called Washington, DC. So thank you very much. Thank you. Thank you, fellas. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 2:15 p.m. at the JW Marriott Hotel Hanoi. In his remarks, the President referred to Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc and President Nguyen Phu Trong of Vietnam; former President Nicolás Maduro Moros of Venezuela, whose legitimacy was challenged by the U.S. Government, which recognized National Assembly President Juan Gerardo Guaidó Márquez as Interim President of Venezuela on January 23; 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.

Categories: Interviews With the News Media : News conferences :: February 28.

Locations: Hanoi, Vietnam.

Names: Abe, Shinzo; Cohen, Michael D.; Kim Dong-chul; Kim Hak-song; Kim Jong Un; Kim, Tony; Maduro Moros, Nicolás; Moon Jae-in; Netanyahu, Benjamin; Obama, Barack; Phuc, Nguyen Xuan; Pompeo, Michael R.; Trong, Nguyen Phu; Xi Jinping.

Subjects: Business and industry : Automobile industry :: Improvement; China : President; China : Relations with U.S.; China : Trade with U.S.; China : U.S. tariff structure, strengthening efforts; Communications : News media :: Presidential interviews; Economy, national : Improvement; Employment and unemployment : Unemployment rate; India : Relations with Pakistan; Israel : Prime Minister; Israel : Relations with Palestinian Authority; Israel : Security cooperation with U.S.; Japan : Prime Minister; Japan : Trade with U.S.; Middle East : Arab-Israeli conflict, peace process; North Atlantic Treaty Organization; North Korea : Ballistic missiles, testing and development; North Korea : Chairman, State Affairs Commission; North Korea : Economic growth and development; North Korea : Human rights issues; North Korea : International and U.S. sanctions; North Korea : International diplomatic efforts; North Korea : Nuclear weapons development; North Korea : Trade with China; Pakistan : Relations with India; Palestinian Authority and Palestinians : Relations with Israel; Palestinian Authority and Palestinians : U.S. assistance; Russia : 2016 U.S. elections, interference; Russia : North Korea, role; South Korea : Defense relationship with U.S.; South Korea : President; South Korea : Relations with U.S.; State, Department of : Secretary; Venezuela : Political unrest and

violence; Venezuela : U.S. assistance; Vietnam : Economic growth and development; Vietnam : President; Vietnam : President Trump's visit; Vietnam : Prime Minister.

DCPD Number: DCPD201900107.