

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2019

Remarks and an Exchange With Reporters Prior to Departure for Cincinnati, Ohio

August 1, 2019

The President. Yes.

Q. Mr. President, what's your reaction to Bernie Sanders saying you're a pathological liar?

China-U.S. Trade/Mexico's Cooperation With U.S. Immigration Enforcement

Q. Mr. President, why the tariffs against China now? And are you concerned about the nosedive the Dow took today as a result?

The President. No, I'm not concerned about that at all. I expected that a little bit because people don't understand quite yet about what's happened. We've taxed China on 300 billion dollars' worth of goods and products being sold into our country. And China eats it, because they have to pay it. Because what they do is, they devalue their currency, and they push money out.

Our people haven't paid, as you know. We're also charging them 25 percent on \$250 billion. So we're taking in many billions of dollars. There's been absolutely no inflation. And frankly, it hasn't cost our consumer anything; it costs China.

Now, what has happened is, a lot of companies are moving out of China so they can, you know, avoid. And China has had a rough 20—this is their worst year in 27 years, according to yesterday's Wall Street Journal. I don't want that.

But when my people came home, they said we're talking. We have another meeting in early September. I said, "That's fine." But in the meantime, until such time as there's a deal, we'll be taxing them.

We're just getting—and we're getting very good numbers from the border. The 21,000 soldiers supplied by Mexico. And I want to thank Mexico. They're doing a great job. The numbers are way down at the border.

Q. Mr. President——

Q. President Trump——

Chairman of the State Affairs Commission Kim Jong Un of North Korea/Ballistic Missile Tests

Q. On North Korea, sir. On North Korea, they apparently just launched their third missile in about a week. Is Kim testing you?

The President. I think it's very much under control. Very much under control.

Q. Will you stop—[inaudible]?

China-U.S. Trade

Q. President Trump, we're talking about a full-blown trade war here. What do you say to American——

The President. Well, what would you say it is?

Q. No, I'm asking you——

The President. Let me ask you a question.

Q. What do you say to American business owners——

The President. Right. Right. Right.

Q. ——and consumers who are going to pay the price for these tariffs, sir.

The President. Right. Sure. Sure. What would you say when China, for the last 20 years, has been taking hundreds of billions of dollars out of our country? And we had a President that would never do anything—a number of Presidents that never would do anything about it. What would you say?

For many years, China has been taking money out by the hundreds of billions of dollars a year. We have rebuilt China. So now it's time that we change things around. If they don't want to trade with us anymore, that would be fine with me. We'd save a lot of money.

Q. Mr. President, what do you say——

Q. Mr. President, you said that you have got a good relationship with President Xi——

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

Q. Mr. President, sir, do you believe that Xi is slow-walking this? And is this 10-percent tariff a bit of a hurry-up call?

The President. No, I don't know. I think President Xi, who's somebody I like a lot, I think he wants to make a deal. But frankly, he's not going fast enough. He said he was going to be buying from our farmers; he didn't do that. He said he was going to stop fentanyl from coming into our country—it's all coming out of China—he didn't do that. We're losing thousands of people to fentanyl. And this was time.

And very importantly, for many years—you know this better than anybody; you've been covering it for a long time—for many years, China has been taking out hundreds of billions of dollars a year and rebuilding China. It's time that we rebuild our country.

Q. So you don't want a trade war with China, sir?

Q. Do you still—Mr. President—[inaudible]—on September 1?

The President. And you know, the one thing I have to say—and you have to say this: What China is doing is, they're devaluing their currency, and they're pumping money out like they've never done before. And they're paying for these tariffs; we're not.

Political Demonstrations in Hong Kong

Q. Are you concerned by reports that the Chinese army may be preparing to intervene in Hong Kong against the demonstrators? And what do you say to the accusation that the U.S. is somehow behind these protests?

The President. Well, something is probably happening with Hong Kong, because when you look at, you know, what's going on, they've had riots for a long period of time. And I don't know what China's attitude is. Somebody said that at some point they're going to want to stop that. But that's between Hong Kong, and that's between China, because Hong Kong is a part of China. They'll have to deal with that themselves. They don't need advice.

Q. What is your response to the Democratic primary, sir? What is your response to the Democratic primary?

China-U.S. Trade

Q. Mr. President, you put a date of September 1—you put a date of September 1 on these tariffs. Are you giving Xi a chance to negotiate himself out of this?

The President. No. No, no, no, no. It's September 1. The reason is, it takes a long time for the ships to come over. And it's a period of time. So I'm giving him 4—like a 4-week period of time before the tariffs go on.

Q. And so you——

The President. But we're now taking in tariffs on 10 percent on over \$300 billion and 25 percent on \$250 billion. And it's been proven that our people are not paying for those tariffs.

Q. And your response to the Democratic—your response to the Democrats who say that you're a—Mr. President, your response to the Democrats?

The President. Go ahead. Go ahead.

North Korea/Ballistic Missile Tests

Q. Thank you. About North Korea, North Korea launched two missiles again yesterday. How did you feel about that? And——

The President. Short-range missiles. We never made an agreement on that. I have no problem. We'll see what happens. But these are short-range missiles. They're very standard.

Q. And, sir, your response to Bernie Sanders who says——

The President. Go ahead. What?

Q. ——that you are a pathological liar, sir?

The President. Go ahead. Go ahead.

Director of National Intelligence Nominee Representative John L. Ratcliffe

Q. Thank you. Mr. President, are you concerned about reports that your DNI nominee, Congressman Ratcliffe, has embellished his record at all, that Democrats plan to oppose his nomination?

The President. Congressman Ratcliffe is an outstanding man, and I'm sure that he'll be able to do very well. I think he's just outstanding, highly respected by everybody that knows him.

Q. Mr. President, what can you tell us about——

Huawei Technologies Co., Ltd.

Q. On Huawei, what will you do on Huawei to give relief to the companies——

The President. Well, we've not changed on Huawei. We're not allowing Huawei into our country. We're not changed on that. We can do business for nonsecurity things with Huawei, because that's—you know, we'll do that. But anything having to do with national security, we're not dealing with Huawei.

Former Federal Bureau of Investigation Director James B. Comey, Jr.

Q. Mr. President, what do you think about the decision to not prosecute James Comey for leaking?

The President. Well, I haven't actually heard that. I know there's a lot of things going on. That's a piece of it, I guess. But I really don't know. I haven't spoken to them about that. I would, frankly, be surprised, because what James Comey did was illegal. So I would be surprised, but I don't know anything about that.

Q. Were you surprised by the Democratic debates?

"Make America Great Again" Rally in Cincinnati, Ohio

Q. Mr. President, in Cincinnati, at your rally tonight, are you prepared to tell your supporters to stop if they begin chanting something problematic?

The President. I don't know what's going to happen. I can tell you this: I'm going to Cincinnati. The arena is a very large one. And we've sold it out. We could sell it out probably 10 times, from what I hear. The applications for seats, as you know—never had an empty seat—the applications are very big. I have no idea.

We have a great group of people. They love our country. They love the job we're doing. And when they see the kind of people that want to represent us from the last 2 nights, that's not what they want.

I don't know—I can't tell you whether or not they're going to do that chant. If they do the chant, we'll have to see what happens.

Q. Will you stop them, sir? Do you think you will?

The President. I don't know that you can stop people. I don't know that you can. I mean, we'll see what we can do. I'd prefer that they don't, but if they do it, we'll have to make a decision then.

"Make America Great Again" Rally in Cincinnati, Ohio

Q. Mr. President, do you have a message—do you have a message for them now, like before they go in?

The President. I do have a message. My message is for the people I'm going to—so we had over 100,000 applications for whatever the size of the—I think it's a 14,000-seat arena. But we're way over a hundred and—I think 122,000 applications for those seats.

You know what my message is? I love them. And I think they love me.

Q. So your message is not "don't do this"?

The President. I actually think they love me.

Q. Mr. President, on bin Laden, sir, bin Laden——

Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India/Prime Minister Imran Khan of Pakistan/India-Pakistan Relations

Q. India has rejected your offer of help on Kashmir. India is also—India has rejected your offer of help on Kashmir. India says Kashmir is a bilateral issue between India and Pakistan.

The President. Have they accepted the offer or not?

Q. No, they have not.

The President. Well, that's up to—it's really up to Prime Minister Modi. And I met with Prime Minister Khan; I got along great with—I think they're a fantastic people, Khan and Modi. I mean, I would imagine they can get along very well.

But if they wanted somebody to intervene or to help them—and I spoke with Pakistan about that, and I spoke, frankly, to India about it. But that's been going on, that battle, for a long time. Long time.

Q. How do you want to resolve the Kashmir issue?

The President. If I can—if they wanted me to, I would certainly intervene.

Yes.

Former Al Qaida Terrorist Organization Leader Usama bin Laden's Son Hamza bin Laden

Q. Sir, was the U.S. Government involved in the death of Hamza bin Laden?

The President. I can't comment about that. But he was very threatening to our country. He was saying very bad things about our country. I will let you make your own comment about it.

Q. Can you share anything about it?

The President. But I don't comment. But I will say, Hamza bin Laden was very threatening to our country, and you can't do that. But, as far as anything beyond that, I have no comment.

Forest Fires in Siberia, Russia

Q. Mr. President, Robert Mueller said last week that Russia is interfering in U.S. elections right now. Did you raise that with Vladimir Putin yesterday?

The President. Oh, you don't really believe this. Do you believe this?

Q. He said it last week. Did you raise that with President Putin yesterday?

The President. Okay, fine. We didn't talk about that. I spoke with President Putin of Russia yesterday. They're having massive fires in the—in their forests. They have tremendous—I've never seen anything like it. It's very big.

I just offered our assistance, because we're very good at putting out forest fires, frankly. And if they should need it, I offered our assistance. We had a good talk—a short talk, but a good talk. And I think he appreciated it.

So we would be able to help them. It's—these are massive fires, like I haven't seen. That was the primary importance of the conversation. And I think they—I think they very much appreciated it.

Q. Mr. President, on the Fed, sir——

Former Department of Justice Special Counsel Robert S. Mueller III/Investigation Into Russia's Interference in 2016 Presidential Election

Q. Mr. President, do you believe Russians are interfering right now? Mueller said right now, he believes, Russia is interfering in the election.

The President. Well, I watched Mueller. I'm not sure Mueller knows what's going on, you want to know the truth. But all I do know is he said, "No collusion with us, no collusion," and

ultimately "no obstruction," because it led to no obstruction by a very smart group of people, including our Attorney General. So "no collusion, no obstruction."

As far as Mueller's performance, you would have to say it was, maybe, not so good. Not so good.

National Economy/China-U.S. Trade/U.S. Military Spending

Q. On the Fed, sir? Sir, on the Fed? Mr. President, on the Fed, why wasn't a quarter rate cut good enough?

Q. Mr. President, will it affect the elections in 2020?

Q. Will you tell Putin not to interfere?

The President. So our country is doing very well. We're setting records in every way, including employment, unemployment. We have now more people working in the United States than ever before. The stock market, it will take a little hit, but it will be phenomenal because ultimately it will be much better because of what I'm doing. Somebody should have done this with China a long time ago. They decided not to do it; they made a big mistake.

But I will say this: There's never been a time in the history of our country like we have right now. The highest number of people employed, the best employment numbers for African Americans, Hispanic, women—for everybody. I mean, the best numbers we've ever had.

Our military is being rebuilt, and it's almost fully rebuilt. It's going to be at a level, in a very short period of time, stronger and better than ever before with new aircraft, new missiles, new everything. Hopefully, we don't have to use it.

Go ahead.

Representative Tulsi Gabbard/Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and Al Qaida Terrorist Organizations

Q. Mr. President, what did you think of the Democratic debate last night? Biden and, specifically, the charge from Congresswoman Gabbard that you're assisting Al Qaida.

The President. So yes, nobody knows what she meant by that. I've—I think even you probably didn't like that statement, John [John Roberts, Fox News]. She doesn't know what she's talking about. If you remember, a short while ago, I defeated ISIS. We have a hundred percent of the caliphate.

So you know, you're always going to have somebody around. We're—right now we have captured over 10,000. We have 2,500 ISIS fighters that we want Europe to take, because they were going back into Europe: into France, into Germany, into various places. So we have, right now, 2,500 ISIS that we captured. We've captured 100 percent of the caliphate. And we've done a big job on Al Qaida and everybody else.

So for her to make that statement is ridiculous, frankly.

Q. But, Mr. President, what did you think Joe Biden?

Q. What did you think of Biden?

The President. For her to make that statement is so ridiculous. And she's taken a lot of heat on it, because nobody has done more against that war than I have.

So we have thousands ISIS fighters that we want Europe to take. And let's see if they take them. And if they don't take them, we'll probably have to release them to Europe.

Q. And what about Bernie Sanders?

Chairman of the State Affairs Commission Kim Jong Un of North Korea/Ballistic Missile Tests

Q. Will you still negotiate, sir? Sir, can you still negotiate with Kim after what he's done this week?

The President. Say it? What?

Q. Can you still negotiate with Kim after what he's done now?

The President. Oh, sure. Sure. Because these are short-range missiles. We never discussed that. We discussed nuclear. What we talk about is nuclear. Those are short-range missiles. Sure. And a lot of other countries test that kind of missile also.

Q. Did you talk to President Xi?

China-U.S. Trade/U.S. Tariff Structure on Chinese Imports

Q. Mr. President, why was the tariff 10 percent and not 25? And then, on the Fed——

The President. [Laughter] Oh, that's funny.

Q. ——you said a quarter point wasn't good enough. What would be good enough for you on the Fed, sir?

The President. That's so interesting, because everyone says, "Gee, that's so tough." And now you're saying I should have done more.

Q. Well, why didn't you do more?

The President. Look, I did more than anybody thought with the first \$250 billion. And the 10 percent is for a short-term period, and then I can always do much more, or I can do less, depending on what happens with respect to a deal.

But I'm very happy the way it is right now. My people came back. They're going to meet again in September. I said, "Look, if you meet, that's great." But in the meantime, we're going to pay a——they're going to pay a tariff, and it will be a very substantial tariff.

Now, if you remember, when I did the 25 percent, I did it in stages. And this can also be lifted, ultimately, in stages, or it can be taken off. But it can be lifted in stages. So we're starting at 10 percent, and it can be lifted up to well beyond 25 percent. But we're not looking to do that necessarily.

But this would be done in stages. So I put on 10 percent on 300—it's approximately \$300 billion. We already have a 25-percent tariff on the first \$250 billion. So the 10 percent follows the \$250 billion at 25 percent.

Q. Mr. President, why——[inaudible]——Pelosi, sir? Speaker Pelosi?

Venezuela

Q. Mr. President, thank you. Are you considering a blockade or quarantine of Venezuela, given the amount of foreign involvement from Russia, China, and Iran?

The President. Yes, I am.

Q. You are considering it?

The President. Yes, I am.

Q. When?

The President. Yes. Yes, I am.

Q. Mr. President, why haven't you talked with Speaker Pelosi?

The President. Go ahead.

Investigation Into Russia's Interference in 2016 Presidential Election

Q. I want to ask you, Mr. President, since the Mueller hearing, 116 House Democrats have said they want to launch a House inquiry. Why do you think that number continues to go up?

The President. You know, it's interesting, nobody has even mentioned this question to me in so long.

Q. Right.

The President. Until last night at the very end, it wasn't even mentioned in the debates. People aren't even thinking—it's a hoax. I don't know if you know that. You know it's a hoax, right? So nobody has mentioned it to me.

Q. Mr. President——

The President. One thing I will say that you haven't covered: Two days ago, a highly respected judge in the Southern District of New York, in Manhattan, came out with a decision on the whole Russia hoax, and he said exactly that: It's a hoax.

You ought to read the decision. This is a decision by a judge who is highly respected—who was appointed by Bill Clinton when he was President—and he came out, and he said, "It's a hoax." And that's exactly what it is. This was a case brought by the Democrats against me, and nobody wants to talk about it. You know why? Because it's fake news. [*Laughter*]

Forest Fires in Siberia, Russia/Negotiations on Nuclear Weapons Arsenals

Q. Mr. President, what did you tell Putin about the INF Treaty?

The President. We didn't discuss the INF. Mostly, we discussed the forest fires in Siberia and other parts of Russia. And I said, "Look, we have the greatest equipment. If we can help you, let us know." Large sections are burning. And so I said to President Putin, "If we can help you, let me know."

Q. But we're pulling out of the treaty tomorrow.

The President. Well, we'll see what happens.

By the way, I will say, Russia would like to do something on a nuclear treaty. And that's okay with me. They'd like to do something, and so would I.

Q. Mr. President——

Senator Elizabeth A. Warren

Q. Mr. President, last night—what's your response to Elizabeth Warren's comment last night that——

The President. Say it again.

Q. What's your response to Elizabeth Warren's comment last night that White supremacy should be considered domestic terrorism?

The President. Well, I think, Elizabeth—I mean, I've watched Elizabeth Warren, sometimes referred to as Pocahontas, with her phony try at an ancestry that she didn't have. I've watched her and, I don't know, to me, she doesn't have credibility. It's possible I'll have to run against her. But everything she did was a fraud. She got into colleges; she got teaching jobs. She said she was of Indian heritage. It turned out to be a lie. So Elizabeth Warren really has a big lack of credibility.

Q. Mr. President, one question for——

Democratic Presidential Debate/Senator Kamala D. Harris/Former Vice President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.

Q. Mr. President, what did you think about the statements from——

The President. The which?

Q. The statements between Tulsi Gabbard and Kamala Harris. Do you think Tulsi really got Kamala?

The President. I didn't really—no, I didn't look. I think that Kamala did not do well last night. I think that—I think Biden did okay. He came through. He came limping through, as I say about Sleepy Joe. He limped right through it. But he got through it. He really did. I think he was okay.

I think Kamala had a bad night last night, I would say. But it's really boiling down to four or five of them. Let's face it. I don't think—I don't see anybody coming from the rear.

Poland-U.S. Relations

Q. Do you have a message for Poland on the anniversary of Warsaw Uprising, which is today?

The President. Well, I have a lot of respect for Poland. And, as you know, the people of Poland like me, and I like them. And I'm going to be going to Poland fairly soon. And I know they're building an installation that—and they're putting in all of the money—a hundred percent of the money. So they're building something very nice for the United States to have.

Go ahead. What?

Q. Mr. President, please, one question for——

Representative Elijah E. Cummings/The President's Criticism of Baltimore, Maryland

Q. On Nancy Pelosi—I'm sorry. Just so I don't have to yell at you here, if you don't mind. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi—I don't know if you saw—but she described Jared Kushner as a kind of Baltimore slumlord. Do you—because he owns property there. Do you think your son-in-law bears any responsibility for those conditions?

The President. No. I think the responsibility is the people that have run Baltimore for so many years, obviously headed up by Elijah Cummings. They've run Baltimore into the ground. We've given billions and billions of dollars to Baltimore. The people of Baltimore appreciate what I've done for them by bringing this up.

It's the number-one city, proportionately, in the United States on crime. I saw a statistic where it's worse than Honduras right now. And I think what the people of Baltimore—I think they really appreciate what I'm doing. The money was stolen or misspent or wasted. And a lot of things happened. A lot of bad things.

But the government, for many years, has been very good to Baltimore. We have to help the people. Elijah Cummings has not helped the people. But maybe, at some point, we'll get together and we'll get it straightened out.

But what happened in Baltimore is disgraceful. And it's not only Baltimore, it's other Democrat-run cities, and you ought to report on it sometime. Thank you.

The President's Support Among Religious Institutions

Q. Mr. President—[inaudible].

The President. Well, I haven't seen the—[inaudible]—at all, but I'll take a look at them. But I will tell you, the church has loved me, and I love them. You know, we've got about 84 percent of the vote. And the churches love Donald Trump, and I love them.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:47 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to John G. Koetl, judge, U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York. A reporter referred to White House Senior Adviser Jared C. Kushner. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the audio was incomplete.

Categories: Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters :: White House.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: ; Biden, Joseph R., Jr.; bin Laden, Hamza; Clinton, William J.; Comey, James B., Jr.; Cummings, Elijah E.; Gabbard, Tulsi; Harris, Kamala D.; Khan, Imran; Koetl, John G.; Modi, Narendra; Mueller, Robert S., III; Putin, Vladimir Vladimirovich; Ratcliffe, John L.; Warren, Elizabeth A.; Xi Jinping.

Subjects: "Make America Great Again" rallies : Cincinnati, OH; Agriculture : Domestic production, strengthening efforts; Armed Forces, U.S. : Funding; Arms and munitions : Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty; Arms and munitions : Nuclear weapons and material :: U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile, reduction; China : Political demonstrations in Hong Kong; China : President; China : Trade with U.S.; China : U.S. tariff structure, strengthening efforts; Communications : News media :: Accuracy and fairness; Communications : News media :: Presidential interviews; Drug abuse and trafficking : Opioid epidemic, efforts to combat; Economy, national : Improvement; Elections : 2020 Presidential and congressional elections; Employment and unemployment : Job creation and growth; Employment and unemployment : Unemployment rate; Huawei Technologies Co., Ltd.; Immigration and naturalization : Illegal immigration; India : Prime Minister; India : Relations with Pakistan; Justice, Department of : Attorney General; Mexico : Immigration enforcement, cooperation with U.S.; North Korea : Ballistic missile testing; North Korea : International diplomatic efforts; North Korea : Nuclear weapons development; Ohio : Cincinnati :: "Make America Great Again" rally; Pakistan : Prime Minister; Pakistan : Relations with India; Poland : Defense relationship with U.S.; Poland : Relations with U.S.; Russia : 2016 U.S. elections, interference; Russia : Forest fires in Siberia; Russia : President; Terrorism : Al Qaida terrorist organization; Terrorism : Counterterrorism efforts; Terrorism : Global threat; Terrorism : Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist organization; Venezuela : Political unrest and violence.

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