

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2019

Remarks in an Exchange With Reporters Prior to Departure for Louisville, Kentucky

August 21, 2019

Q. [Inaudible]—Mr. President?

National Economy/Federal Reserve System

Q. Should the Fed lower interest rates? Are you fed up with Powell?

The President. So the economy is doing very, very well. We'll see what happens with the Federal Reserve, whether or not they finally get smart and reduce interest rates, like many other places around the world that we have to compete with.

But our economy is the strongest in the world, by far. Nothing even close. And a lot of good things are happening. We had some very good retail numbers this morning, as you saw. And I guess the stock market is quite a bit up. So it's good.

Federal Reserve System/Interest Rates

Q. Are you demanding that Jay Powell lower interest rates?

The President. No, I don't demand it. But if he used his head, he would lower them. In Germany, they have a zero interest rate. And we do compete. We're much stronger than Germany, but we do compete with Germany. In Germany, they have zero interest rate. And when they borrow money—I mean, when you look at what happened, look at what's going on over there. They borrow money, they actually get paid to borrow money. And we have to compete with that.

So, if you look at what's happening around the world, Jay Powell and the Federal Reserve have totally missed the call. I was right, and just about everybody admits that. I was right. He did quantitative tightening. He shouldn't have done that. He raised interest rates too fast, too furious. And we have a normalized rate. I—you call it that. And now we have to go the other direction. We'll see if he does it. If he does it, you'll see a rocket ship; you'll see a boom. If he does it, we have a very strong economy.

Q. Why not take him out?

The President. But we could have—we could be—we could be in a place that this Nation was seldom at, if we had interest rates cut by the Federal Reserve. The Federal Reserve has let us down. They missed the call. They raised them too fast. They raised it too high. And they did quantitative tightening. They shouldn't have done the tightening, and they shouldn't have raised them to the extent. We could have had some raises, but nothing like they did.

Q. Mr. President——

Gun Control/Immigration Reform/Mexico's Cooperation With U.S. Immigration Enforcement/Border Security

Q. What happened to the strong appetite for background checks?

The President. Oh, I have an appetite for background checks. We're going to be doing background checks. We're working with Democrats. We're working with Republicans. And we already have very strong background checks, but we're going to be filling in some of the loopholes, as we call them, at the border. And speaking about at the border, it would be really nice if the Democrats would indeed fix the loopholes, because it would be really nice.

But despite that, I want to thank Mexico. They have 26,000 soldiers at our border, and they're really stopping people from coming in.

Gun Control

Q. But what does that have to do with background checks for guns?

The President. So what happens is—with background checks, we're dealing with Democrats, we're dealing with Republicans, we're dealing with the NRA, we're dealing with gun owners. We're dealing with everybody. And I think we're going to have something, hopefully, that's meaningful.

Gun Control

Q. Did you tell Wayne LaPierre that you would not pursue background checks, yesterday, in your call with him?

The President. No, I didn't say anything about that. We had a great talk with Wayne yesterday. Didn't say anything about that. We just talked about concepts. Wayne agrees things have to be done also. And we have areas where we can close and—for instance, we did Fix NICS last time. We have a lot of background checks right now. Gun owners can tell you that; others can tell you that.

But there are certain weaknesses; we want to fix the weaknesses. And I think that will happen. Let's see what happens.

Q. What do you stand for?

The President. I'm concerned that no matter what we agree to, when we get there, I'm concerned the Democrats will say, "Oh, well, we now want this, and we want . . ." And you know, it's a slippery slope, and that's what, actually, your gun owners and a lot of other people are concerned with.

But assuming that that's not going to take place by the Democrats, assuming they really want to get this done, we can get it done.

Q. [*Inaudible*—understand the slippery slope? Why is it now a slippery slope?

Suicide Rate Among Veterans

Q. Mr. President, you're speaking with AMVETS today. Organizers are saying they remain concerned about veteran suicide.

The President. You've got to speak up.

Q. Veteran suicide. AMVETS says it's their top priority. Talk with me about what the administration's Task Force has done since its creation.

The President. Well, we're doing a lot having to do with veteran suicide. We have a Task Force that's set up. There's a product that's made right now, that just came out by Johnson & Johnson, which has a tremendously positive—pretty short term, but nevertheless positive—effect.

I've instructed the head of the VA to go out and buy a lot of it. And we are buying a lot of it. Hopefully, we're getting it at a very good cost. And this is a—I guess it's a form of a stimulant where, if somebody is really in trouble from the standpoint of suicide, it can do something. It's pretty well known. Just came out. It's made, I believe, by Johnson & Johnson. And we have calls in now to Johnson & Johnson. Those calls—we've been dealing with them for 2 months, on buying a lot.

Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen of Denmark/Greenland

Q. Mr. President, can you explain your decision not to go to Denmark? Is it really because they wouldn't talk about selling Greenland?

The President. No—Denmark, I looked forward to going, but I thought that the Prime Minister's statement—that it was absurd; that it was an absurd idea—it was nasty. I thought it was an inappropriate statement. All she had to do is say, "No, we wouldn't be interested."

But we can't treat the United States of America the way they treated us under President Obama. I thought it was a very not nice way of saying something. They could've told me "no." This is something that's been discussed for many years. Harry Truman had the idea of Greenland. I had the idea. Other people have had the idea. It goes back into the early 1900s. But Harry Truman, very strongly, thought it was a good idea.

I think it's a good idea because Denmark is losing \$700 million a year with it. It doesn't do them any good. But all they had to do is say, "No, we'd rather not do that," or "We'd rather not talk about it." Don't say, "What an absurd idea that is."

Q. Sir——

The President. Because she's not talking to me——

Q. Mr. President——

The President. Excuse me. She's not talking to me. She's talking to the United States of America. You don't talk to the United States that way, at least under me.

Now, President Obama, when they wouldn't land—let him land in the Philippines, when they treated him so badly in so many places—the Philippines is one that comes to mind—that's different. That's different. They can treat him any way they want to; that's up to him. But they can't treat the United States with a statement, "How absurd."

Q. Mr. President, a question——

Q. [*Inaudible*]—an ally?

Q. [*Inaudible*]—Jewish Americans accused of disloyalty——

Q. Quick question. Excuse me. Excuse me.

The President. Let your wife do it.

Q. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Who's the boss? Who's the boss?

Q. I am. I am the boss. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. I agree. She's the boss. I agree. Go ahead.

Q. Is Melania the boss?

The President. You've got a lot of people. Yes. She's got a lot of people watching.

Go ahead.

Gun Control/Mental Health

Q. Mr. President, with regard to background checks, why shouldn't anyone who wants to buy a gun go through a background check? What's wrong with that?

The President. Well, what we're doing is, I want guns to be in the hands of people that are mentally stable. And those people, I want them to easily be able to get a gun. But people that are insane, people that are sick up here, I don't want them to be able to get a gun.

Q. So wouldn't a background check be a good idea for anybody who wants to buy a gun? Wouldn't a background check be a good idea for anyone?

The President. If a person is sick, if a person is mentally ill, if a person has done things in their past that are a horror—like, in the case of Dayton, except it got expunged because, I guess, he was 17 years old. When he wrote a list out, and the list said it was a death—not about guns. He had a kill list, and he had a rape list. But it was 17.

And one of the things we're talking about is getting rid of the age limit. He was 17, so when he turned 18, it was expunged. So we didn't find out about that. And a big percentage of the school, the parents wouldn't let their kids go to that school because they heard about it. Okay? It was a very big thing. When he was 18, it all went away. We can't let that happen.

Q. [Inaudible]—question about the economy.

Q. Sir, you said that Russia was kicked out of the G-7——

Gun Control/Mental Illness

Q. Mr. President, a hundred people a day die from guns. Do you see that as a public health emergency?

The President. I do. I do. Yes. I do. And they die for a lot of other reasons too. But they do. And as I've said——

Q. But it's not like this in other countries.

The President. And I think I've said it very loudly and plainly, and I don't think I've changed positions at all: We're working on background checks. There are things we can do. But we already have very serious background checks. We have strong background checks. We can close up the gaps. We can do things that are very good and things that, frankly, gun owners want to have done. But we also have to remember the gun doesn't pull the trigger, a person does. And we have great mental illness.

Q. What do you say to Republicans who want to primary you? Republicans who want to primary you, sir?

Antifa Movement

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Does your Justice Department plan to dust off the H. Rap Brown law and prosecute the Antifa demonstrators under the law that makes it a Federal crime to cross State lines?

The President. We're looking at—right. We're looking at a lot of different things relative to Antifa. Antifa, in my opinion, is a terrorist organization. You see what they've been doing. We've had great support on that. We're looking at various different things.

Q. Mr. President, yesterday you said that——

Q. Sir, why did you come up with ways to hold migrant families longer? To hold migrant families?

The President. Go ahead. Behind you. Behind you.

Greenland/Denmark

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. I appreciate it. So, with Greenland, it seems to be entirely off the table. Are you looking at any additional lands for potential expansion?

The President. No. We're just looking. Greenland was just an idea, just a thought.

Q. Why?

The President. But I think when they say it was "absurd" and it was said in a very nasty, very sarcastic way, I said, "We'll make it some other time." We'll go to Denmark—I love Denmark. I've been to Denmark. And frankly, we'll do it another time.

Q. Why did you say that——

Q. Who are Jewish Americans being disloyal to?

The President. Respect has to be shown to the United States.

Go ahead.

Israel-U.S. Relations/Representatives Rashida H. Tlaib, Ilhan A. Omar, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, and Ayanna S. Pressley/Democratic Party

Q. Yesterday you said that Jews—American Jews who vote for Democrats are disloyal. To whom are they being disloyal, sir? And that's a well-known anti-Semitic trope.

The President. Yes, well. So I have been responsible for a lot of great things for Israel. One of them was moving the Embassy to Jerusalem, making Jerusalem the capital of Israel. One of them was the Golan Heights. One of them, frankly, is Iran. Iran is a very far-weakened nation right now—much different. Hopefully, if something works out. We'll see. If it happens, it happens.

Q. But sir——

The President. Wait a minute. Wait. Wait. No President has ever done anywhere close to what I've done, between Golan Heights, Jerusalem, Iran—and other things.

Q. But American Jews are Americans, sir.

The President. Excuse me. Wait a minute. Wait a minute.

No President has done what I've done. We have a group—I call it "A.O.C. plus 3"—you can call the person Representative Tlaib, you could say Representative Omar, you could go anywhere you want to do—go. They are anti-Semites. They are against Israel. She had a plan to greatly embarrass Israel by going there with the fact that she wanted to see her grandmother. I assume that's true. I hope that's true. But it was very bad. Very bad—the things that she and others of that group and other Democrats have said. And they have become the face of the Democratic Party.

And I will tell you this: In my opinion, the Democrats have gone very far away from Israel. I cannot understand how they can do that. They don't want to fund Israel. They want to take away foreign aid to Israel. They want to do a lot of bad things to Israel. In my opinion, you vote for a Democrat, you're being very disloyal to Jewish people and you're being very disloyal to Israel.

Q. But, sir, Americans——

The President. And only weak people would say anything other than that.

Q. Sir, American Jews are Americans; they are not loyal to Israel—[inaudible].

Anti-Semitism/Jewish Support for the Democratic Party

Q. Mr. President, your critics have said that is an anti-Semitic remark. What—how do you respond to that?

The President. I haven't heard anybody say that; it's just the opposite.

Q. People have said that over the last 24 hours.

The President. I think that if you vote for a Democrat, you're very, very disloyal to Israel and to the Jewish people.

Q. They say that—[inaudible].

Republican Party Support for the President

Q. What do you say to the Republicans who want to primary you?

The President. Well, I'm at 94 percent now in the Republican Party, the highest in history, the highest of any Republican. So I think they'd have a hard time.

Russia's Annexation of Crimea/Group of Seven (G-7) Nations

Q. Sir, you said Russia was kicked out of the G-8, because they outsmarted—you said Russia was kicked out of the G-8——

The President. Yes.

Q. ——because they outsmarted Obama. In fact, it was because they annexed Crimea. You know that. They're still there. Why would you let them back in?

The President. That was outsmarting Obama. So Russia outsmarted President Obama. They took over during his term, not during mine—Crimea.

Q. They're still there. Why let them in now?

The President. They took over Crimea. If you'd stop being an organ of the Democrats—I mean, you know, if you'd let me answer the question——

Q. Listening. Please, sir.

The President. ——I'll answer it very easily. It's a very simple question.

The fact is, President Putin totally outsmarted President Obama on Crimea and other things, including the redline in the sand, all right? He outsmarted—he made a living on outsmarting President Obama. And frankly, because of it, Obama was upset, and he got Obama out of what was the G-8 into the G-7.

It's come up: Should we put Russia back in? We spend a lot of time talking about Russia at those meetings. And they're not there. I think it would be a good thing if Russia were there so we can speak directly, not have to speak all the—you know, by telephone and other things.

So here's the thing: It's a vote of what's now the G-7. They were taken out because Putin outsmarted—on Crimea, on the redline, on other things—totally outsmarted Obama. Obama was upset; they took them out. I think Russia should be a part of it, because we're looking for world peace, and it's—and other things—trade and other things. And it would be a lot easier to have Russia in, where they had always been.

Q. But they're still there, sir. But sir, they're still there. So why let them in if they're still there?

Tax Relief

Q. Yesterday in the—yesterday, when you were talking to us in the Oval Office, you said you had the executive authority to index capital gains funds, but—capital gains taxes. But a 1992 Office of Legal Counsel opinion from the Treasury Department says the administration can't——

The President. I read the same report as you. I'm not looking to do indexing. I've studied indexing for a long time. I think it will be perceived, if I do it, as somewhat elitist. I don't want to do that. I want taxes for the—the middle class, the workers, the people that work so hard. That's

what I'm looking—I think indexing is really, probably better for the upper income groups. I'm not looking to do that. But if I wanted to do it, I believe I could. But I'd need a letter from the Attorney General.

Q. [*Inaudible*—migrant families longer?

National Economy/China-U.S. Trade

Q. Mr. President, so taking America into a recession, is it worth it? And do Americans need to back that up?

The President. So the fake news, of which many of you are members, is trying to convince the public to have a recession. "Let's have a recession." The United States is doing phenomenally well.

But one thing I have to do is economically take on China, because China has been ripping us off for many years. President Clinton, President Bush, and President Obama, and others should have done this long before me. My life would be much easier—although I enjoy doing it—but my life would be much easier if I just said, "Let China continue to rip off the United States." All right? It would be much easier, but I can't do that.

We are winning against China. They've lost 2½ million jobs in a very short period of time. They want to make a deal. It's got to be a deal that's good for the United States. When they want to make a deal—probably, we will make a deal.

But if I didn't do that—and I'm not doing this—somebody said it's Trump's trade war. This isn't my trade war. This is a trade war that should have taken place a long time ago by a lot of other Presidents.

Over the last 5 or 6 years, China has made \$500 billion—\$500 billion. Ripped it out of the United States. And not only that—if you take a look, intellectual property theft. Add that to it. And add a lot of other things to it. So somebody——

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Excuse me. Somebody had to do it. I am the chosen one. Somebody had to do it. So I'm taking on China. [*Laughter*] I'm taking on China on trade. And you know what? We're winning. Because we're the piggybank. We're the one that all these countries, including the European Union, wants to rob and takes advantage of. European Union—\$200 billion. China—more than \$500 billion. Sorry.

Q. So it sounds like a recession is worth it.

The President. I was put here——

Q. Is that what you're saying?

The President. I was put here by people——

Q. Do you believe you're the second coming of God?

The President. I was put here by people to do a great job. And that's what I'm doing. And nobody has done a job like I've done.

Now, would China rather wait for a little more than a year and try and get Sleepy Joe Biden to negotiate with, instead of President Trump? Maybe. But I don't think so. You know why? They're losing too many jobs too fast. They had the worst year in 27 years, but I think it was actually 52 or 54 years. It's the worst year they've had in a half a century. And that's because of me. And I'm not proud of that. But you know what? They want to negotiate.

And Sleepy Joe doesn't have a clue. Sleepy Joe said, "Oh, China is wonderful." Well, China is wonderful for China. But I'm wonderful for the U.S.A.

Q. So, okay——

Q. Sir, do you believe you're the second coming of God? Do you believe you're the second coming of God?

Denmark/Greenland

Q. I'm from Danish TV. A lot of Danes are disappointed today. You—the Prime Minister said the invitation is still open. What will it take for you accept it?

The President. Well, we'll meet at some time. But the Prime Minister used a terrible word when describing something that we've been talking about for years with our country. President Truman said, "What about Greenland?" And he talked about it very openly, and it was a big deal at the time. And I brought it up again, and it was discussed many other times.

And I thought it was not a nice statement—the way she blew me off—because she is blowing off the United States. And we've done a lot for Denmark. We've done a lot. I know Denmark well. I have many friends from Denmark. I have many people from Denmark that live in the United States. And we treat countries with respect.

Q. They served with us in Afghanistan, no?

The President. She shouldn't treat the United States that way by saying, "What an absurd"—she said "absurd." That's not the right word to use: "absurd."

Q. Didn't they serve with us in Afghanistan? They served with us in Afghanistan.

Separation of Parents and Children at Mexico-U.S. Border

Q. Mr. President, why is it acceptable—why is it acceptable to lock up children indefinitely?

The President. Louder.

Q. Why is it acceptable to lock up children indefinitely, which is what the result would be of rolling back the *Flores* agreement?

The President. Well, if you remember, President Obama had separation. President Obama built the cells. He built the cages that you people always talk about and attribute them to me. President Obama, in 2014, built those cages and you were very embarrassed when the New York Times, as usual, and others, put a picture of a cage and they said how bad Trump was, only to find out that it was President Obama that built those cages.

So President Obama had separation. I'm the one that brought them together. This new rule will do even more to bring them together.

Q. How——

The President. But it was President Obama that had the separation.

Border Security

Q. How worried are you about the long-term traumatic effect that children might face if they're—if they are detained indefinitely because *Flores* is ending?

The President. Well, we're being very strong on the border. You see the numbers are way, way down. I want to thank——

Q. Are you worried about children though?

The President. I want to thank Mexico for that. The United States could make your question—could make that problem go away very easily if the Democrats would meet and we could fix the loopholes and asylum, which is what you're talking about it, to an extent.

Q. [Inaudible]

The President. But let me just tell you: Very much, I have the children on my mind. It bothers me very greatly. People make this horrible, 2,000-mile journey—one of the things that will happen, when they realize the borders are closing, the wall is being built. We're building tremendous numbers of miles of wall right now in different locations. It all comes together like a beautiful puzzle.

But one of the things that's happening—when they see you can't get into the United States, or when they see if they do get in the United States, they will be brought back to their country; it won't matter if they get in or not, because we're doing that—they won't come and many people will be saved. And many, many women's lives will not be destroyed and ruined.

Q. Sir, Joe Biden, sir—your attacks on Joe Biden's gaffes——

Q. Are you concerned about the growing deficit?

Tax Relief/National Economy/Stock Market

Q. Will we see a payroll tax cut, which is aimed at the middle class?

The President. I'm not looking at a tax cut now; we don't need it. We have a strong economy. Certainly, a payroll tax cut—President Obama did that, in order to artificially jack up the economy. President Obama had zero-interest rates. I don't have zero interest. I have real interest rates. And despite that, I have a strong economy.

President Obama did two payroll tax cuts and, despite that, I have a much stronger economy.

And if you look at my numbers from November 9—you look at them, November 9 to present—the stock market is up over 50 percent.

Media Bias/Formal Vice President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.

Q. Sir, Joe Biden's gaffes. You like to attack—you like to attack Joe Biden for his gaffes, but——

The President. This guy is the most biased reporter. NBC. You know, I made a lot of money for NBC with "The Apprentice," and I used to like them, but they are the most biased. Peter [Peter Alexander, NBC] is such a biased—you should—you should be able——

Q. Let me ask you about Joe Biden's gaffes.

The President. You should be able to ask a question—same question—in a better way.

Q. I'll ask a question.

The President. You are so obviously biased, and that's why the public has no confidence in the media. Go ahead, come here. Go ahead.

Q. Sir, I just said—sir, I just said "Joe Biden's gaffes." I'll ask my question.

The President. Joe Biden doesn't have it.

Q. Let me just say——

The President. Let me just tell you about Joe Biden.

Q. You said that the mass shooting happened in Dayton——

The President. Joe Biden doesn't have it.

Q. You said that the mass shooting happened in Toledo, when it happened in Dayton. So is that fair game?

The President. Joe Biden doesn't have it.

Go ahead.

Q. Is that fair game, sir, for you?

New York Times/Media Bias

Q. So, speaking of that, what do you think about the leaked tape of the New York Times planning for a racist narrative ahead?

The President. Well, I think the New York Times now has totally lost credibility. They've given up on the Russian collusion delusion, and now what they're doing is, they're trying the racist deal. And that's not going to work, because I am the least racist person ever to serve in office, okay? I am the least racist person.

But the New York Times, they're trying everything they can. It is a totally dishonest newspaper. It's a paper that really has lost tremendous credibility.

And let me tell you, in 6 years—or maybe 10 or maybe 14, right? In 6 years, when I'm not here, the New York Times goes out of business very quickly. And you know who else goes out? Like NBC News—NBC News has less credibility, in my opinion, with guys like you, than CNN. I think CNN has more credibility than NBC News.

Q. A couple additional questions, why should you be trusted——

Q. Mr. President, what's your response to a U.S. drone——

The President. Did you hear what I said?

Q. Yes.

The President. I said you have more credibility than this guy.

Go ahead.

Q. I think Peter has credibility.

The President. And that's not saying much——

Q. I have credibility, and Peter has credibility.

The President. ——because I don't think you have—I don't—you know what? You know why?

Q. What's your response to a U.S. drone——

The President. Because I don't think you have very much credibility.

Q. Sir, why did you abandon the fight for stronger background checks?

The President. But I—I will tell you this: NBC, I think, has less credibility than CNN. That's not saying much, but that's the way I feel.

Q. Sir, why did you abandon the fight for stronger background checks?

Mental Illness/Gun Control

Q. You're focused on mental health issues——

The President. Yes.

Q. —with gun control, but—

The President. Mental health, very important.

Q. But other countries have similar levels of mental illness and not the same gun violence problems. Can you really deny that the incredible access to guns in the United States isn't part of the problem?

The President. There are many, many things in play. People are talking about videos. People are talking about lots of different things. But we do have a way of bringing what we already have, because we have many, many—as you know, we have many, many people that are unable to buy guns right now. Many people are unable to buy guns.

We have background checks, but there are loopholes in the background checks. And that's what I spoke to the NRA about yesterday. They want to get rid of the loopholes as well as I do.

At the same time, I don't want to take away people's Second Amendment rights. I don't want to take away the Constitution, having to do with gun ownership. And you know, we can't let that slope go so easy that we're talking about background checks, then all of a sudden, we're talking about, "Let's take everybody's gun away." People need weapons, unfortunately, for protection.

Gun Control

Q. But, sir, that word "slope," that is an NRA talking point: the slippery slope.

The President. No, that's a Trump talking point.

Q. But you had to—

The President. You approve one thing, then another thing, then another thing, then all of a sudden, you're on that slope, and all of a sudden, nobody has any legal protection. We have a Second Amendment—

Gun Rights

Q. But, sir, you did not use that term. People are concerned that the NRA is pressuring you.

The President. Let me just tell you this. We have a Second Amendment—

Q. [Inaudible]—disagree with that. [Inaudible]—disagreed with that 2 weeks ago?

The President. —and our Second Amendment will remain strong.

Q. Mr. President, you put—

Q. [Inaudible]—slippery slope 2 weeks ago, sir?

Q. Are you concerned—are you concerned—

The President. Go ahead. Jeff [Jeff Mason, Reuters], go ahead.

Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) Terrorist Organization/Afghanistan/U.S. Counterterrorism Efforts

Q. Are you concerned about the potential reemergence of ISIS in Afghanistan? And is that affecting your decision-making at all?

The President. Well, you know, at a certain point, Russia, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Turkey, they're going to have to fight their battles too, okay? We wiped out the caliphate, a hundred percent. I did in record time. But at a certain point, all of these other countries where ISIS is

around—they've been decimated, by the way, badly decimated—but all of these countries are going to have to fight them. Because do we want to stay there for another 19 years? I don't think so.

So, at a certain point, other countries—and that includes Russia, and it includes Iran and Turkey and Iraq and Afghanistan and Pakistan and India. Look, India is right there. They're not fighting it; we're fighting it. Pakistan is right next door. They're fighting it very little, very, very little. It's not fair.

The United States, we're 7,000 miles away. We have decimated ISIS. You haven't been hearing much about ISIS. And we took the caliphate, 100 percent. When I took it at 98 [percent],* I said: "All right, maybe we go home now. Let these other countries handle it." Everyone went crazy. They said, "Do 100 percent." They said it was going to take a year. It took me a month, and they're gone. The caliphate is gone.

And by the way, we're holding thousands of ISIS fighters right now, and Europe has to take them. And if Europe doesn't take them, I'll have no choice but to release them into the countries from which they came, which is Germany and France and other places.

Q. Mr. President——

The President. Because we beat them. We captured them. We've got thousands of them. And now, as usual, our allies say: "Oh, no. We don't want them." Even though they came from France and Germany and other places. So we're going to tell them, and we've already told them, "Take these prisoners that we've captured, because the United States is not going to put them in Guantanamo for the next 50 years and pay for it."

Q. What's your deadline for that?

Q. Sir, why should Americans——

The President. It's moving along, my deadline. They know.

Q. Sir, why should Americans be allowed to buy assault rifles?

Q. By how long—1 week, 2 weeks?

The President's Visits With Shooting Victims in Dayton, Ohio, and El Paso, Texas

Q. Are you talking to the victims of mass shootings to ask them what they want?

The President. I did. I went to the hospitals——

Q. What are you hearing from them about what they want from guns laws?

The President. I will tell you this: I went to the hospitals. It was totally falsely reported. There were beautiful, beautiful, very sad, you know, horrible moments. But there were beautiful moments, in the sense that these people—the families and also the people that were so badly injured that I was with—they love our country.

Q. But what to do they want in terms of gun laws?

The President. And frankly, do you want to know the truth? They love their President.

Q. What do they want in the gun laws?

The President. And nobody wrote that. Nobody wrote that, because you didn't write the truth. The New York Times doesn't like to write the truth. But——

* White House correction.

Q. Sir, what——

The President. But they love—they totally love our country, and they do love our President.

So when I went to Dayton, and when I went to El Paso, and I went into those hospitals, the love for me—and me, maybe, as a representative of the country—but for me—and my love for them was unparalleled. These are incredible people. But if you read the papers, you'd—it was like nobody would meet with me.

Q. What did they tell you that they want in terms of gun laws?

The President. Not only did they meet with me, they were pouring out of the room. The doctors were coming out of the operating rooms. There were hundreds and hundreds of people all over the floor. You couldn't even walk on it. So you know, there's a lot to happen.

Q. What do they want from gun laws? You're talking to the NRA, I'm wondering what——

The President. The people in Dayton—let me just explain. The people in Dayton, people of El Paso, these are incredible people. And those victims and the survivors and the families, I love those people.

Q. Sir, what do you say to those critics——

Q. Mr. President, you just said—you just told us that you aren't looking at doing——

Q. Sir, the thumbs up at the migrant camp, what do you say to those critics who attack that?

Q. [Inaudible]

The President. Louder. Louder.

Tax Relief/National Economy/Federal Reserve System

Q. You just said you aren't looking at doing indexing. Yesterday you suggested you were. Which is it?

The President. I've looked at indexing for a long time. It's not something I love. I think it's probably better for the high-income people, and I'm not looking to do that. I want to do for the workers. I'm looking to do for middle-income people.

I think indexing—now, I'd have to get a letter from the Attorney General or from the Justice Department, which I think I might be able to get; otherwise, I'd have to go through Congress. But I'm not looking at doing indexing. And I haven't been seriously looking at it. But certainly, it is an option if I wanted to.

We have such a strong economy. If the Fed did what they were supposed to do, they'd drop interest rates by a hundred basis points. They maybe would do, not only not tightening, but they'd do some loosening or leave it alone. Do nothing. But they'd drop interest rates by a hundred basis points or more, nobody—nobody—would be able to compete with the United States.

Right now the Fed is tying our hands, because we're paying interest rates, and Germany and other countries that aren't like us are not. It should be the other way around, in a sense. But why should they be paying no interest rates and even have an incentive beyond that, and we're paying interest rates? The Fed has missed the call for a long time.

Q. Mr. President, the thumbs-up at the migrant camp, what do you say to those critics who attacked you for that? What do you say to those critics who attacked you for that?

National Economy/Strength of the U.S. Dollar

Q. Mr. President, are you saying that you're not pursuing any tax cuts at all at this time?

The President. I think we have a very strong economy. I don't—I just don't see any reason to. I think the Fed has been very late and very early. They were very early to raise, and they're very, very late to cut. But the Fed can do the whole thing.

Yesterday we had the strongest dollar in the history of our country. Yesterday—wait. Yesterday, we had the strongest dollar in the history of our country. Now, in one way, I'm honored by that. But in another way, it makes it much harder to export goods. You understand.

So in two ways—one, I love it. But in another way, I don't like it because it's much harder to compete. But we had literally the strongest dollar in the history of our country.

Birthright Citizenship

Q. Mr. President, are you going to do an Executive order on birthright citizenship to follow up these rule changes over the last couple weeks?

The President. Say it.

Q. Are you going to do an Executive order on birthright citizenship still to follow up on these rule changes?

The President. We're looking at that very seriously, birthright citizenship. Where you have a baby on our land—you walk over the border, have a baby. Congratulations, the baby is now a U.S. citizen. We're looking at it very, very seriously.

Q. [*Inaudible*—at all?

The President. I don't know how you found that out, but that's very good. We are looking at birthright citizenship very seriously. It's, frankly, ridiculous.

Q. Sir, the thumbs up at the migrant camp, what do you say to those critics who attacked you for that?

Separation of Parents and Children at Mexico-U.S. Border/Border Security

Q. Mr. President, do you favor unlimited detention of migrant minors in the *Flores* changes?

The President. Do I what?

Q. Unlimited detention of migrant minors in U.S. custody.

The President. I am the one that kept the families together. Okay? You remember that, right? Just remember I said it. And now it gets even better: President Obama and others brought the families apart, but I'm the one that kept the families together.

With what we're doing now, we'll do even more of that, but it will make it almost impossible for people to come into our country illegally.

Plus, we're building large sections of the wall. I won the lawsuit 2 weeks ago in the Supreme Court. We're building large sections of wall and lots of other things are happening.

Q. Mr. President, does Boris Johnson—sir, sir, Boris Johnson—

Apple, Inc. Chief Executive Officer Timothy D. Cook

Q. What about Tim Cook of Apple, sir? You seem to have a good relationship with Tim Cook. You seem to have a good relationship with Tim Cook of Apple.

The President. I do.

Q. But why more so with him than with other tech executives, say?

The President. Oh, I have it with everybody, but he's the one that calls me. You know why? That's why he's a great executive, because he calls me, and others don't. Others go out and hire very expensive consultants, and Tim Cook calls Donald Trump directly. Pretty good. And I would take their call too, but the only one that calls me is Tim Cook.

He calls me—whenever there's a problem, he'll call. Now, the problem was that Samsung, a competitor, a good competitor—wouldn't be paying tariffs and Tim Cook would. I've got to help him out, short term, with that problem, because it's a great American company. Samsung is in South Korea. Not fair that Samsung isn't hit, while he's hit. Right?

Q. How about——

The President. But the reason I speak to Tim Cook: He's the one that calls me. The other ones don't call. They go out and hire—for millions of dollars—consultants that have less power than you do. [Laughter]

Q. Mr. President——

Democratic Party/Anti-Semitism/Representatives Rashida H. Tlaib, Ilhan A. Omar, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, and Ayanna S. Pressley

Q. If Jews vote for Democrats, would they be disloyal to Israel? Is that what you're saying?

The President. Oh, I'd say so. Yes. Yes.

Q. Isn't that anti-Semitic to say?

The President. No, no, no. It's only in your head. It's only anti-Semitic in your head.

If you look at what Tlaib, Omar, Cortez—if you look at what these people I say—if you just—A.O.C. plus four or plus three. If you look at what they say, what they are—they are so bad for Israel. They are so bad for Jewish people.

You take a look at the horrible, anti-Semitic statements that they've made. You take a look at what they want to do to Israel. Take a look at the fact that they want aid—all of the aid—almost \$4 billion—all of the aid cut from Israel. You take a look.

You know what? The Democrats have to own it. And I say this: Anybody that votes for a Democrat, they're voting for that. That's the face of your party. And that's very bad for Israel.

Q. What do you say to Jewish people who——

Downing of a U.S. Drone Over Yemen

Q. A U.S. drone was shot down over Yemen. What is your response?

The President. You'll find out.

Q. When?

The President. You're going to find out.

Political Demonstrations in Hong Kong

Q. Did Hong Kong give you leverage in the China talks? Does Hong Kong give you leverage in the China talks—in the negotiation?

The President. I don't view it as leverage, no. I hope Hong Kong works out in a very humane way. I don't view it as leverage or nonleverage. I hope it works out in a humane way. And I think that President Xi has the ability to make sure that happens.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:41 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House prior to boarding Marine One. In his remarks, he referred to Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome H. Powell; Wayne LaPierre, executive vice president and chief executive officer, National Rifle Association; Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert L. Wilkie, Jr.; Connor Stephen Betts, suspected gunman in the shooting in the Oregon District of Dayton, OH, on August 4; Muftiyah Tlaib, grandmother of Rep. Tlaib, a resident of Beit Ur al-Fauqa, West Bank, in the Palestinian Territories; and President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia. A reporter referred to Prime Minister Boris Johnson of the United Kingdom.

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

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Barr, William P.; Biden, Joseph R., Jr.; Bush, George W.; Clinton, William J.; Cook, Timothy D.; Frederiksen, Mette; LaPierre, Wayne; Obama, Barack; Ocasio-Cortez, Alexandria; Omar, Ilhan A.; Powell, Jerome H.; Pressley, Ayanna S.; Putin, Vladimir Vladimirovich; Tlaib, Muftiyah; Tlaib, Rashida H.; Trump, Melania; Wilkie, Robert L., Jr.; Xi Jinping.

Subjects: Afghanistan : U.S. military forces :: Deployment; Antifa movement; Apple, Inc.; China : President; China : Trade with U.S.; China : U.S. tariff structure, strengthening efforts; Civil rights : Firearm rights; Civil rights : Minorities :: Anti-Semitism; Commerce, international : Group of Seven (G-7) nations; Commerce, international : Intellectual property law, strengthening efforts; Communications : News media :: Accuracy and fairness; Communications : News media :: Presidential interviews; Defense and national security : Border security; Denmark : Prime Minister; Denmark : Relations with U.S.; Economy, national : Improvement; Economy, national : Strengthening efforts; Europe : European Union :: Trade with U.S.; Health and medical care : Mental health programs and services; Immigration and naturalization : Citizenship; Immigration and naturalization : Illegal immigration; Immigration and naturalization : Reform; Iran : International diplomatic efforts; Israel : Golan Heights, U.S. recognition; Israel : Jerusalem, U.S. recognition as capital; Israel : Relations with U.S.; Israel : U.S. Embassy, relocation to Jerusalem; Justice, Department of : Attorney General; Law enforcement and crime : Criminal background check procedures, strengthening efforts; Law enforcement and crime : Gun control; Mexico : Border with U.S., infrastructure and security; Mexico : Immigration enforcement, cooperation with U.S.; Ohio : Dayton :: Shooting; Reserve System, Federal; Rifle Association, National; Russia : 2016 U.S. elections, interference; Russia : President; Russia : Relations with Ukraine; Syria : Civil war and sectarian conflict; Taxation : Capital gains tax; Taxation : Tax relief; Terrorism : Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist organization; Texas : El Paso :: Terrorist attack; Ukraine : Russia, role; Veterans : Suicide rate; Veterans Affairs, Department of : Secretary.

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