

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2019

Remarks and an Exchange With Reporters Prior to Departure for Baltimore, Maryland

September 12, 2019

The President. Thank you, everybody. So the stock market is up again, and we're very close to a new high. It would be over a hundred times, I believe. You'll check it. But many, many times, we set the record. So we're very honored by that. We're having a tremendous couple of weeks. A lot of good things are happening.

I got a call from heads of China. The call was directed to my people, actually. And they asked whether or not it would be possible to delay the hit on the tariffs up to 30 percent from 25 percent—would it be possible to take it off of the October 1 date. We gave them a 2-week—in honor of President Xi, we gave them a 2-week reprieve. And so we'll be doing the tariffs on October 15, instead of October 5 or 1.

They were going to be set on October 1; we're moving it to October 15 because they're having their 70th anniversary. And I will do that, again, in honor of President Xi.

And that's it. Any questions.

Q. Mr. President——

Q. [*Inaudible*]—about guns. Guns——

Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo/National Security Adviser Candidates

Q. Mr. President, are you considering Secretary Pompeo to also be the National Security Adviser?

The President. No, I wouldn't. I think he's fantastic, but I actually spoke to Mike Pompeo about that, and he decided—and he and I—I get along with him so well. We have a lot of the same views and a couple of a little different views. But he likes the idea of having somebody in there with him, and I do too.

I think that we'll have an answer for you; we have 15 candidates. Everybody wants it badly, as you can imagine. And we'll probably next week sometime make that decision. And we look forward to that.

Q. Mr. President——

Q. Anything on guns?

National Security Adviser Candidates

Q. [*Inaudible*]—15 candidates. Yesterday you said you had five candidates.

The President. We had. We have at least 10 more. A lot of people want the job. And we—it's a great job. It's great because it's a lot of fun to work with Donald Trump. And it's very easy, actually, to work with me. You know why it's easy? Because I make all the decisions. They don't have to work.

The President's Travel to Baltimore, Maryland/Special Congressional Elections in North Carolina

Q. Mr. President, you called Baltimore, at one point, "rodent-infested." What's your message to the people of Baltimore now, as you head to Baltimore?

The President. Well, I look forward—we're going to Baltimore right now. I look forward to it. We're going to be with the Republican Congressmen, and I think it's going to be a very successful evening.

We're—we had a tremendous election on Tuesday, and you saw the results on Tuesday night. One gentleman was Dan Bishop. He was not doing so well 3 or 4 weeks ago. We got the message out, and he won the election. He was losing substantially, and he ended up winning fairly easily. That's Dan Bishop. And Greg Murphy won by a lot more than it was expected. He won by many points. And a lot of people thought that was going to be a close race.

So we won two seats in Congress on Thursday, and I guess the press didn't talk about it too much. They would have if they lost, but they won. The Republicans had a great night on Tuesday.

Q. On China, sir. Mr. President, on China——

China-U.S. Trade

Q. Are you considering any kind of interim deal with the Chinese, where they make a commitment on intellectual property and agriculture?

The President. Well, it's something that people talk about. I'd rather get the whole deal done. We've taken in many, many billions of dollars of tariffs. I'd rather get the entire Chinese done—look, if we're going to do the deal, let's get it done.

A lot of people are talking about it, and I see a lot of analysts are saying an interim deal, meaning we'll do pieces of it, the easy ones first. But there's no easy or hard. There's a deal, or there's not a deal. But it's something we would consider, I guess.

But we're very—we're doing very well. We're doing very well. I did the little bit of a delay in honor of President Xi because it's their 70th anniversary in China.

Democratic Presidential Debate

Q. Mr. President, what do you expect out of the debate tonight?

The President. Well, it's too bad I'm going to miss it. I'm going to have to have it somehow taped. I didn't even tell them about that, so maybe it's not that important. But it is important.

Q. [Inaudible]

The President. Look, it's going to be very interesting. I look forward to going home. I'm going to have to watch it as a rerun, because many of you are coming to Baltimore with me.

I don't expect too much difference. I mean, you have three people that are leading. I sort of think that those three people are going to take it to the end. It's going to be one of those three, I think. But you never know in politics, do we? You know better than I. You never know in politics.

Q. Mr. President——

Q. Mr. President, the gun meeting today——

Democratic Presidential Candidates

Q. Out of those three, who do you think your strongest opponent is?

The President. I think—you know, look, they all have their weaknesses and their strengths. I think that they're very different. You certainly have a lot of different voices up there. But it would look to me like it would be Elizabeth Warren. And it looks like Joe, maybe, will be able to get there. Maybe not. I don't know. And certainly, Bernie is there. He's number three.

But I think that—because they're so far in the lead—the three of them. And if you remember, I'm sure you forget my Republican primaries, but I went to the lead at the very beginning and stayed there. It's—you know, if you don't make a really major mistake, he should be able to make it. I would imagine Biden would be able to make it if he doesn't make any major mistakes. We'll see what happens.

Q. Mr. President, in your meeting on guns today, have you made any progress on guns?

The President's Support Among African Americans

Q. The man that you called "my African American" at your rally in 2016, he says he's leaving the Republican Party, because you're pursuing a pro-White agenda. What's your reaction to that?

The President. Yes, go ahead. Go ahead. What?

Q. What do you—what do you say to him? What do you say to—he used to be a supporter of yours?

The President. Go ahead.

Q. He's—it's a supporter of yours.

Q. Do you have any answer for——

Q. He's a supporter of yours that used to be a supporter, and then he's not anymore.

The President. I don't know who you're talking about.

Q. He's the man that you pointed out at the rally and called "my African American." He used to support you.

The President. I don't know. We have tremendous African American support. I would say I'm at my alltime high.

Q. He said your pro——

The President. I don't think I've ever had the support that I have now. And I think I'm going to do very well with African American.

Q. Do you think he's wrong?

The President. African American support is been the best we've had, and I think a lot of it has to do with the fact that, from an employment and unemployment—both—employment and unemployment——

Q. But do you think he's wrong? Do you think he's wrong that you're pursuing a pro-White agenda?

The President. Well, I think this. I think this. It's very simple: We have the best numbers we've ever had for African Americans, in terms of employment and unemployment. So I think we're going to do very well.

Q. Mr. President, in your meeting on guns today, Mr. President——

Gun Control Measures/Ethanol

Q. Have you made any decisions on guns or ethanol today?

The President. So we had a big meeting on guns, and we had a big meeting on ethanol. We had a great meeting with Chuck Grassley, Joni Ernst, Mike Rounds. We had—Kim was there, Iowa. Kim was there. We had some terrific people. John Thune.

We had a meeting on ethanol. We had a meeting on guns. Separately, and different people. And I think we made some good progress on background checks and guns. I think we had a great meeting on ethanol, for the farmers. I think we had—our ethanol meeting was a great meeting. Let's see what happens.

Q. Did you make any decisions?

The President. But there's been nobody better to farmers than Donald Trump, that I can tell you.

Q. When will you have a gun plan, sir?

The President. I think we made a lot of progress on ethanol, and I think we made a lot of progress on guns.

Yes.

Q. When do you expect to have a plan?

North Korea

Q. Will you meet with Kim Jong Un this year? You will meet Kim Jong Un sometime this year, Mr. President?

The President. At some point, yes. He will—certainly, they want to meet. They'd like to meet. I think it's something that will happen. And we'll see. But Kim Jong Un, I think something can happen.

Yes.

Border Security

Q. President Trump, on the military—on military construction funds: Senator Tim Kaine says you're putting national security at risk, and Democrats are calling for a vote to overturn your national emergency. What's your response to that and would you reconsider—[inaudible]?

The President. So the wall is being built. We need the wall for purposes of national security. The military is behind it all the way. Any project that they may delay a little bit, it's only a delay. They'll get built. But the wall is something that we need. We're going to be building hundreds of miles of walls. We have, as you know, a Supreme Court decision, which was outstanding.

We also had a Supreme Court decision yesterday on asylum. And that was a very, very big decision. And it was a 7-to-2 decision. The asylum decision was very big, but we had a very good decision on the wall and wall funding.

And the wall is going up as we speak. We intend to have, approximately, you know, maybe something short of 500 miles of wall. That would be almost everything that we need. About 500 miles is what we need. And we're going to be very close to that by the end of next year.

Q. Mr. President——

National Economy/The President's Accomplishments

Q. The House Judiciary Committee approved a resolution defining the panel's investigation—the impeachment investigation. Are you concerned at all——

The President. No, I'm not.

Q. ——that they're moving forward, potentially, on this?

The President. We've done the best job of any President in 2½ years of—in office. Our economy is incredible. Rules, regulations—everything that we've rolled back have really led to a resurgent economy. If you look at all of the things we've done for the military, if you look at what we've done for the vets, if you look at everything we've done from an economic standpoint to a national security standpoint, I think our country is in one of the best conditions that it's ever been in. I think the economy may be the strongest it's even been in the history of our country.

And people know we're doing a great job. They do play politics, and they continue to play politics. And a lot of people think that's the only way. But you know what? Most people think that helps me. It's really an embarrassment to our country. We've done a great job.

Yes.

North Korea/Iran/China-U.S. Trade

Q. Thank you. Mr. President, Kim Jong Un wants new conditions for negotiation with the United States. Are you accept the new conditions for the negotiations?

The President. Well, we're going to see. I think that North Korea would like to meet. I think you probably have heard that. I can tell you that Iran wants to meet, and China wants to make a deal. So we have a lot interesting things going on. Okay?

Former Federal Bureau of Investigation Deputy Director Andrew G. McCabe

Q. Mr. President, should Andrew McCabe be charged?

The President. Well, I haven't seen the Andrew McCabe situation. I really don't know about it yet. I heard it was big news before, but I have not been able to find out exactly what happened with Andrew McCabe. Something happened that was very big. It was just breaking as I was——walked out. But I haven't seen it yet.

David [David Martosko, Daily Mail].

E-Cigarette Use

Q. Mr. President, what exactly have you and the First Lady told Barron about vaping?

The President. We haven't told him anything except: "Don't vape. Don't vape." We don't like vaping. I don't like vaping.

Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi/National Economy

Q. Mr. President, do you think Nancy Pelosi is scared to impeach you?

The President. I don't think she's scared of anything. I think she's a smart woman, and I think she knows exactly what she is doing.

We have the strongest economy in the history of our country. We're about ready to break the record again on stock market. We've broken the record on jobs. African American, we just broke the record again. You know that.

If you look at Hispanic American, Asian American, the best employment and unemployment numbers in the history of our country. With women, we're at 71 percent. Seventy-one years. Think of this, 71 years. The best numbers in 71 years.

No, I think we've done a great job. There are those that say the best job in the history of our country, for the first 2½ years. So, pretty much, that's the story.

Q. Mr. President, is there any evidence——

Gun Control/Ethanol/Second Amendment Protections

Q. [Inaudible]—deal on guns? And what will you do with the NRA?

The President. So we had a big meeting today on guns. We had a big meeting today on ethanol. Both meetings went very well. A lot of progress was made, I believe, on the background checks and various things having to do with guns. We're dealing with the Democrats. And we're dealing—I think we're dealing very well. It seems like they'd like to do something. And I think that I can speak for Republicans: They'd like to do something.

Q. What about the NRA?

The President. We'll see what can happen. But we're always protecting our Second Amendment. I want to make it clear: Our Second Amendment will be protected fully.

Q. Is the NRA—[inaudible]?

Venezuela/Cuba

Q. Mr. President, how was John Bolton holding you back on Venezuela, sir?

The President. Say it.

Q. How was John Bolton holding you back on Venezuela? Do you want more in military—

The President. Well, we're dealing on Venezuela right now. It's going to be a very interesting period of time. We're also trying to help; a lot of Venezuelans are dying. They have no food. They have no water. And we are trying to help. A lot of them have escaped, so to speak, into Colombia and different places. We're trying to help those people that have been able to get out.

But we are dealing with a lot of things having to do with Venezuela. My attitude on Venezuela is a very tough one. And frankly, my attitude on Cuba is a very tough one. And, in a way, they go hand in hand, because Cuba has always made it possible for Venezuela to do what they're doing. And frankly, that's ending now. And likewise, Venezuela, through the oil, took care of Cuba. A lot of that is ending right now.

Israel-U.S. Relations

Q. Have you seen any evidence that the Israelis have been spying on you and the White House?

The President. I don't believe that. No, I don't think the Israelis were spying on us. I really would find that hard to believe.

My relationship with Israel has been great. You look at Golan Heights. You look at Jerusalem, with moving the Embassy to Jerusalem, becoming the capital. You look at even the Iran deal—what's happened with Iran. Iran is a much different country right now than it was 2½ years ago. It's a much—it's in a much different position.

No, I don't believe that. I wouldn't believe that story. It could—anything's possible, but I don't believe it.

Democratic Presidential Candidates

Q. Are there any Democrats debating tonight that you actually respect?

The President. I respect all of them.

Q. All of them?

The President. I respect every one. Let me tell you: It takes a lot of courage to run for office. I respect all of them.

See that? I'm getting to be much better as a politician. You never thought you'd hear that answer.

Go.

Gun Control Legislation/Second Amendment Protections

Q. You said you had this big meeting on guns today. Are you going to support strengthening background checks? Yes or no?

The President. I think so. It depends, really, on the Democrats. It depends on whether or not the Democrats want to take your guns away—because there's a possibility that this is just a ploy to take your guns away—or whether or not it's meaningful. If it's meaningful, we'll make a deal.

If this is a movement by the Democrats to take your guns away, then it's never going to happen because we're never going to let that happen. We will always be there for our Second Amendment.

So we're going to see. If the Democrats want to make a deal, we could make a deal.

Thank you, everybody.

Elections in Israel

Q. Mr. President, how important are the Israeli elections next week?

The President. Very important.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:47 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House prior to boarding Marine One. In his remarks, he referred to Representatives-elect Dan Bishop and Greg Murphy; Sens. Elizabeth A. Warren and Bernard Sanders and former Vice President Joseph R. Biden, Jr., in their capacity as 2020 Democratic Presidential candidates; Sens. Charles E. Grassley, Joni K. Ernst, M. Michael Rounds, and John R. Thune; Gov. Kimberly K. Reynolds of Iowa; and Chairman of the State Affairs Commission Kim Jong Un of North Korea. A reporter referred to California Independent congressional candidate Gregory Cheadle; and former National Security Adviser John R. Bolton.

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

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Biden, Joseph R., Jr.; Bishop, Dan; Ernst, Joni K.; Grassley, Charles E.; Kim Jong Un; McCabe, Andrew G.; Murphy, Greg; Pelosi, Nancy; Pompeo, Michael R.; Reynolds, Kimberly K.; Rounds, M. Michael; Sanders, Bernard; Thune, John R.; Trump, Barron; Warren, Elizabeth A.; Xi Jinping.

Subjects: Armed Forces, U.S. : Funding; China : President; China : Trade with U.S.; China : U.S. tariff structure, strengthening efforts; Civil rights : Firearm rights; Communications : News media :: Accuracy and fairness; Communications : News media :: Presidential interviews; Congress : House of Representatives :: Speaker; Defense and national security : Border security; Economy, national : Improvement; Elections : 2020 Presidential and congressional elections; Employment and unemployment : Job creation and growth; Employment and unemployment : Unemployment rate; Energy : Ethanol and biofuels; Government organization and employees : Federal regulations, review; Health and medical care : E-cigarette use and vaping, reduction efforts; Immigration and naturalization : Foreign nationals and refugees, U.S. admission policy; Iowa : Governor; Iran : International diplomatic efforts; Iran : Nuclear program, Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action; Israel : Elections; Israel : Relations with U.S.; Judiciary : Judicial review; Law

enforcement and crime : Criminal background check procedures, strengthening efforts; Law enforcement and crime : Gun control; Mexico : Border with U.S., infrastructure and security; North Carolina : Special congressional elections; North Korea : Chairman, State Affairs Commission; North Korea : International diplomatic efforts; State, Department of : Secretary; Venezuela : International assistance ; Venezuela : Oil supply and refining; Venezuela : Political unrest and violence; Veterans : Health and medical care; White House Office : Assistants to the President :: National Security Adviser.

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