

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2019

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Prime Minister Scott Morrison of Australia and an Exchange With Reporters

September 20, 2019

President Trump. Thank you very much, everybody. It's a great honor to have Prime Minister of Australia. And congratulations and thank you very much, Mrs. Morrison. Thank you very much for being here. We appreciate it. This was a lovely ceremony. I hope you liked it.

Prime Minister Morrison. Absolutely.

Jennifer Morrison, wife of Prime Minister Morrison. We absolutely loved it.

President Trump. It was in honor of you and Australia.

Mrs. Morrison. Thank you.

President Trump. Okay? Thank you very much.

So we have a lot of things to talk about. We're talking trade. We're talking military. We've been great allies for a long time. There's no better partnership.

And we've developed, on a personal basis, a tremendous friendship, and that helps. That helps a lot. But we'll be meeting after this and having some very serious discussions about many things.

Additional U.S. Sanctions on Iran/Saudi Arabia-U.S. Security Cooperation/Iran

I do want to, if I may intercede for just a second: We have just sanctioned the Iranian National Bank. That is their central banking system. And it's going to be at the highest level of sanctions. So that just took place, and a couple of other things.

We have our Secretary of Treasury here, Steve Mnuchin. If you want to say just a word, Steve, before we begin.

Secretary of the Treasury Steven T. Mnuchin. Mr. President, as you instructed me, we are continuing the maximum-pressure campaign. This is the last remaining source of funds. So both the Central Bank of Iran, as well as the National Development Fund, which is their sovereign wealth fund, will be cut off from our banking system. So this will mean no more funds going to the IRGC or to fund terror. And this is on top of our oil sanctions and our financial institution sanctions. Thank you, Mr. President.

Iran

Q. How big are the sanctions, Mr. Secretary and Mr. President?

Secretary Mnuchin. This is very big. We've now cut off all source of funds to Iran.

Q. It goes all the way up to the very top?

Secretary Mnuchin. That does.

Q. Does that mean to the President of Iran?

President Trump. Right to the top.

Q. The Supreme Leader?

President Trump. Right to the top. Okay?

Q. The Supreme Leader?

President Trump. Yes. Right to the top. Thank you very much, Steve. Appreciate it.

Secretary Mnuchin. Thank you, Mr. President.

President Trump. So we're dealing with many nations. We're dealing with some of the neighbors to Saudi Arabia. And of course, we're dealing with Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia is very much involved, from the standpoint of what we're doing and what they're doing. And we're working together with others.

We're also working on the cost of this whole endeavor. And Saudi Arabia has been very generous. We want to see if it works out. And if it works out, that's great. And if it doesn't work out, that's great. In the end, it always works out. That's the way it is: It always works out.

So you'll be seeing certain things happening, but a very major factor is what we did. These are the highest sanctions ever imposed on a country. We've never done it to this level. And it's too bad what's happening with Iran. It's going to hell, doing poorly. They are practically broke. They are broke. And they could—they could solve the problem very easily. All they have to do is stop with the terror.

They have been the number-one—as you know, Scott, very well—number-one country worldwide of terror, between sponsoring it and doing it themselves. And we can't have it. They have a tremendous potential. They have an incredible potential. I can—I think I can speak on behalf on Australia too, in the sense that we'd like to see them do very well.

We were discussing it before—the Prime Minister and myself. We want to see them to do well. But it looks to me like, with what's happening, maybe they want to keep going at it. And when they go at it with us, there's no way they win, no way they win in any way or in any capacity.

So we wanted to let you know about that. And that's the way it is.

Australia-U.S. Relations

And thank you all very much. We're going to spend a lot of time with Australia today. Today is our—a very special day for the United States because we're honoring a great ally and a great friend.

Thank you. Thank you.

Prime Minister Morrison. Thank you, Mr. President.

President Trump. Thank you very much.

Q. [Inaudible]

President Trump. Scott, would you like to say something?

Prime Minister Morrison. It's a tremendous honor for Australians for Jenny and I to be here with the President and Mrs. Trump. It's a very gracious invitation. But it's an invitation that recognizes not just, you know, the great relationship that the President and I have been able to forge so early, but this goes back a long way, this relationship.

As the President often says, we've been in a lot of battles. And those battles, of course, is what's happened in the field of conflicts, but we're battling continuously for a prosperous and a free world.

President Trump. And we've never lost.

Prime Minister Morrison. Well, we've been doing great. And we're going to keep doing great because——

President Trump. Keep it that way. *[Laughter]*

Prime Minister Morrison. ——we have to keep this partnership together. And it's a partnership where we both carry our own weight. As I said outside, we look to America, but we don't leave it to America.

Iran

Q. Prime Minister, the President said he spoke for Australia on Iran. Does he?

Prime Minister Morrison. Well, he was saying that we both would like to see a prosperous Iran. We'd like to see the people of Iran—we want to see the people right across the world to be able to benefit from prosperous economies doing well. That's what we want. This is why Australia and the United States have always worked so closely together is because that's what we want for our own people; that's what we want for everyone.

Q. Are our two countries heading to another conflict together?

President Trump. And we've been speaking this subject, the two of us. We—I think we have very similar views on the subject.

Steve *[Steve A. Holland, Reuters]*.

Q. Mr. President, are you holding on—*[inaudible]*—on this?

Intelligence Community Whistleblower/The President's Communications With Foreign Leaders

Q. Mr. President, do you want to address this whistleblower story, sir?

Q. Will you be asking—will you be asking——

President Trump. Wait a minute, please.

Q. Do you want to address this whistleblower story?

President Trump. What story?

Q. The whistleblower, whether it was—*[inaudible]*?

President Trump. It's a ridiculous story. It's a partisan whistleblower. Shouldn't even have information. I've had conversations with many leaders. They're always appropriate. I think Scott can tell you that. Always appropriate. At the highest level, always appropriate. And anything I do, I fight for this country. I fight so strongly for this country. It's just another political hack job.

Former Vice President Joseph R. Biden, Jr./The President's Communications With Foreign Leaders

Q. Mr. President, on that point, did you discuss Joe Biden, his son, or his family with the leader of Ukraine?

President Trump. It doesn't matter what I discuss. But I will say this: Somebody ought to look into Joe Biden's statement, because it was disgraceful, where he talked about billions of dollars that he's not giving to a certain country unless a certain prosecutor is taken off the case.

So somebody ought to look into that. And you wouldn't, because he's a Democrat. And the fake news doesn't look into things like that. It's a disgrace.

Q. Mr. President——

President Trump. But I had a great conversation with numerous people. I don't even know exactly who you're talking about, but I had a great conversation with numerous people, numerous leaders. And I always look for the conversation that's going to help the United States the most. That's very important.

Intelligence Community Whistleblower/News Media

Q. Mr. President, do you know the identity of the whistleblower? Do you know the identity of the whistleblower?

President Trump. I don't know the identity of the whistleblower. I just hear it's a partisan person, meaning it comes out from another party. But I don't have any idea. But I can say it was a totally appropriate conversation. It was actually a beautiful conversation.

And this is no different than—you know, the press has had a very bad week with Justice Kavanaugh and all of those ridiculous charges and all of the mistakes made at the New York Times and other places. You've had a very bad week. And this will be better than all of them. This is another one. So keep——

Q. Mr. President——

President Trump. So keep——

Q. Mr. President——

President Trump. So keep playing it up, because you're going to look really bad when it falls. You know, I guess I'm about——

Q. Did you mention Joe Biden during the

President Trump. I guess I'm about 22-and-oh, and I'll keep it that way.

The President's Communications With Foreign Leaders

Q. Did you mention Joe Biden during the conversation though, Mr. President?

President Trump. I don't want to talk about any conversation, other than to say——

Q. Mr. President—[inaudible]——

President Trump. ——other than to say: great conversation, totally appropriate conversation, couldn't have been better. And keep asking questions and build it up as big as possible so you can have a bigger downfall.

Q. [Inaudible]

China-U.S. Trade

Q. Mr. President, will you be asking Australia to do more when it comes to China?

President Trump. Say it. What?

Q. Will you be asking Australia to do more when it comes to China?

President Trump. Well, we're talking about China all the time. And Scott has very strong opinions on China. And I think I'd let him, maybe, express those opinions. Maybe you do it right now. You're not going to get a better audience than this. [Laughter]

Prime Minister Morrison. We have a comprehensive strategic partnership with China. We work well with China. But, as we've spoken many times, we need to ensure that as countries develop and realize their potential, well, they come onto a whole new level. And that means there can't be special rules around that.

And we have a great relationship with China. China's growth has been great for Australia. But we need to make sure that we all compete on the same playing field.

And this is something that United States and Australia have been very consistent on, that we need to move into this new world where economies are changing; China is a big economy, not as big as the United States, but it's a big economy. And that means we've all got to get on the same page with how the rules work. And that's what we're working to achieve.

Q. [Inaudible]

President Trump. I will say this: We're making a lot of progress with China. They're having a very bad year, worst year in 57 years. The tariffs are coming into us. We're taking in billions and billions of dollars of tariffs. They're devaluing their currency, which means the tariffs are not costing us probably anything, but certainly not very much. They're also adding a lot of money into their economy. They're pouring money into their economy.

But we're taking in many billions of dollars. At some point in the not-too-distant future, it will be over a hundred billion dollars. We've never taken in a hundred cents from China. It was always the other way around.

With that, they've lost over 3 million jobs. Their supply chain is crashing. And they have a lot of problems. And I can tell you, they want to make a deal. That I can tell you. They want to make a deal. So we'll see what happens. We'll see what happens.

Q. On Iran—

U.S. Military Readiness/U.S. Defense Spending/Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) Terrorist Organization/Repatriation of Captured Terrorist Suspects/Guantanamo Bay Naval Base Detention Facilities

Q. Are you prepared for military action against Iran, Mr. President?

President Trump. Always prepared. There's never been a country more prepared.

Q. Are you planning for it?

President Trump. There's never been a country more prepared. Look, I spent—

Q. Is that going to happen?

President Trump. I spent 1½ trillion dollars. And we're spending another \$738 billion now. But I've spent 1½ trillion dollars rebuilding our military. We have the finest ships, the finest planes, the finest everything.

And actually, Scott and Australia, they've purchased a lot of great stuff from the United States, some of the best military equipment that you have. We have the greatest missiles in the world, rockets in the world, jetfighters in the world, planes in the world, ships. And we have, under construction, a number of the most powerful submarines ever built. And they're getting very close to completion.

We have the largest ship in the world right now, the President *Gerald Ford*, the aircraft carrier. It's the largest ship ever built. And just flew over it yesterday, actually. It's massive and beautiful.

We have the greatest—and I have to say this, when I got here, Scott, it was a different world. It was a different world. We were very depleted. And I actually saw one of the related networks today saying how strongly and good and how well we've done with ISIS. I defeated the caliphate.

Now, when I came, the caliphate was all over the place. I defeated the caliphate, ISIS. And now, we have thousands of prisoners of war, ISIS fighters that are prisoners of war. And we're asking the countries from which they came, Scott—from Europe—we're asking them to take back these prisoners of war. And they can try them, do what they want.

So far, they've refused. And at some point, I'm going to have to say, "I'm sorry, but you either take them back, or we're going to let them go at your border." But they came out from Germany; they came out from France. We captured them. We did everyone a big favor. We've taken over the caliphate 100 percent.

If you remember, I was thinking about getting out when it was at 96, 97 percent. But they were all over the place. And we did it. We did it in record time. It was a total caliphate victory. And now I want the countries to take back the captured ISIS fighters. And if they don't take them back, we're going to probably going to put them at the border, and then they'll have to capture them again.

Q. Mr. President——

President Trump. Because the United States is not going to have thousands and thousands of people that we have captured stationed at Guantanamo Bay, held captive at Guantanamo Bay, for the next 50 years, and us spending billions and billions of dollars. We've done Europe a tremendous favor; they mostly come out of Europe. And we've done them a tremendous favor. And the United States is not going to pay the cost of thousands and thousands of ISIS fighter prisoners in Guantanamo Bay or someplace else. We won't do it.

So they have to make their decision. Otherwise, we're releasing them at the border.

Go ahead. Next?

National Security Adviser Robert C. O'Brien/Iran

Q. Will you be meeting your national security team on Iran today? And what do you expect to hear from them?

President Trump. Yes. I have a great new person. You know Robert O'Brien. A lot of people wanted Robert very badly. He was—I—hey, look, I had 10, 12 people that I thought were fantastic for the job.

Prime Minister Morrison. He's a good friend of Australia too, Robert.

President Trump. He's a great friend of Australia. Scott was telling me he was very happy with the choice. Robert is going to be outstanding. He just picked a Deputy who was in the administration. You all know him. You know who the Deputy is. I guess they have to announce that separately, but he's fantastic. And essentially, he's already on the job.

But you know, he did a tremendous job as hostage negotiator. We are—we have a tremendous record. Nobody comes close to our record with hostages.

Q. But are you going to be discussing the options for Iran today with your team?

President Trump. Sure. Sure. But also with Secretary of Defense, Secretary of State. We're discussing with everybody. And you know, the early move today was the Central Bank of Iran. Okay?

U.S. Policy Options Toward Iran

Q. Mr. President, is the U.S. moving toward a military conflict? And would you support that, Mr. Prime Minister, a military strike?

President Trump. It's always possible.

Australia-U.S. Relations

Q. Would you expect Australia to join in any military action?

President Trump. We haven't discussed that. We'll be discussing that later. But we haven't discussed that yet.

China-U.S. Trade

Q. Mr. President, would you consider—sir, would you consider 50-percent tariffs or even 100-percent tariffs on China, as someone suggested?

President Trump. I'm not going to get into that. Right now China is paying 30 percent on \$250 billion. That starts in another couple of weeks.

As you know, President Xi called, through his top people. And they have a 70th anniversary, a very important day for them. And it happens to be October 1, which is the exact date of the—*[laughter]*—increase in the tariff. And they asked us, out of respect, would I delay the tariff a little bit. I said, "How about if I move it forward?" Let me move it forward a little bit, because they didn't want it to fall on the same day. It's exactly October 1. So I said, "Let me move up a couple of weeks." They said: "No. No. No. Could you"—so, out of respect for President Xi, who I do have great respect for, I moved it back 2 weeks. But right now it's 25 percent. It goes up to 30 percent on October 15. Okay?

Intelligence Community Whistleblower/News Media

Q. Mr. President, on the whistleblower, have you read the complaint? Have you read the complaint of the——

President Trump. No, I haven't. It's—it's——

Q. Who in your White House has?

President Trump. I just tell you, it is—everybody has read it, and they laugh at it. And it's another——

Q. But you haven't read it?

President Trump. It's another media disaster. The media has lost so much credibility in this country. Our media has become the laughingstock of the world.

When you look at what they did to Justice Kavanaugh and so many other things last week, I think this is one of the worst weeks in the history of the fake news media. You have been wrong on so many things, and this one will be—I wouldn't say it will top the list, because I think you can't do worse than some of the stories you missed over the last week or two, but the media of our country is laughed at all over the world now. You're a joke.

Okay, what else?

The President's Communications With Foreign Leaders

Q. Mr. President, can we clarify: When you talk about the conversation that you——

President Trump. Which conversation?

Q. Well, we're trying to figure out what conversation you're——

President Trump. Well, figure it out. You're supposed to be the media. Figure it out.

Q. July 25? Was it July 25?

President Trump. It was—which conversation?

Q. Was it July 25, with the President of Ukraine?

President Trump. I really don't know. I don't know.

Q. We think it was—we think it was with one of the leaders of Ukraine.

Prime Minister Morrison. He's going to want to know about space. [*Laughter*]

Space Program/Private Sector Space Exploration

Q. Mr. Trump, can you talk about the exciting new space program to the Moon, sir? And what does that mean for both countries?

President Trump. So we're doing a great program. We have—Vice President Pence is very much involved. And we have a tremendous space program. If you look at our facilities, they were virtually closed up. There was crabgrass growing on the runways, and now they're vital.

And you know, we're doing—we're doing—we're going to Mars. We're stopping at the Moon. The Moon is actually a launching pad. That's why we're stopping at the Moon. I said: "Hey, we've done the Moon. That's not so exciting." They said: "No, sir. It's a launching pad for Mars." So we'll be doing the Moon. But we'll really be doing Mars. And we'll be—we're making tremendous progress.

In addition, rich people like to send up rocket ships. So between Bezos and Elon Musk and others, we're leasing them our launch facilities, which you can't get. There are no launch facilities like this. This is big stuff. So we're—in Texas and Florida, we're leasing them our facilities so they can send up whatever they want to send up. It's okay with us. And they've actually done very well. They've said they've had great success.

But rich people in this country—I don't know about your country—but they like building rocket ships and sending them up, and it's okay with us. [*Laughter*]

Q. Will an Australian astronaut be onboard?

President Trump. Say it.

Q. Will an Australian astronaut be onboard?

President Trump. Well, I'll let it—I think Scott and I would rather take a pass. Though I don't know, would you like to be on there? [*Laughter*] I think—I'm not sure, but I know him pretty well. I think he and I will take a pass. But there are a lot people that want to go up. And I have great respect for the astronauts. That's it. That's an incredible—[*inaudible*].

Australia's Extractive Industries/Coal Mining Safety Best Practices

Q. [*Inaudible*—critical minerals from Australia and how important is that industry?

President Trump. Say it again.

Q. Do you want to buy more critical minerals from Australia? And how important is that industry?

President Trump. Yes. Well, Australia's mineral industry is massive. It's far, far bigger than that. I mean, very few countries have anything approaching what Australia has in terms of mineral wealth. And you've really taken advantage of it. And you've done it in a very environmentally sensitive way. I know that's very important to you.

Prime Minister Morrison. That's true.

President Trump. It's very important to Scott. We talk about it a lot. Because that business can get out of control a little bit, from the standpoint of environment. And you have really approached it in an environmentally sensitive way.

Coal, as an example: You're the leader of safety in coal digging. And we've actually studied it because we're doing a lot of coal. And you have very—literally, you almost have no—you know, you used to have a thing: black lung disease. And in Australia, you almost don't have it anymore. You've got all of the dust down. And you know, they're very—they become wet mines, basically. But it's great.

Prime Minister Morrison. Well, it's a very technologically advanced industry in Australia.

President Trump. Incredible.

Prime Minister Morrison. All of that resources industry are, from the robotics that's involved in the production and all the way through.

But that, critical metals, space—these are the things we're going to be talking about because Australia has a wonderful partnership with the United States, not just militarily and not just strategically, but also economically. And that's going to be a big part of this conversation we have today.

President Trump. And environmentally, I have to say——

Q. [Inaudible]

President Trump. And environmentally, the things that they have done, environmentally, with digging. Digging is a—you know, when you talk minerals, it's about digging. And what you've been able to do with environment—with the environment, having to do with taking minerals out of the ground, including—and you know, I would say even especially—because you're leading on coal.

I will tell you: I sent a whole crew over, because your record is so good in terms of illnesses from digging, better than anybody in the world. So we're going to catch you on that, okay? [Laughter]

Q. Have you invited the President to Australia? And have you introduced him to the term "bubble" yet?

Prime Minister Morrison. [Laughter] We'll talk about that over dinner tonight. I'm sure he has another term for it here in Washington, I understand.

But no, we have talked about whether if, his schedule and Mrs. Trump's permits, will they take in the President's Cup later in the year, which is going to be a great time. There's a tremendous tournament.

President Trump. That's great.

Prime Minister Morrison. The President knows a lot more about golf than I do, and he certainly swings a club way better than I do. But he's got a busy year coming up next year. He's going to do great there. And—but if he has the opportunity, if Mrs. Trump has the opportunity, it's going to be a great spectacle down in Australia this year.

The President's Cup Golf Tournament in Melbourne, Australia/State Dinner for Prime Minister Morrison

Q. Are you planning to go, Mr. Trump?

Q. Mr. President, are you planning to go? Are you planning to go Australia?

President Trump. Interestingly, the PGA Tour invited me to go. And I would love to do it. We'll have to see what the schedule is, but I would love to do it. It's a very exciting tournament. Nothing more exciting.

Q. Mr. President——

President Trump. And having at—in Australia, where you have so many great golfers—Greg Norman is a friend of mine——

Prime Minister Morrison. Yes, he's a—[inaudible].

President Trump. ——and a great friend of yours, I know. And I think he's going to be here tonight.

Prime Minister Morrison. Yes, he is. Yes.

President Trump. The First Lady has done an incredible job tonight.

Prime Minister Morrison. Yes, we're looking forward to it.

President Trump. We're going to have it, for either the first time or certainly one of the few times, in the Rose Garden. And it's going to be—I watched, yesterday, the rehearsal, and she was out there. And it's going to be incredible. Tonight's going to be a beautiful night.

And the only thing that can dampen it would be rain, and we're not expecting any rain.

Q. Mr. President——

President Trump. But if it rains, we head over to the State Room, and we'll be just fine. But we're really expecting—I hope you're going to be able to see it tonight for a little while. Probably, you will. We'll, sort of, make sure that you do. It's beautiful.

Q. Mr. President——

Iran/Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action/U.S. Military Readiness/U.S. Nuclear Arsenal

Q. On the U.N., how critical is it that you build a coalition to address Iran, Iran's latest provocations? And does that start today with the Prime Minister?

President Trump. Well, I always like a coalition. And sometimes, you find that people have made a lot of money that you'd want in the coalition. They've made a lot money with Iran, which is—you know, when President Obama made that deal, not only was it a bad deal, but the United States didn't partake, in a business sense.

And other countries—Germany, France, Russia, many other countries—made a lot of money with Iran. And we didn't make money with Iran, which—that was just one of the many bad parts about the deal. Everyone else is making money, and we're not.

So we'll see what happens. Look, the United States is in a class by itself. We have the most powerful military in the world, by far. There's nobody close. As you know, we've spent tremendous, and hopefully—and we pray to God we never have to use it, but we've totally renovated and bought new nuclear. And the rest of our military is all brandnew.

The nuclear now is at a level that's it's never been before. And I can only tell you, because I know—I know the problems of nuclear. I know the damages that—I know what happens. And I want to tell you: We all hope, and Scott hopes—we all pray that we never have to use nuclear. But there's nobody that has anywhere close to what we have.

Q. Prime Minister, Prime Minister, given President Trump——

United Nations General Assembly/The President's Travel to New York City

Q. What is your message at UNGA next week?

President Trump. Well, UNGA is going to be very exciting, and we look forward to it. We'll be there. You'll be there?

Prime Minister Morrison. Yes, I'll be later in the week. Yes.

President Trump. And for you, it's a much longer trip.

Prime Minister Morrison. It is a bit, yes.

President Trump. But we look forward to it. We have a big message for UNGA. We have a big message. And I very much—I haven't been back to New York in a long time.

I see that our part-time mayor will be now going back to New York, so he'd be able to work a little bit harder. But he dropped out of the Presidential race a little while ago. Too bad. He had tremendous potential. *[Laughter]* He only had one real asset. You know what it was? Height.

Q. Prime Minister——

President Trump. Other than that, he had nothing going.

Okay. What else?

Iran/The President's Approach to Foreign Policy

Q. Prime Minister, given that President Trump has indicated that you will be discussing military action in Iran this afternoon, what is Australia's attitude?

Prime Minister Morrison. Well, I think the United States has taken a very measured and calibrated approach to date. And the thing about our partnership is, we always listened to whatever requests are made, and Australia always considers them in our national interests, and we have good conversations about these things.

But the thing is, both of us, we never get ahead of ourselves on these things. We just—you know, you take this one step at a time. And we keep talking to each other. That's what we've always done, wherever we've worked together. And we're going to keep doing that. We've got such an open line of communication. I appreciate the fact, the President and I talk about these things even when we're not together. And we're going to keep doing that. And we'll just take these things one step at a time.

Q. Is Australia—*[inaudible]*——

President Trump. You know, the easiest thing for me to do—and maybe it's even a natural instinct, maybe I have to hold myself back. I remember during the debates, and when I was running against Hillary and the Democrats and the media—I view them all the same; I view that partnership very much the same.

But when I was running, everybody said: "Oh, he's going to get into war. He's going to get into war. He's going to blow everybody up. He's going to get into war." Well, the easiest thing I can do—in fact, I could do it while you're here—would say: "Go ahead, fellas. Go do it." And that would be a very bad day for Iran. That's the easiest thing I could do. It's so easy.

And for all of those that say: "Oh, they should do it. It shows weakness. It shows . . ." Actually, in my opinion, it shows strength. Because the easiest thing I could do: "Okay, go ahead. Knock out 15 different major things in Iran." I could do that and—all set to go. It's all set to go. But I'm not looking to do that if I can.

And I think I've changed a lot of minds. People are very surprised that—and many people are extremely happy. Many people are thrilled. And many people are saying, "Oh, I wish you'd

hit the hell the out of them." Well, let's see what happens. But it will take place in 1 minute; I could do it right here in front of you, and that would be it. And then, you'd have a nice, big story to report.

And I think it shows far more strength to do it the way we're doing it. And again, whether it's next week or 2 weeks or 3 weeks doesn't make any difference. Whether it's now or in 3 weeks doesn't make any difference. But I think the strong person's approach and the thing that does show strength would be showing a little bit of restraint. Much easier to do it the other way. It's much easier.

And Iran knows if they misbehave, they're on borrowed time. They're not doing well. I'd like to see them do great. I'd love to see them do great, but they're not doing well. They're doing very poorly. They're doing far worse than they've ever done before. They're having riots in their streets. They're having a lot of problems in Iran right now. They could solve it very quickly.

But the easiest thing for me to do is say: "Okay, let's go. Let's just do it." Very easy for me to do. But it is interesting, because when I was campaigning, everybody here thought that I was going to be, like—it would be 1 day. But what I have done is I've defeated ISIS, I've rebuilt our military to a level that it's never been before, spent a lot of money. The budgets are not so hard to fix for me, but when you're spending 1½ trillion [dollars; White House correction], so far. Now, another \$738 million—billion—on the military. But think of it: 1½ trillion dollars. And we have the greatest in the world.

But I think restraint is a good thing. I think it's a good thing.

Q. Mr. President, what are your reactions to Justin Trudeau?

Reconciliation Efforts in Afghanistan/U.S. Military Operations in Afghanistan/North Korea/U.S. Economy/U.S. Defense Spending/Australian Defense Spending

Q. Mr. President, how do you plan to bring peace in Afghanistan—peace in Afghanistan—now that the process collapsed?

President Trump. Yes, well, we were thinking about having a meeting. I didn't like the idea that they couldn't produce a cease-fire. I wasn't in favor of that. I said: "No. If they can't produce a ceasefire, why are we bothering?" And they thought that it was a sign of strength to kill 12 people, wound others—badly wound some others. And one of those 12 people was a young man—young soldier from Puerto Rico, from our country. And when I heard that, I said, "I don't want to deal with them anymore."

We have hit—in Afghanistan, we have hit the Taliban harder than they've ever been hit in the entire 19 years of war. They've been hit harder. It's come back to me through absolutely impeccable sources that they are saying: "Wow. We made a mistake with this guy. We made a big"—they made a mistake.

I was totally willing to have a meeting. I'll meet with anybody. I think meetings are good. I think meetings are good. There's no such thing as: "Oh, gee, we shouldn't." I really believe meetings are good. Worst that happens, it doesn't work out. That's okay. Even then, you get to know your opposition. Don't forget, I'm looking at them like they're looking at me. You get to know your opposition. You can see if they're real. Sometimes, you develop a relationship, like we do, but sometimes you develop—and many times you won't. But you get to know your opposition.

I think the best thing that's happened to this country is the fact that, at least for 3 years, the fact that I have a very good relationship with Kim Jong Un. I think that's a positive. His country

has tremendous potential. He knows that. But our country has been playing around for 50 years and getting nothing. And we have a relationship. There's never been a relationship with them.

We'll see what happens. It might work out. It might not work out. I'm not saying it will, but in the meantime, he hasn't been testing any nuclear. You've had no nuclear tests since—since—for a long time. And he has been doing some short-range missiles, but so does every other country do short short-range missiles. Every country is doing them. They're pretty standard fare.

But no, I will tell you that we've never had a country so strong. But we're just a couple of points away from a new stock market alltime high. And I think we've done it over 112 times. There's a certain number—whatever it may be. I don't want to be specific, because if I give you the wrong number, we'll have breaking news. It will be one every newspaper that I said—I said "112," and it was actually 111. And it will be breaking news. They'll give me a Pinocchio.
[Laughter]

Q. Mr. President——

President Trump. But let me just say—let me just say, the country has never been in this position. We have the strongest military we've ever had. And now we've rebuilt it. After this \$738 billion, we really have a built—we have rebuilt military. It's a great thing. And some of our friends are doing the same thing.

I can tell you, Australia's military is unbelievable. I saw the order that they put in for some of our most sophisticated equipment and I said, "That's really great what you're doing." They've really upped it. And I want to congratulate you. I mean, you have really done a job on your military.

Prime Minister Morrison. We have. Up to 2 percent of GDP next year.

President Trump. Right.

Prime Minister Morrison. So we're in the middle of a \$200 billion upgrade.

President Trump. Right.

Prime Minister Morrison. Biggest increase in our defense, as a share of GDP, since the Second World War.

President Trump. Yes.

WikiLeaks

Q. Mr. President, you praised WikiLeaks continuously during the election campaign. Is it right that the United States is prosecuting its Australian founder, Julian Assange?

President Trump. Well, you know, that's a question I haven't heard in a long time. I'll leave that for you to determine.

Q. Mr. President——

Q. Mr. President, what is your reaction——

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

Q. Mr. President, could I get some clarity from you on your thinking on China? Is it just a trade issue for you or do you see China as a strategic threat to the United States?

President Trump. Well, obviously, China is a threat to the world in a sense, because they're building a military faster than anybody. And frankly, they're using U.S. money. Presidents before me have allowed China to take out \$500 billion a year, and it's really more than that. They've allowed China to steal our intellectual property and property rights. And I'm not doing that.

And we actually were very close to having a deal. You know, we were very close. We had intellectual property; all of the tough things were negotiated. And then, at the last moment, Scott——

Prime Minister Morrison. Yes.

President Trump. ——they said, "We cannot agree to this." I said, "That's all right, we're charging you 25-percent tariffs, and then it's going up." And it will continue to go up. And frankly, we're making so many hundreds of—the numbers that we're taking into our Treasury——

And you see it, because sometimes, you'll see—look at the good reports. Look at the great reports that came out 2 days ago on retailing, on consumers, on numbers that nobody believes. Well, I think a lot of it—we're taking in hundreds of millions, potentially, over a short period of time. Hundreds of billions of dollars' worth of money is coming in from China that never came in before.

So China wants to make a deal. I think we want to make a deal. We'll see what happens. But I view China in many different ways, but right now I'm thinking about trade. But you know, trade equals military. Because if we allow China to take \$500 billion out of the hide of the United States—that money goes into military and other things.

Past Images of Prime Minister Justin P.J. Trudeau of Canada in Blackface

Q. Mr. President, your reaction to Justin Trudeau. Can he survive this controversy?

President Trump. Well, I was hoping I wouldn't be asked that question. It had to be you that asks it. You've—you had to ask me that question, right? Justin.

I'm surprised. And I was more surprised when I saw the number of times. And you know, I've always had a good relationship with Justin. I just don't know what to tell you. It's—I was surprised by it, actually.

Australia-U.S. Relations

Q. Mr. President, the last Australian Prime Minister to receive an official state visit was described by the then President as "a man of steel." How do you describe our Prime Minister?

President Trump. I would say a "man of titanium." [*Laughter*] You know, titanium is much tougher than steel. [*Laughter*] He's a man of titanium. Believe me, I have to deal with this guy. He's not easy. [*Laughter*] You might think he's a nice guy, okay? He's a man of real, real strength, and a great guy. And his wife is lovely. And I want to thank you. I want to thank Melania for the work.

Prime Minister Morrison. Yes, thank you.

President Trump. And I hope you're going to be able to see it, because Melania has—she's worked very hard for Australia.

Prime Minister Morrison. Yes, she has.

Mrs. Morrison. I know. It's going to be beautiful.

President Trump. And you've done a fantastic—it's so beautiful. And it will be so different. And we look up to the skies, and we're just going to hope that it's not going rain. And if it is——

Mrs. Morrison. It's not going to rain.

President Trump. ——that's okay too, because that will work out also. It always works out. Thank you all very much. Thank you.

Intelligence Community Whistleblower

Q. Should Congress see the complaint and the transcript of your call to clear any confusion?

President Trump. There is nothing. It's nothing.

Q. Should Congress see it?

President Trump. There's nothing.

Q. Mr. Morrison, what do you think of your first time in the White House?

Prime Minister Morrison. Very exciting.

President Trump. What?

Q. What does Mr. Morrison think of his first time in the White House and you hosting him?

Prime Minister Morrison. It's a great honor to be here.

President Trump. A little different.

Prime Minister Morrison. Tremendous honor to be here.

President Trump. Say it.

Q. Did you want to—you were finishing the question.

President Trump. Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:20 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former Prosecutor General Viktor Shokin of Ukraine; Deputy National Security Adviser Matthew Pottinger; Jeffrey P. Bezos, president, chief executive officer, and chairman of the board, Amazon.com, in his capacity as founder of Blue Origin, a space technology and exploration company; Elon R. Musk, founder, chief executive officer, and lead designer, Space Exploration Technologies (SpaceX); former professional golfer Gregory J. Norman; Mayor Bill de Blasio of New York City; 2016 Democratic Presidential nominee Hillary Rodham Clinton; and Chairman of the State Affairs Commission Kim Jong Un of North Korea. Reporters referred to President Hassan Rouhani and Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Hoseini-Khamenei of Iran; Hunter R. Biden II, son of former Vice President Biden; President Volodymyr Zelenskiy of Ukraine; former President George W. Bush; and former Prime Minister John W. Howard of Australia.

Categories: Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters :: White House; Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials : Australia, Prime Minister Morrison.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Bezos, Jeffrey P.; Biden, Joseph R., Jr.; Clinton, Hillary Rodham; DeBlasio, Bill; Kavanaugh, Brett M.; Kim Jong Un; Mnuchin, Steven T.; Morrison, Jennifer; Morrison, Scott; Musk, Elon R.; Norman, Gregory J.; Obama, Barack; O'Brien, Robert C.; Pence, Michael R.; Pottinger, Matthew; Shokin, Viktor; Trudeau, Justin P.J.; Trump, Melania; Xi Jinping.

Subjects: Afghanistan : Former regime; Afghanistan : Insurgency and terrorist attacks; Afghanistan : Reconciliation efforts; Armed Forces, U.S. : Funding; Arms and munitions : Nuclear weapons and material :: U.S. nuclear arsenal modernization; Australia : Defense relationship with U.S.; Australia : Mining industry; Australia : Prime Minister; Australia : Relations with U.S.; Australia : Trade with U.S.; Canada : Prime Minister; China : President; China : Trade with U.S.; China : U.S. tariff structure, strengthening efforts; Communications : News media :: Accuracy and fairness; Cuba : Guantanamo Bay, U.S. Naval Base :: Detention of

alleged terrorists; Defense and national security : Defense readiness, improvement efforts; Economy, national : Improvement; Energy : Coal and clean coal technologies; Iran : International diplomatic efforts; Iran : Nuclear program, Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action; Iran : Terrorism, sponsorship; Iran : U.S. sanctions; Judiciary : Supreme Court :: Associate Justice; North Korea : Chairman, State Affairs Commission; North Korea : Nuclear weapons development; Saudi Arabia : Security cooperation with U.S.; Space program : Mars exploration; Space program : Moon exploration; Space program : Public-private partnerships; Sports : Golf; Terrorism : Counterterrorism efforts; Terrorism : Global threat; Terrorism : Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist organization; Treasury, Department of the : Secretary; United Nations : General Assembly; White House Office : Assistants to the President :: National Security Adviser; White House Office : Assistants to the President :: National Security Adviser, Deputy; White House Office : Vice President.

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