

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2019

Remarks at a United States Coast Guard Briefing on Tropical Storm Imelda in Houston, Texas

September 22, 2019

U.S. Coast Guard/Hurricane Response Efforts/Defense Spending

Q. Mr. President, what grade would you give the Coast Guard in Texas?

The President. A-plus. I give the Coast Guard an A-plus, and I have for a long time. I don't think there's any brand—no matter where you go—that's gone up more than the Coast Guard. And that started with Harvey, as far as I'm concerned, the big hurricane from a year ago in Texas, which was, I guess, they say, the biggest dump of water we've ever had in this country and probably so.

I was just asking the difference between Harvey and what happened over the last week. And, you know, Harvey is really in a class by itself, but this was a really bad one. And this one snuck up. It came up pretty quick.

But I will say that they've done a fantastic job—saved I guess, close to 70 lives.

U.S. Coast Guard Assistant Commandant for Prevention Policy Rear Admiral John P. Nadeau, USCG. One hundred and thirty-one, sir.

The President. How many?

Rear Adm. Nadeau. One hundred and thirty-one.

The President. Wow. One hundred and thirty-one.

Now, with Harvey—you've all heard this number—what was the number with Harvey?

Rear Adm. Nadeau. I'd have to—[inaudible].

U.S. Coast Guard Sector Houston-Galveston Commander Captain Kevin D. Oditt, USCG. Over 11,000, sir.

Rear Adm. Nadeau. Eleven thousand, some odd.

The President. Now this is—11,000 lives saved at Harvey. The Coast Guard is so important to this country and the job they've done is incredible. As you know, we've ordered new cutters. We have brandnew cutters coming, and you already gotten some. And a lot of new equipment. We have new helicopters coming, out of the budget. We spent a trillion and a half dollars, so at least you should get some helicopters out of it, right?

But it's going to be completely rebuilt with brandnew ships and boats and helicopters and everything else. So it's really great. Big difference between now and what it was three, four years ago. It's been totally rebuilt. And some equipment is still coming.

Steve [Steve A. Holland, Reuters].

Iran/China-U.S. Trade

Q. When you go to the U.N., what do you want them to do on Iran together with you?

The President. Well, nothing specific. I mean, we're doing our own thing with Iran and with a lot of other places, and I think we're doing very well. A lot of progress is being made in a lot of different ways.

China is coming along well. I actually think that tremendous progress was made over the last little while with respect to the question you just asked, having to do with Iran.

So we'll see. We'll see. But it's all going to work out, always does. We get it to work out. And if it doesn't, sometimes it takes a little longer. But I get things to work out, Steve.

Iran/United Nations General Assembly/The President's Remarks With Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India in Houston, Texas

Q. Mr. President, Iran's President Rouhani said that he's going to offer a peace plan of some kind during the U.N. Are you open to hearing him out—[inaudible]?

The President. I'm always open. I have no plans to meet with him, but I'm always open. I would meet if they wanted, but I have absolutely no plans to meet.

We're doing very well. They're not doing well. They're having a hard time. And I'd like to see it be a great country. I would like to see Iran be a great and very wealthy country, because it has tremendous capability. It has tremendous people, frankly, and tremendous potential. So we'll see what happens. Certainly, the United Nations week is going to be very interesting. I look forward to it. I'm speaking on Tuesday. But on Monday, tomorrow, a lot of meetings with different heads of state.

And I leave for the stadium—the Prime Minister of India has asked me to make a speech and I will make a speech in a stadium loaded up with—I guess we're going to have 70,000 people or something like that, whatever the maximum is. So we're going to have a lot. So it's the Prime Minister and myself. I look forward to it.

Q. Mr. President, why come here—

India-U.S. Relations/Tropical Storm Imelda Recovery Efforts/Disaster Assistance to Texas

Q. Mr. President, why did you come to this event? What is the message you want to send?

The President. I was asked by Prime Minister Modi if I could come. He asked me about 4 weeks ago. And I asked him what it was about, and he said it's this very—it's a very big deal for India.

And I'm very close to the folks from India, the folks that love India, because I love India. And I have lot of respect and a great friendship with the Prime Minister. And he said, "Would it possible to do it?" And I said, "I'll make it possible."

So—and I thought, while I was here, I'd come—I wanted to see the Coast Guard. I wanted to see FEMA. I think you would say that working along with FEMA has been a terrific thing, right?

Rear Adm. Nadeau. Yes, sir. As always.

Participants. Yes, sir.

The President. They've been great. They've really done a job. And local enforcement, local first responders, and law enforcement—the team has been incredible.

And I've just spoke with the Governor of Texas, Greg Abbott, who is a fantastic guy. And we will be making everything available. They have a big, big—a lot of water right now in Texas. And we're making the Federal Government totally available.

So you'll let us know. Any questions, you'll let us know. But you know that's happened. And they've made a lot of progress. And hopefully, now, it's going down pretty good. And people here

just fix it up. They get used to it, and they fix it up. And it'd be nice if they don't have to get used to it for a little while. We had Harvey, and now we have this. So it's pretty tough.

Q. Mr. President, can you talk about the relief that you plan to offer?

The President. But I want—I want to say, FEMA—I want to thank, also, the people from FEMA, the first responders, law enforcement, everybody. And of course, I'm here with the Coast Guard now, very special people.

Yes.

Tropical Storm Imelda Recovery Efforts

Q. Can you talk about the relief you plan to offer—[*inaudible*]? Is the Federal Government going to put any money towards the recovery effort?

The President. We're going to be doing money. We're going to be doing a lot of things. We help the State of Texas. We've had some very, very big events in Texas, and we've been there. We've gotten an A-plus from everybody, whether it's Harvey or any of the other, really, tragedies. They were tragedies. But they could have been so much worse.

And frankly, with the Coast Guard, the number of people—where we talk about thousands and thousands of people were saved. Their lives were saved. What would have been the biggest catastrophe, really, of its kind, ended up being not that. Tremendous damage, some life lost, but you would—you would have been talking about anywhere from 10- to 20- or even 25,000 lives would have been lost. So the Coast Guard has really done a job.

Texas

Q. Mr. President—[*inaudible*]—when you see the images of the flooding in Houston yet again, your thoughts about the resiliency not only of the first responders, but the people of Houston helping each other.

The President. That's right. That's right. The people of Texas are incredible. They go through some of these really catastrophic floods and hurricanes, and the following morning, they're up working and making it beautiful.

Last time, I came a few days later, and some of the areas were already—you see people out there cutting their lawn. They had 5 feet of water on top of their lawn, and they're cutting their lawn a short time later.

No, these are amazing people. These are incredible people, the people of Texas. That's why I'm here today. I'm here for this, and I'm here for the stadium. And that's going to be a lot of fun.

Q. Mr. President, do you still plan——

Federal Hurricane Response Efforts/Disaster Assistance to Texas

Q. Mr. President, what do you say to those who blame this on climate change?

The President. Well, they've had floods for many years in Texas, and they've had hurricanes for many years in Texas.

And I think one of the big differences is we really have it down to a science now. In the last 3½ years, we've done something that nobody has done. Nobody has reacted to hurricanes and flooding like the Trump administration. And nobody has helped Texas like the Trump administration has helped. And we've done a good job, and I'm very happy to do that. It's a very, very great State.

Q. Mr. President, are you still planning on meeting——

2020 Presidential Election

Q. Mr. President, Ted Cruz says—Ted Cruz says Texas is in play in 2020. Do you worry about that for your own reelection?

The President. No, I don't think it is for us. But I mean, I—still, you can't take anything for granted. I just saw polls that we're ahead. But you have to always be careful because, you know, people think you're ahead.

I like the concept of "it's in play." Last time, I won by a lot, and I heard it was in play. And when you hear something is "in play"—that means "close"—you work harder.

So I don't think—I don't see how I could possibly lose Texas. They want border security. They want to protect their Second Amendment. They want a lot of things that I stand for. I don't see how it's possible, but you know, you never know.

The only way it's possible is, if people think you're going to win and win by a lot, and therefore, they don't go out to vote. So I think we're doing well in Texas.

Q. Mr. President, do you still plan on meeting with the President of Ukraine?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India/India-U.S. Relations

Q. Mr. President—[inaudible]—about the protesters outside of the arena who don't want Prime Minister Modi in the country?

The President. Well, he's a very highly respected man, Prime Minister Modi. He's very, very highly respected. He's also loved in India. He just had an election. He won by a record number. And they had 600 million voters. He won by a record number. It was the biggest election victory in India for, at a minimum, a very long time. I think—from the beginning. That's a long time.

He's very popular. The people love him. He's done a great job. And he's been very good to us and me. So he asked me if I'd come and speak and introduce him, and I'm doing that.

Q. Mr. President, Mr. President——

Indian Americans/India-U.S. Relations

Q. [Inaudible]—who voted overwhelmingly Democratic. Are you here to try and court some of those voters?

The President. Well, I think Indian Americans—people from India, people that love India—they like Trump. You know, we've seen that too. We've seen that even in the polls. I have a great relationship with the people of India, and I have a great relationship with people from India that end up living in the United States and ultimately becoming citizens of the United States. It's been great. It's been special.

Q. Mr. President, will you meet with the——

The President. That's why—that's one of the reasons I'm here.

Former Vice President Joseph R. Biden, Jr./The President's July 25 Telephone Conversation With President Volodymyr Zelenskyy of Ukraine/The President's Communications With Foreign Leaders

Q. Mr. President, will you meet with the President of Ukraine still? Or are you going to mention Vice President Joe Biden when you do?

The President. Well, I won't be mentioning much. I mean, it—you know, Vice President Biden did a terrible thing, the way he put it. I'm not looking at—to hold him to anything. I'm not looking to hurt him, with respect to his son.

Joe's got a lot of problems. Joe's got enough problems without that. But what he said was a terrible thing. And you know, he really made it a—it was an offer. It was beyond an offer. It was something where he said, "I'm not going to give billions of dollars to Ukraine unless they remove this Prosecutor." And they removed the Prosecutor supposedly in 1 hour. And the Prosecutor was prosecuting the company of the son and the son. And you talk about something that shouldn't have been said; he just shouldn't have said that.

Now, as far as my conversation, it was perfect. It was a perfect conversation. It was—it couldn't have been any better. But we'll make a determination about how to release it, releasing it, saying what we said. It was an absolutely perfect conversation.

The problem is, when you're speaking to foreign leaders, you don't want foreign leaders to feel that they shouldn't be speaking openly and good. You have to be talking to people. And the same thing for an American President; you want them to be able to express themselves without knowing that not every single word is going to be going out and going out all over the world.

When I make calls, though, I know that there are a lot on those calls that are listening—intelligence people—with my approval. Intelligence people and others. So when you're making a call—when you're talking to a leader of a foreign country, it's very easy to assume that you have many, many people listening, in addition to people listening on the other side.

Q. Will you still have that meeting, sir? Will you still have that meeting?

The President's July 25 Telephone Conversation With President Volodymyr Zelenskiy of Ukraine/U.S. Assistance to Ukraine/International Assistance to Ukraine

Q. Are you thinking about releasing the transcript?

The President. Well, I'm going to talk about it. I mean, I love it. I would love to do whatever I want to do. I'd love to do it. But you have to be a little bit shy about doing that. It's a perfect—everything we said on that call was perfect.

By the way, I don't know if you saw: Ukraine put out a major statement last night, said that was a perfect call. It was friendly. It was warm. Discussed many topics.

And we've done more for Ukraine than President Obama. He sent them pillows and sheets and we sent them very powerful weapons.

What does bother me is that Germany and France and so many other countries aren't helping with Ukraine, and we are. Why are we helping and they're not helping. I mean, they benefit much more than we do, because Ukraine is a block between Russia and the European Union—European countries. So why are they—and that's been a complaint that I've had for a long time. You've heard me say it many times, whether it's for defense or for anything else. Why isn't Germany doing more? Why isn't France doing more? Why aren't the European countries doing more? And why is it always the United States?

We send a lot of money to Ukraine. We send a lot of armor. At least, I do. President Obama sent, as I told you, sheets and pillows. I send much more than that. But why isn't the European Union doing more? You have to ask that question. They have to do more.

Q. Mr. President, Mr. President—

The President's July 25 Telephone Conversation With President Volodymyr Zelenskiy of Ukraine/Former Vice President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.

Q. Mr. President—[inaudible]—sir, they'd like to release parts of the transcript or what—I mean, what are you thinking here?

The President. Well, we're looking at—we're looking at that. You know, people don't like that, and I don't like it—the concept of it. But we're looking at it. It's perfect. And by the way, the conversation was absolutely perfect. Absolutely appropriate.

What wasn't appropriate was what Joe Biden said. And he said it on tape. And I guess he must have thought he was in front of a lot of friendly people. But he said it on tape in front of a small group. And somebody recorded it. And it's up there to see. And what he said was wrong.

And again, I'm not looking to hurt him, because he's got his own difficulties, but what he said was wrong. And I know a lot of people are looking at that right now.

Yes.

The President's July 25 Telephone Conversation With President Volodymyr Zelenskiy of Ukraine/Former Vice President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.

Q. But can you say whether, on this call, you raised Joe Biden or his son's name with Ukraine?

The President. Well, I don't even want to mention it. But certainly, I'd have every right to. If there's corruption and we're paying lots of money to a country, we don't want a country that we're giving massive aid to to be corrupting our system. And we don't want it to be corrupted in any way, but we certainly don't want it to be corrupting our system.

I've been hearing about the Ukraine all during this Russian hoax—the witch hunt that they went through that now turned out to be a zero. But, after 2 years—all through, I've been hearing the name, "Ukraine, Ukraine, Ukraine." A lot of things came out of Ukraine.

So we don't want to let anything having to do with any of that really, you know, hurt our country. So it would be fine to do it, but you will see one of the finest, one of the nicest—if we do that. Or I'll have somebody—I'll give it to a respected source. They can look at it.

But what I said was so good. It was a great conversation. It was a really great conversation, and everybody will say that.

Q. Would you be okay with the——

The President. But you know—but unfortunately, what Joe Biden said was a terrible thing. What he said was a—just an absolutely terrible thing. And he used money—he said, "I'm going to hold back money if you don't do"—and then they did what he wanted, and then he released the money. You're not supposed to be doing that. You're just not supposed to be doing it.

The President's July 25 Telephone Conversation With President Volodymyr Zelenskiy of Ukraine

Q. Would you be okay with the Ukrainian Government releasing their version of the transcript?

The President. Well, I think their version would be the same as our version. I mean, it would be identical.

But they did; they put out a major statement last night. And in the statement, they said it was a very, very fine conversation. And there was no pressure. No nothing. There was no pressure. That was not pressure. I know when I give pressure, and that was not pressure.

Thank you all very much. Thank you. Thank you. I'll see you over at the stadium.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:10 a.m. in a U.S. Coast Guard hangar at Ellington Airport. In his remarks, he referred to R. Hunter Biden, son of former Vice President Biden; and former Prosecutor General Viktor Shokin of Ukraine. A reporter referred to Sen. R. Edward "Ted" Cruz.

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