

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2019

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Volodymyr Zelenskiy of Ukraine and an Exchange With Reporters in New York City

September 25, 2019

President Trump. Well, thank you very much, everybody. We're with the President of Ukraine, and he's made me more famous, and I've made him more famous. [Laughter] And——

President Zelenskiy. Thank you.

President Trump. I will say he's got a great reputation. He's very, very strongly looking into all sorts of corruption and the——some of the problems they've had over the years. I think it's one of the primary reasons he got elected. His reputation is absolutely sterling. And it's an honor to be with you.

And we spoke a couple of times, as you probably remember. [Laughter] And they'd like to hear every single word, and we give them every single word, and then they'll say, "Well, about today?" I think the press would like to stay in the meeting, but we have lots of witnesses, if you'd like to have it. [Laughter]

But the country of——our country is doing phenomenally well. We are——we have the best economy we've ever had. We have the best employment numbers that we've ever had. And we have now almost 160 million people working, which is more than we've ever had. So we're doing very well in every respect. And I have a feeling that your country is going to do fantastically well. And whatever we can do. You just take care of yourself. Thank you.

President Zelenskiy. Thank you very much. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

President Trump. Thank you. Please.

President Zelenskiy. Thank you very much. It's a great pleasure to me to be here, and it's better to be on TV than by phone, I think.

President Trump. Yes. [Laughter]

President Zelenskiy. And, Mr. President, thank you very much. And I'm not the first time to stay in New York——

President Trump. Right.

President Zelenskiy. ——but I know that you've never been in Ukraine.

President Trump. That's right.

President Zelenskiy. And your predecessor also——how to say it in English?——didn't find time; I mean that. [Laughter]

President Trump. Right.

President Zelenskiy. So can you give me a word that you will come to our great country?

President Trump. Well, I'm going to try. [Laughter] And I know a lot of people—I do—I will say this: I know a lot of people from Ukraine. They're great people. And I owned something called the Miss Universe pageants years ago, and I sold it to IMG. And when I ran for President, I thought maybe it wouldn't be the greatest thing to own the Miss Universe and Miss U.S.A. pageants. But it's a great thing. And we had a winner from Ukraine, and we've really had—we got

to know the country very well in a lot of different ways. But it's a country, I think, with tremendous potential.

President Zelenskiy. Yes, I know it, because I'm from this country.

President Trump. Right. [Laughter]

President Zelenskiy. And I want to thank you for the invitation to Washington.

President Trump. Right.

President Zelenskiy. You invited me. But I think—I'm sorry, but I think you forgot to tell me the date. [Laughter] But I think in the near future.

President Trump. They'll tell you the date.

President Zelenskiy. [Laughter] Yes, they know before us. And I want to thank you—to thank you, especially, Mr. President, to U.S.A., to your Government. Like I said, that I know many people, many faces, like the second family, after you—my Ukrainian family, we know each other.

Thank you for your support, especially now when—you know, when we have two—really, two wars in Ukraine. The first one is with corruption, you know. But we'll fight—no, we'll be winner in this fight, I'm sure. And the priority—my priority is to stop the war on Donbass and to get back our territories: Crimea, Donbass, Luhansk.

Thank you for your support in this case. Thank you very much.

President Trump. Well, thank you very much, Mr. President. And if you remember, you lost Crimea during a different administration, not during the Trump administration.

President Zelenskiy. Yes. So you have chance to help us. [Laughter]

President Trump. That's right. I do. But that was during the Obama administration that you lost Crimea, and I didn't think it was something that you should have. But that was done a long time ago, and I think it was handled poorly. But it's just one of those things.

One of the elements that we discussed is, the United States helps Ukraine, but I think that other countries should help Ukraine much more than they're doing: Germany, France, the European Union nations. They really should help you a lot more. And I think maybe, together, we'll work on that. They have to feel a little bit guilty about it, because they don't do what they should be doing.

You're very important to the European Union. You're very important, strategically, very important. And I think they should spend a lot more in helping Ukraine. And they know that also, and they actually tell me that, but they don't seem to produce. So I'm sure you'll talk to them, and I'll certainly be talking to them.

President Zelenskiy. Thank you very much, Mr. President. And you know, now we need—I want to tell you that we now rolled the new country. And I'm sorry, but we don't need help; we need support. Real support. And we thank—thanks, everybody, thank all of the European countries; they each help us. But we also want to have more—more. But I understand, so only together—America and EU—only together, we can stop the war. And you know, we are ready. We just want to tell that we are—remember that we are the biggest country in Europe, but we want to be the richest one. It's true; it's in my heart.

President Trump. Well, you know, you have great people in Ukraine, and you have very talented people——

President Zelenskiy. Very smart.

President Trump. —in terms of manufacturing, in terms of some of the things they do. And we'll be doing—we're doing trading already, but we should be doing a lot more trading with Ukraine. But you have very talented people. They make great things—

President Zelenskiy. Yes.

President Trump. —at the top of the line, really. So that's very important.

And the other thing is, I've heard you actually have—over the last fairly short period of time, you've really made some progress with Russia. I hear a lot of progress has been made. And just keep it going. It would be nice to end that whole disaster.

President Zelenskiy. First of all, I want to tell you, before—before the relations with Russia—I will prolong, just 1 minute—I mean that, you have to know—I want world to know that now we have the new team, the new Parliament, the new Government.

President Trump. Right.

President Zelenskiy. So now we voted about 74 laws, new laws, which help for our new reforms: land reform, big privatization. They did the law about concessions. Did—we removed the general for security, and we launched the Service Secretary.

Is it right, Service Secretary?

Aide to President Zelenskiy. Yes. And anticorruption court, as well.

President Zelenskiy. An anticorruption court. As we came, we did—we launched the anticorruption court. It began to work on the 5th of September. It was—you know, it was—after 5 days, we had the new Government.

So we are ready. We want to show that we—we just come. And if somebody, if you—we want to help us, so just let's do business cases.

President Trump. Right.

President Zelenskiy. We have many investment cases. We're ready.

President Trump. And stop corruption in Ukraine, because that will really make you great. That will make you great personally, and it will also be so tremendous for your nation, in terms of what you want to do and where you want to take it.

Thank you very much. It's a great honor.

President Zelenskiy. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

The President's July 25 Telephone Conversation With President Zelenskiy

Q. President Zelenskiy, have you felt any pressure from President Trump to investigate Joe Biden and Hunter Biden?

President Zelenskiy. I think you read everything. So you—I think you read text. I'm sorry, but I don't want to be involved to democratic, open—*vibory*?

Aide to President Zelenskiy. Elections.

President Zelenskiy. Elections, elections of U.S.A. No, you heard that we had, I think, good phone call. It was normal. We spoke about many things. And I—so I think, and you read it, that nobody pushed it—pushed me. Yes.

President Trump. In other words, no pressure.

Q. President Trump, would—President Trump, would you like President Zelenskiy to—

President Trump. Because you know what? There was no pressure.

Q. Mr. President——

President Trump. And you know there was—and by the way, you know there was no pressure. All you have to do it see it, what went on on the call. But you know that. But you could ask the question, and I appreciate the answer.

Go ahead.

Former Vice President Joseph R. Biden, Jr./Corruption Issues in Ukraine

Q. Mr. President, would you like President Zelenskiy to do more on Joe Biden and investigating him?

President Trump. No. I want him to do whatever he can. And this was not his fault; he wasn't there. He's just been here recently. But whatever he can do in terms of corruption, because the corruption is massive.

Now, when Biden's son walks away with millions of dollars from Ukraine, and he knows nothing, and they're paying him millions of dollars, that's corruption.

When Biden's son walks out of China with \$1.5 billion in a fund—and the biggest funds in the world can't get money out of China—and he's there for one quick meeting, and he flies in on Air Force Two, I think that's a horrible thing. I think it's a horrible thing.

But I'm going far beyond that. I know the President, and I've read a lot about Ukraine. I've read a lot about a lot of countries. He wants to stop corruption.

He was elected—I think, number one—on the basis of stopping corruption, which unfortunately has plagued Ukraine. And if he could do that, he's doing, really, the whole world a big favor. I know—and I think he's going to be successful.

Personal Attorney to the President Rudolph W. Giuliani/Investigation Into Russia's Interference in 2016 Presidential Election

Q. Mr. President, on Rudy Giuliani, why do you think it's appropriate for your personal attorney to get involved in government business?

President Trump. Well, you'd have to ask Rudy. I will tell you——

Q. You mentioned it to the President here.

President Trump. I will tell you this, that Rudy is looking to also find out where the phony witch hunt started, how it started. You had a Russian witch hunt that turned out to be 2½ years of phony nonsense.

And Rudy Giuliani is a great lawyer. He was a great mayor. He's highly respected. I've watched the passion that he's had on television over the last few days. I think it's incredible the way he's done.

What he's at is, he wants to find out where did this Russian witch hunt that you people really helped perpetrate, where did it start? How come it started? It was all nonsense. It was a hoax. It was a total hoax. It was a media hoax and a Democrat hoax. Where did it start?

And Rudy has got every right to go and find out where that started. And other people are looking at that too. Where did it start? The enablers—where did it all come from? It was out of thin air. And I think he's got a very strong right to do it. He's a good lawyer; he knows exactly what he's doing. And it's very important.

Former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton's Use of Private E-mail Server/Federal Bureau of Investigation

Q. Mr. President, do you believe that the e-mails from Hillary Clinton—do you believe that they're in Ukraine? Do you think this whole thing originated——

President Trump. I think they could be. You mean the 30,000 that she deleted?

Q. Yes.

President Trump. Yes, I think they could very well—boy, that was a nice question. I like that question. [Laughter] Because, frankly, I think that one of the great crimes committed is Hillary Clinton deleting 33,000 e-mails after Congress sends her a subpoena. Think of that. You can't even do that in a civil case; you can't get rid of evidence like that. She deleted 33,000 e-mails after—not before—after receiving the subpoena from the U.S. Congress.

I mean, I have never heard—now, she's done far worse than that. Although, I don't know how much worse it can be. But there were many other things she did that were wrong. But that's so obvious. She gets a subpoena from the United States Congress, and she deletes them. And then, she said, as I remember it, that, "Oh, well, they had to do with the wedding and yoga." She does a lot of yoga, right? So they had 33,000 e-mails about the wedding of her daughter and yoga. I don't think so.

How she got away with that one is just—but it's one of many. And it's corrupt Government. Because we have corruption also, Mr. President. We have a lot of corruption in our Government. And when you see what happened with Hillary Clinton, when you see what happened with Comey, and McCabe, and all of these people—we have a lot of things going on here too. Hopefully, it's going to be found out very soon. But I think that a lot of progress has been made. A lot of progress has been made.

U.S. Assistance to Ukraine/Ukraine-Russia Relations

Q. Mr. President, will military aid—will the military aid continue? Can you assure that it will continue in the future?

President Trump. Well, we're working with Ukraine. And we want other countries to work with Ukraine. When I saw "work," I'm referring to money. They should put up more money. We put up a lot of money. I gave you antitank busters that—frankly, President Obama was sending you pillows and sheets. And I gave you antitank busters. And a lot of people didn't want to do that, but I did it.

And I really hope that Russia—because I really believe that President Putin would like to do something. I really hope that you and President Putin get together and can solve your problem. That would be a tremendous achievement. And I know you're trying to do that.

Q. Mr. President, did you ask the House Speaker to find a way——

U.S. Assistance to Ukraine/Former Vice President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.

Q. President Zelenskiy, in the phone call, you said that you would look into Joe Biden—you would ask your Prosecutor to look into the matter. Have you had that conversation?

President Trump. Well, I think—no, I haven't.

Q. I'm asking President Zelenskiy.

President Trump. But I think that—I think this——

Q. President Zelenskiy.

President Trump. I think that somebody, if you look at what he did, it's so bad—where his son, he goes to China, he walks away with a billion and a half dollars. He goes to Ukraine, and he walks away with \$50,000 a month and a lot of money in addition to that. And the whole thing with the Prosecutor in Ukraine.

And he's on tape. This isn't like "maybe he did it, maybe he didn't." He's on tape doing this. I saw this a while ago. I looked at it, and I said: "That's incredible. I've never seen anything like that." Now, either he's dumb, or he thought he was in a room full of really good friends, or maybe it's a combination of both, in his case.

Q. President Zelenskiy——

President Zelenskiy. I heard your question. Thank you very much. Don't cry.

I mean that we have independent country and independent general security. And I can't push anyone, you know? That's it. That is the question—that is the answer. So I didn't call somebody or the new general security. I didn't ask him. I didn't push him. That's it.

Ukraine-U.S. Relations

Q. Do you feel obligated to fulfill your promises to President Trump?

President Zelenskiy. Just—sorry.

[At this point, an interpreter translated the reporter's question into Ukrainian for President Zelenskiy. President Zelenskiy and a reporter then had a brief exchange in Ukrainian.]

Interpreter. Obligated to do what?

[President Zelenskiy spoke to the reporter in Ukrainian, and no translation was provided.]

Q. Promises not——

[President Zelenskiy and a reporter continued their exchange in Ukrainian, and no translation was provided.]

President Trump. You want to just——

President Zelenskiy. I'm sorry.

[An interpreter then translated President Zelenskiy's remarks into English as follows.]

Concerning the investigation, actually, I want to underscore that Ukraine is an independent country. We have a new Prosecutor General in Ukraine, a highly professional man with a Western education and history to investigate any case he considers and deems appropriate.

While we have many more issues to care about and to tackle, we have—*[inaudible]*—we have Maidan, we have corruption cases, as President Trump rightly mentioned about that. So we know what to do, and we know where to go and what to tackle.

Q. President Trump, is it appropriate to ask the Attorney General to be involved in this matter?

President Trump. Go ahead.

Q. President Zelenskiy——

Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi/Legislative Priorities in Congress

Q. Did you ask House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to find a way out of impeachment yesterday?

President Trump. Not at all. No. Look, she's lost her way. She's been taken over by the radical left. She may be a radical left herself, but she really has lost her way. I spoke to her about guns yesterday. She didn't even know what I was talking about. She's not interested in guns.

Q. Did it even come up or no?

President Trump. I'll tell you what: Nancy Pelosi is not interested in guns and gun protection and gun safety. All she is thinking about is this. She's been taken over by the radical left, the whole Democrat Party. And you take a look at what's happening in the media today. The whole party is taken over by the left.

And thank you very much. My poll numbers have gone up. But I don't want it to go up for this reason. When they look, and when you see what's happening, people are really angry at Democrats. They're really angry at the Democrat Party.

And things like, as an example, drug pricing—getting drugs down—things like gun safety, infrastructure, the Democrats can't talk about that, because they've been taken over by a radical group of people. And Nancy Pelosi, as far as I'm concerned, unfortunately, she's no longer the Speaker of the House.

Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:19 p.m. at the InterContinental New York Barclay hotel. In his remarks, he referred to R. Hunter Biden, son of former Vice President Biden; Chelsea Clinton, daughter of former President William J. Clinton and former Secretary Clinton; James B. Comey, Jr., former Director, and Andrew G. McCabe, former Deputy Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation; and former Prosecutor General Viktor Shulin of Ukraine. President Zelenskiy referred to Prosecutor General Ruslan Riaboshapka of Ukraine. A reporter referred to former Prosecutor General Yuriy Lutsenko of Ukraine.

Categories: Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters :: New York City; Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials : Ukraine, President Zelenskiy.

Locations: New York City.

Names: Biden, Joseph R., Jr.; Biden, R. Hunter; Clinton, Chelsea; Clinton, Hillary Rodham; Comey, James B., Jr.; Giuliani, Rudolph W.; McCabe, Andrew G.; Obama, Barack; Pelosi, Nancy; Putin, Vladimir Vladimirovich; Shokin, Viktor; Zelenskiy, Volodymyr.

Subjects: China : Relations with U.S.; Congress : House of Representatives :: Speaker; Economy, national : Improvement; Health and medical care : Prescription drugs, affordability and costs; Law enforcement and crime : Gun control; New York : President's visits; Russia : 2016 U.S. elections, interference; Russia : Crimea, annexation from Ukraine; Russia : President; Russia : Relations with Ukraine; Ukraine : Crimea, annexation by Russia; Ukraine : Government officials, corruption issues; Ukraine : President; Ukraine : Relations with Russia; Ukraine : Trade with U.S.; Ukraine : U.S. assistance.

DCPD Number: DCPD201900661.