

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2019

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Nayib Armando Bukele Ortez of El Salvador in New York City

September 25, 2019

President Trump. It's a great honor to be with the President of El Salvador. We've had a tremendous success because, 2 weeks ago, we signed a cooperation agreement, which is a big thing: great for El Salvador, great for the United States. And worked very, really well with our people. And I have great respect for you, and I really appreciate what you're doing.

And the President has done an incredible job with MS-13. He realizes what a threat they are. And they have been very, very tough, and we all appreciate that. And thank you very much for the agreement.

President Bukele. Thank you, Mr. President.

President Trump. Please.

President Bukele. Thank you, Mr. President. Well, we're very happy to be here. It's an honor to be with the President of the United States and with his team. It's—we're very impressed and—the whole team being here.

And actually, for us, the United States is not only a partner and an ally, but also a friend. And we're going to show that friendship. That's one of the reasons we signed the agreement is because we want to show that friendship to our most important ally, which is the United States. And for us, this is very, very important.

And looking forward, I mean, we have been a little more than a hundred days in office, but we look forward to be working with President Trump for the next 5 years. So I think that will be very good for us.

President Trump. I thought you were going to say longer than that. [*Laughter*] Tell them a little bit longer; they'll love that. That will be breaking news.

President Bukele. I'm only going to be for 5 years.

President Trump. I know. I'm only kidding. [*Laughter*]

President Bukele. You would need to talk with the next President.

President Trump. Yes.

President Bukele. So for—we're very happy to be here and we're hoping that this meeting will only strengthen our relationship even more. And I think it will, because, you know, we're—President Trump is very nice and cool, and I'm nice and cool too. [*Laughter*] So—we both use Twitter a lot, so you know, we'll get along. And we're very honored. We're very honored, Mr. President.

President Trump. Well, it's our honor. Thank you very much. And we're working together very well. And the relationship has been excellent.

Mr. Secretary, would you like to say something?

Acting Secretary of Homeland Security McAleenan. Thank you, Mr. President. And thank you, President Bukele. It's been a tremendous partnership in the first hundred days you've had in office, with all of your team: Minister Hill, Minister Rivas, your Security Minister. And I really

see the advances that you're making on ending forced migration. It's very productive for the region, and we'll be there alongside supporting you. Thank you.

President Trump. And I think, importantly, we met with Honduras, as you know, and we also had meetings previous to this, but with Guatemala, and had tremendously successful meetings. We also signed agreements with them, cooperation agreements. Some people use different terms, but we use the word "cooperation agreement," and at the highest strength, and yours also. And that's good for all of us. It's really good for all of us.

Mexico has been fantastic on the border. Today, we have 27,000 soldiers. The numbers are way down. What are the numbers you were just telling me?

Acting Secretary McAleenan. Yes. We're going drop again this month, Mr. President. It will be an over 60-percent reduction from the peak in May. And from Central America, it will be closer to 75- or 80-percent reduction.

President Trump. Yes. About an 80 percent—I heard that before. Eighty-one percent. The catch-and-release is gone, as of almost now.

Acting Secretary McAleenan. That's right.

President Trump. And there won't be catch-and-release. We're not releasing anybody into the country. And especially, we focus on the bad ones, but the bad ones get taken out. We're removing them from our country. We're moving them fast. And they are the ones that go first. You might want to discuss that a little bit.

Go ahead.

Acting Secretary McAleenan. Absolutely. So we announced the end of the court-mandated catch-and-release of families from Central America. And we've been able to do that because of our partnerships with the region, like with El Salvador, on streamlining repatriation for those who don't claim asylum, and working with Mexico through the migrant protection protocol for families if they do claim asylum so that they can get an expedited court hearing. And that's been a very productive approach.

We reduced the overall flow, and we're taking profits away from criminal smugglers, and we're making great progress with our international partners under your leadership.

President Trump. And Mexico, frankly, is doing a great job, with respect to the cartels, by having 27,000 soldiers on our border. They're decimating a lot of the cartels that were just really coming in. There's so many people now. There's so many bodies and really strong, tough, hardened soldiers there that it's very hard for the cartels to break through. And a lot of bad word—if you have a cartel, it has not been a good situation for you. So Mexico really is doing themselves a big favor too.

But the President of Mexico has been outstanding in working with all of us, really.

President Bukele. Yes. Impressive.

President Trump. And we're very happy.

The people that aren't working with us are the Democrats. The Democrats in Congress are a disaster. We could solve so many more problems with the loopholes, which could be done literally in 15—I always say it, 15, 20 minutes—maybe 30, if we're a little bit slower. But we could solve the loophole problem in a short period of time.

Despite that—and we have asylum also, which we could solve immediately. But we've sort of solved asylum by going through different countries. Can you believe it? Where we go to El Salvador, Honduras; we go to Mexico; we go to Guatemala to solve problems of asylum, because

we can't go to the United States Congress, because the Democrats are playing games. They don't have any time to do anything else. They don't have time to do gun safety. They don't have time to do infrastructure. They have time to do nothing else.

I'll tell you what: A lot of people are very angry at what's going on. It's a—they view it as—you could never use the word "joke," because it's too serious. But they view it as something that should never take place. They're never going to see anything done with this group in Congress, the Democrats. And that's why I really think the Republicans will take over the House. We might even increase in the Senate. And we'll keep the Presidency, and we'll do something that—like this country has never seen before.

But Nancy Pelosi has been taken over by the radical left. I watched it. I just find it hard to believe. But she's been totally taken over by the radical left. And she does exactly as they want her to do. And a lot of her members now are having second thoughts. They're saying they're in a very bad position. They're in a very bad position.

We were just with the President—the new President of Ukraine—and it was a fantastic meeting. He said: "No pressure. No nothing." It's all a hoax. I call it "the hoax." And this is just a continuation of the witch hunt. And that's all faded; that's all gone. And they had to come up with something else. The same players—Adam Schiff, Nadler—all the same players.

But now Nancy Pelosi was forced into a position that she didn't want to be in, and unfortunately, she wasn't tough enough to stop it.

So thank you very much, everybody. I think we're going to be doing a news conference in a little while. And that will be the end. Thank you very much. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:24 p.m. at the InterContinental New York Barclay hotel. In his remarks, he referred to President Andres Manuel López Obrador of Mexico; and President Volodymyr Zelenskiy of Ukraine. Acting Secretary McAleenan referred to Minister of Foreign Affairs Alexandra Hill and Minister of Justice and Public Security Rogelio Rivas of El Salvador.

Categories: Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials : El Salvador, President Bukele.

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Names: Bukele Ortiz, Nayib Armando; López Obrador, Andrés Manuel; McAleenan, Kevin K.; Nadler, Jerrold L.; Pelosi, Nancy; Schiff, Adam B.; Zelenskiy, Volodymyr.

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