

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2024

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Prime Minister Keir Starmer of the United Kingdom and an Exchange With Reporters

July 10, 2024

Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) European Championship

Q. Do you watch soccer, sir? Do you watch soccer?

President Biden. By the way, I heard.

Q. Good news?

President Biden. Good news is right. I tell you what, that—it's all because of the Prime Minister. *[Laughter]*

Prime Minister Starmer. We've not lost a game under the Labour government in 2024.

Q. Is football coming home, Prime Minister?

Prime Minister Starmer. It looks like it. *[Laughter]*

United Kingdom-U.S. Relations

President Biden. Well, welcome. And it's good to—we had a long conversation on the phone when you won.

[At this point, President Biden reached over to shake Prime Minister Starmer's hand.]

Give me your hand there, pal. And we've been the best of allies——

Prime Minister Starmer. Yes.

President Biden. ——maybe in the whole world.

And we really need to continue to cooperate.

And a lot we can talk about. And I think that, to start off, we can talk about—you call it football; we call it soccer. *[Laughter]* By the way, you know, soccer has become incredibly popular here in the United States.

Prime Minister Starmer. Yes.

President Biden. It really is growing.

And—but, any rate. And there's a lot going on. I think your—your seeking closer ties in Europe is good for all of us—the transatlantic alliance. I think it's a great idea that we're going to be working together on.

I thought we had a good meeting today at NATO.

Prime Minister Starmer. Very good, sir.

President Biden. I thought we had a good meeting.

Prime Minister Starmer. Very good, sir.

President Biden. And I think things are moving in the right direction. I'm feeling really optimistic about what—the way things are moving.

So, welcome, welcome, welcome.

The floor is yours.

Prime Minister Starmer. Thank you very much, Mr. President. And, firstly, congratulations on a really successful summit. It's been an incredibly important moment, 75 years of a bigger NATO, a stronger NATO, and a NATO with the resolve that we need.

I thought the medal—the honor for Jens Stoltenberg yesterday was a very special moment. I don't think he was expecting it.

President Biden. No, he wasn't.

Prime Minister Starmer. And——

President Biden. I owe him big. He was leaving——

Prime Minister Starmer. He——

President Biden. ——and I intervened when he was going to leave. And I sort of got on my knees and begged him to stay. No, I'm only kidding. But I talked him into staying. And his wife still talked to me. She spoke to me yesterday.

Prime Minister Starmer. I had lunch with him when he was just about to go to the Central Bank and was saying, "I'm free." And then you spoke to him, and he's still in the job. [*Laughter*]

President Biden. No, he's done a great job. Done a great job.

Prime Minister Starmer. But the special relationship is so important. It's forged in difficult circumstances, endured for so long, and stronger now than ever.

So we're very pleased to be able to come so early in the government. And to recommit to NATO, to recommit to the special relationship, and to have the opportunity to discuss these affairs with you is really important for us——

President Biden. Well, in a figurative sense——

Prime Minister Starmer. ——5 days in.

President Biden. ——I kind of see you guys as the knot tying the transatlantic alliance together. The closer you are with Europe, the more you're engaged, the more—because we know where you are, and we know where we are——

Prime Minister Starmer. Yes.

President Biden. ——for both countries.

Prime Minister Starmer. No, I think that's absolutely right.

And now, we go into a Cup final on Sunday on top of all of that. So, very good.

President Biden. Before you know it, they're——

Prime Minister Starmer. I actually watched the—I began to watch the game with the Netherlands' Prime Minister, but we left at 1–1. [*Laughter*]

President Biden. Well, you guys are still talking with one another?

Prime Minister Starmer. No, we haven't seen each other since. [*Laughter*] So we'll have to—— [*laughter*]——we'll have to see.

President Biden. Anyway. Well, we've got a lot to talk about.

So thank you all for coming in.

[*Several reporters began asking questions at once.*]

AFL–CIO

Q. Any response to George Clooney?

Q. George Clooney says you shouldn't run, Mr. President——

Q. Mr. President——

[*Several reporters asked questions at once.*]

President Biden. AFL–CIO! Go, go, go!

[*Several reporters asked questions at once.*]

President Biden. AFL–CIO. A small operation.

[*Several reporters asked questions at once.*]

President Biden. [*Inaudible*]—what he said.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:49 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and his wife Ingrid Schulerud. Prime Minister Starmer referred Prime Minister Dick Schoof of the Netherlands. A reporter referred to actor George T. Clooney. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 11.

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

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Schoof, Dick; Schulerud, Ingrid ; Starmer, Keir; Stoltenberg, Jens.

Subjects: America Federation of Labor–Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL–CIO); Netherlands, Prime Minister; News media, Presidential interviews; North Atlantic Treaty Organization; Soccer; United Kingdom, Prime Minister; United Kingdom, relations with U.S.

DCPD Number: DCPD202400585.