

*Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2025*

**Remarks on Signing a Memorandum on an Immediate Assessment of Aviation Safety and an Exchange With Reporters**

*January 30, 2025*

*The President.* Thank you very much for seeing me twice today. It's going to be a—quite an important signing, so we thought we'd let you watch.

If we could, I'd ask Will to explain the first, but more—really, more importantly, explain the second, and we'll start signing.

Go ahead.

*White House Staff Secretary William O. Scharf.* Yes, sir. Just two items for your signature today. The first is the formal commission appointing Chris Rocheleau to be the Deputy Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration.

*The President.* Right.

*Staff Secretary Scharf.* And since the Commissioner position is—excuse me, since the Administrator position is currently vacant, he will act as the Administrator, since he's now been appointed Deputy.

*The President.* And he's a very capable guy.

*Staff Secretary Scharf.* Extremely experienced in aviation and highly regarded in the industry and in Government.

*[At this point, the President signed the commission.]*

*The President.* Okay.

*Staff Secretary Scharf.* Thank you, sir.

*The President.* Thank you.

*Staff Secretary Scharf.* Second for your signature, we have a Presidential memorandum titled "Immediate Assessment of Aviation Safety."

In light of the damage done to aviation safety by the Biden administration's DEI and woke policies, what this presidential memorandum orders is for your Secretary of Transportation and FAA Administrator—in this case, acting FAA Administrator—to basically ensure that we are actively undoing all of that damage, that we are assessing how much damage was done, and that we're ensuring that people hired within the FAA, in keeping with your memorandum of January 21st, are only the most outstanding, capable people for the jobs that they are being hired into.

*The President.* In other words, competence.

*Staff Secretary Scharf.* Yes, sir, elevating competence over everything else, instead of the DEI policies that were pursued by the Biden administration.

*The President.* I think everyone understands that.

*[The President signed the memorandum.]*

And Obama.

*Staff Secretary Scharf.* Yes.

*The President.* Both of them.

Okay, but Biden much worse, not even a contest. What they've done is just crazy in so many other ways.

Okay?

*Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion/January 29 Collision Between U.S. Army Helicopter and American Airlines Aircraft*

*Q.* Mr. President, to be clear, are you saying race or gender played a role in this tragedy?

*The President.* It may have. I don't know. Incompetence might have played a role. We'll let you know that.

But we want the most competent people. We don't care what race they are. We want the most competent people, especially in those positions. And you know, you're talking about extremely complex things. And if they don't have a great brain, a great power of the brain, they're not going to be very good at what they do, and bad things will happen.

*Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport/Air Traffic Control System*

*Q.* Mr. President, there's long been concerns about the amount of congestion out of DCA airport. Do you think that there's too many flights coming out of that airport?

*The President.* No, I think we need very smart people running the flights and doing it. You know, the ones that aren't good—and they'll either do one of two things. They'll have too many coming in and they can't handle it, or they'll have the people waiting up in the air—which everyone has been caught in that situation—and circling the airports for an hour. And that's no good either.

*Helicopter Training Flights Near Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport*

*Q.* What's your—what's your view on the military helicopter——

*Q.* Mr. President, are you aware——

*The President.* Say it.

*Q.* ——the military helicopter training flights that are flying around the National airport all the time, what's your view? Should they be rolled back?

*The President.* Well, my view is, fine, if they're in the right locations and if they're not at the same levels. I mean, if a plane coming in is at 300 feet or 400 feet, and a helicopter is training at 300 or 400 feet, why wouldn't they be up 500 feet higher?

*Q.* Mr. President——

*The President.* So we're certainly willing——

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

And that, to a certain extent, is the air traffic controller.

*Q.* And do you feel——

*Q.* Mr. President, what's the air traffic——

*Q.* Mr. President, you've—Mr. President——

*The President.* Wait, please. Wait. Just a second.

*January 29 Collision Between U.S. Army Helicopter and American Airlines Aircraft*

*Q.* Do you feel like what happened last night was preventable if proper——

*The President.* I do. Yes. Oh, absolutely. And obviously, that was something that should not have happened, and we're not going to let it happen again.

Yes, please.

### *Tariffs on U.S. Imports From Canada and Mexico*

*Q.* Mr. President, on a slightly different subject. On your Canada and Mexico tariffs——

*The President.* Yes?

*Q.* ——will oil be included or excluded from those tariffs?

*The President.* So we'll be announcing the tariffs on Canada and Mexico for a number of reasons. Number one is the people that have poured into our country so horribly and so much. Number two are the drugs, fentanyl and everything else, that have come into the country. And number three are the massive subsidies that we're giving to Canada and to Mexico in the form of deficits.

And I'll be putting the tariff of 25 percent on Canada and, separately, 25 percent on Mexico. And we will really have to do that, because we have very big deficits with those countries. Those tariffs that may or may not rise with time.

*Q.* Mr. President——

### *Oil Imports*

*Q.* And will oil be part of that though, because we get oil from Canada?

*The President.* Oil is going to have nothing to do with it as far as I'm concerned. Oil has nothing to do with it.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

*Q.* Mr. President—Mr. President, you said that incompetence——

### *Naval Station Guantanamo Bay/Illegal Immigration*

*Q.* [Inaudible]—yesterday regarding Guantanamo Bay. You want 30 new thousand—30,000 new beds there. Is there a possibility that will increase, or is 30,000 the maximum?

*The President.* It could increase, yes.

*Q.* What would be the maximum number?

*The President.* It depends. But countries that won't take back their criminals that they sent in to us—you know, they sent them to us. They put them into the caravans, and they came in to—as sure you're standing there, they were sent by those countries. And then they're going to be met very harshly with sanctions, et cetera.

*Q.* And when are you hoping to have Guantanamo Bay, this new facility, up and running? And how much——

*The President.* It will be pretty quickly.

*Q.* How much do you think it's going to cost?

*The President.* I—not very much. It's—a lot of the structure is already there, as you know.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

### *Air Traffic Control System*

*Q.* Mr. President, you said that incompetence may have played a role. Are you aware of any performance issues or disciplinary actions that were taken against anyone who was working the tower last night or flying the plane or——

*The President.* No. No. And I hope that's not the case in this case. But certainly, over the years, that's been the case, and it's the case with respect to close calls, and it's the case with respect to circling for hours on end.

You know, planes circle a lot, and they circle because the people bringing them down—these people that have to be very, very smart. And it's not based on anything other than the brain. We need the smartest people. We need—both psychologically smart and just brilliant, period. And we are going to have them in our control towers.

*[Several reporters spoke at once.]*

We are going to have—we are going to have the most competent people in the country in our control towers, not people that are there for any other reason.

### *Border Security*

*Q.* On the border, sir. You said that you envision sending the 80-something-thousand IRS agents hired under Biden to the border. What role do you see them playing there?

*The President.* Well, we'll see. I mean, I may do that, or I may use different people. But we're going to send more. We're going to give the Border Patrol some help.

Although, now, if you look, they've taken in the lowest number since my administration. The numbers are very low. And, at that level, we don't need so much help. People know not to come because, if they come, they're not going to make it in, and they're going to be shipped out.

### *Resettlement of Palestinian Refugees*

*Q.* Mr. President, Egypt's——

*Q.* Mr. President——

*Q.* ——Egypt's President and the King of Jordan have both said that they won't take in displaced people from Gaza, like you suggested. Is there anything you can do to make them do that? I mean, tariffs against those countries, for example.

*The President.* I think they'll do it. They will do it.

*Q.* What makes you say that?

*The President.* They are going to do it. Okay? We do a lot for them, and they're going to do it.

### *Federal Workforce*

*Q.* Mr. President, you have offered over 2 million Federal workers the option to resign immediately.

*The President.* Right.

*Q.* There are 50,000 FAA employees. Does this tragedy give you reason to reconsider that option of resignations because of concerns about staffing issues——

*The President.* No, there's no——no, if people——

*Q.* ——on airline safety?

*The President.* If people aren't coming to work, if they're not going to come into the office and report as per the date that—you know what it is—everybody knows what the date is; it's been very well documented—then they're going to be terminated.

*Q.* Do you——

*Q.* You're not going to be—you're not concerned, though, that if many people take that offer, there could be shortages that could lead to safety issues?

*The President.* Then they'll be replaced with very competent people. We have a lot of competent people in this country.

#### *January 29 Collision Between U.S. Army Helicopter and American Airlines Aircraft*

*Q.* Have you spoken to any of the families of the victims of the plane crash?

*The President.* I don't want to comment on that.

*Q.* Do you have a plan to go visit the site or——

*The President.* I have no——

*Q.* ——meet with any of the first responders?

*The President.* I have no plan to visit—not the site, because what it—you tell me. What's the site? The water? You want me to go swimming?

*Q.* Well, to meet with the first responders down there.

*The President.* I don't have a plan to do that. But I will be meeting with some people that were very badly hurt—with their family member, obviously. But I'll be meeting with some of the families, yes.

*Q.* Today?

#### *Birthright Citizenship*

*Q.* On birthright citizenship, sir. Do you believe that there are five votes on the Supreme Court that would uphold your position?

*The President.* On what?

*Q.* Five votes on the Supreme Court that would up- ——

*The President.* What position?

*Q.* Birthright citizenship.

*The President.* I think so, yes. Look, birthright citizenship was—if you look back when this was passed and made, that was meant for the children of slaves. This was not meant for the whole world to come in and pile in to the United States of America, everybody coming in and totally unqualified people with perhaps unqualified children.

This wasn't meant for that. This was meant, when it was originally done, for the children of slaves. And that was a very good and noble thing to do, and I'm in favor of that a hundred percent.

But it wasn't meant for the entire world to occupy the United States.

*Q.* So you don't see it requiring a constitutional amendment that would be——

*The President.* I just think that we'll end up winning that court in the Supreme Court. I think we're going to win that case, and I look forward to winning it. This has been going on—we're—at

that level, we're the only country in the world that does this. There's no other country—at this level, there's no other country in the world that does it. It's crazy.

*Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion/January 29 Collision Between U.S. Army Helicopter and American Airlines Aircraft/Air Traffic Control System*

*Q.* Mr. President—

*Q.* Thank you.

*Q.* —if—you know, 64 people lost their lives last night. If you aren't confident that DEI had any role, why bring it up?

*The President.* Well, all I'm talking about is competence. And we want, in the—in that particular position, we have to have the most competent people in our country, because we're talking about lives.

Now, it may or may not have had to do—but I don't like the fact that the helicopter was at the exact same level as the airplane. The helicopter should have been a thousand feet or 500 feet above it or something below it. The plane was at 3- to 400 feet. Or the plane should have been stopped, because—the helicopter could have stopped.

The plane can't be stopped, but the plane was on a schedule that was—you know, it was along a track. They call it a track. And it's the same track that every other plane has used for many years. It was going down and landing, and the helicopter got in its way.

And if the helicopter was higher or lower or stopped or turning left or turning right at a quicker time—I mean, it turned, but it turned when it was too late—a tragic—a tragic story.

So I don't know. Do you blame it on the air traffic controller too, in addition to the pilots? It may be the pilots' fault. They should have seen it. I would have thought they should have seen it, because it was a plane that was loaded up with lights, and everybody—you can see it from Kennedy Center. You can see it very easily.

So all I want is the most competent people in our country to be air traffic controllers. It's a very important position. And other positions too, by the way. We're not only talking about that. We're talking—but air traffic controllers, maybe in particular.

They have to be brilliant with computers, brilliant with graphics. They have to be, psychologically, really, really smart. And you know, there are a lot of people that wouldn't be able to do that.

*Q.* Were there any signs of foul play?

*Tariffs on U.S. Imports From Canada, Mexico, and China*

*Q.* Can you talk about—talk about tariffs on Canada and Mexico, 25 percent? That's coming on Saturday—

*The President.* That's coming on the 1st, Saturday.

*Q.* Okay. But no oil tariff—no oil tariffs?

*The President.* No, I don't—well, I didn't say that. You said that. No.

*Q.* Well, I didn't—I don't want to misinterpret you, sir.

*The President.* No, we may or may not. We're going to make that determination probably tonight—

*Q.* Oh my goodness. Okay.

*The President.* —on oil. Yes, because they send us oil. We'll see. It depends on what the price is.

If the oil is properly priced, if they treat us properly, which they don't—look, Mexico and Canada have never been good to us on trade. They've treated us very unfairly on trade, and we will be able to make that up very quickly, because we don't need the products that they have. We have all the oil you need. We have all the trees you need—meaning the lumber. We have more than almost anybody in those two categories. In oil, we have more than anybody, and we don't need anybody's trees.

We have to free up some of the tree areas that we have. We have great lumber in this country. We have to free them up environmentally, which I can do very quickly. But we don't need what they have.

And for us to be subsidizing Canada to the tune of \$175 billion a year and subsidizing Mexico to the tune of \$250 billion, \$300 billion a year—and Mexico is a method of China sending in its product—and, with China, I'm also thinking about something because they're sending fentanyl into our country, and because of that, they're causing us hundreds of thousands of deaths. So China is going to end up paying a tariff also for that, and we're in the process of doing that.

*Q.* Mr. President——

*The President.* We'll make that determination on what it's going to be, but China has to stop sending fentanyl into our country and killing our people.

*Q.* Mr. President——

*Syria*

*Q.* Mr. President, Israeli media has reported that conversations between Netanyahu's government and the White House have signaled that the U.S. may be about to pull its troops out of Syria. Have you made a decision to pull U.S. troops——

*The President.* I don't who said that. I mean, I don't know who said that, but we'll make a determination on that.

*[Several reporters spoke at once.]*

We're not going to—we're not involved in Syria. Syria is its own mess. They got enough messes over there. They don't need us involved in every one.

*Q.* Mr. President——

*January 29 Collision Between U.S. Army Helicopter and American Airlines Aircraft*

*Q.* Mr. President, was there a shortage of staff at the control tower at DCA last night that you're aware of?

*The President.* Well, that's part of competence right there. They shouldn't have that happen. Right there is what I'm talking about. Competence would be: You're not going to have a shortage. But if you had the right people, you wouldn't need as many people either.

*Q.* Do you know if there was a shortage last night or not, or is that still under investigation?

*The President.* I don't know. You're telling me something.

*Russia-U.S. Relations/China-U.S. Relations*

*Q.* Mr. President, you said earlier today that you had not spoken to Putin about this. When was the last time that you spoke with him? And has President Xi responded to your ask to help put pressure to end the war in Ukraine?

*The President.* I won't comment on either of them, but we're doing very well with regard to both.

#### *Taiwan*

*Q.* There are some reports that Xi might ask of you, in order to give that help, pressure to disavow potential Taiwan independence. Is that something that you would ever do?

*The President.* No, we've never discussed it.

#### *January 29 Collision Between U.S. Army Helicopter and American Airlines Aircraft*

*Q.* You had said earlier that we would get more details about the victims on the plane. Can you give more on that now?

*The President.* We have—I have a lot of details, but it's something that will be released to you also at the appropriate time. No, that—I have the full details.

*Q.* There were a lot of young people, potentially on——

*The President.* Young people, great people, great athletes, great skaters—very sad situation—from numerous countries.

*[Several reporters spoke at once.]*

Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you.

*Q.* *[Inaudible]*—Ukraine?

*The President.* I'll do it later. Thank you very much.

*Q.* Was there any sign of foul play?

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:31 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Abdelfattah Said Elsisi of Egypt; King Abdullah II of Jordan; President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia; and President Xi Jinping of China. The transcript was released by the Office of Communications on January 31.

*Categories:* Addresses and Remarks : Aviation safety assessment, signing the memorandum; Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters, White House.

*Locations:* Washington, DC.

*Names:* Abdullah II, King; Biden, Joseph R., Jr.; Elsisi, Abdelfattah Said; Obama, Barack; Putin, Vladimir Vladimirovich; Rocheleau, Christopher J.; Scharf, William O.; Xi Jinping.

*Subjects:* Air traffic control system; Aviation safety, improvement efforts; Border security; Canada, trade with U.S.; China, political status of Taiwan; China, President; China, synthetic opioid supply chain; Citizenship; Egypt, President; Federal Aviation Administration; Federal Government recruitment and retention practices, improvement efforts; Federal workforce, reduction efforts; Guantanamo Bay, U.S. Naval Base in Cuba, detention facility; Illegal immigration; Jordan, King; Mexico, trade with U.S.; Opioid epidemic, efforts to combat; Russia, President; Syria, political unrest and violence; Taiwan, political status with respect to mainland China; U.S. Border Patrol; Virginia, collision of military helicopter and passenger aircraft outside Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport; White House Staff Secretary.



*DCPD Number:* DCPD202500202.