

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2025

**Remarks and an Exchange With Reporters Upon Arrival at Joint Base Andrews,
Maryland**

February 2, 2025

The President. Thank you very much.

So we had a very busy weekend. We got the six hostages out of Venezuela, as you probably know, and they're very safe right now. They're home with their families.

And we appreciate the hard work of a lot of people, including Ric Grenell. We appreciate the cooperation from Venezuela. And we have some very happy people right now. Nobody thought that was going to happen.

So they are home, they're safe, and they're with their families. That was a big one.

Secretary of State Rubio is in Panama right now, and we're talking about the Panama Canal. What they've done is terrible. They violated the agreement. They're not allowed to violate the agreement.

China is running the Panama Canal. That was not given to China; that was given to Panama, foolishly. But they violated the agreement, and we're going to take it back, or something very powerful is going to happen.

And, as far as other things are concerned, as you know, we had a very busy weekend. We're dealing with Israel. We're dealing with Ukraine and Russia. We have meetings and talks scheduled with various parties, including Ukraine and Russia, and I think those discussions are actually going pretty well.

The discussions on the Middle East with Israel and various and sundry other countries are progressing. Bibi Netanyahu is coming on Tuesday, and I think we have some very big meetings scheduled.

White House Senior Adviser Elon R. Musk

Q. Mr. President, do you feel that Elon Musk is delivering on his promises to you? Do you feel he's doing a good job right now with DOGE?

The President. I do. I think Elon is doing a good job. He's a big cost-cutter. Sometimes we won't agree with it, and we'll not go where he wants to go, but I think he's doing a great job. He's a smart guy—very smart—and he's very much into cutting our—the budget of our Federal Government.

Q. Mr. President—Mr. President—

Q. You spoke of retaliatory tariffs on Canada.

The President. Say it.

Tariffs/Canada-U.S. Trade/Border Security

Q. You spoke of retaliatory tariffs on Canada. There was a rider in the order. Are you planning to increase the tariffs against Canada?

The President. Well, it could happen. If they do anything, we will. Canada has been very abusive of the United States for many years.

They don't allow our banks—did you know that?—Canada does not allow banks to go in. If you think about it, that's pretty amazing. If we have a U.S. bank, they don't allow them to go in.

Canada has been very tough on oil, on energy. They don't allow our farm products in, essentially. They don't allow a lot of things in, and we allow everything to come in. It's been a one-way street.

We subsidize Canada by the tune of about \$200 billion a year, and for what? What do we get out of it? We don't get anything out of it.

I love the people of Canada. I disagree with the leadership of Canada, and something is going to happen there. But if they want to play the game, I don't mind. We can play the game all they want.

Mexico—we've had very good talks with them.

And this is retaliatory. This is retaliatory to a certain extent. Millions of people flowed into our country through Mexico and Canada, and we're not going to allow that.

And by the way, we have among the lowest numbers we've ever had of people crossing our border—the lowest numbers since my administration.

South Africa

Q. Mr. President, you say—you—on Truth Social, you said that you were going to cut aid from South Africa. Will you plan to cut aid across other African nations? And why South Africa?

The President. No, it's only South Africa. Terrible things are happening in South Africa. The leadership is doing some terrible things, horrible things.

So that's under investigation right now. We'll make a determination. And until such time as we find out what South Africa is doing—they're taking away land. They're confiscating land. And, actually, they're doing things that are perhaps far worse than that.

Q. And on the Fed—

[*At this point, several reporters spoke at once.*]

Federal Reserve System/Interest Rates

Q. And on the Fed. Fed Chair Jerome Powell, he held rates. What's your reaction to him not changing the rates?

The President. What did you say?

Q. Fed Chair Jerome Powell. The Fed meeting was this week. He held the rates. He didn't cut them or anything.

The President. No, I'm not surprised. I think holding the rates at this point was the right thing to do.

[*Several reporters spoke at once.*]

Tariffs/European Union-U.S. Trade/United Kingdom-U.S. Trade

Q. Mr. President, what country will be next on tariffs? Would you consider taxing the U.K., for example?

The President. Well, we're going to see what happens. It will happen.

Q. With the U.K.?

The President. But we're going to—might—we'll see how things work out. It might happen with them. But it will definitely happen with the European Union—I can tell you that—because they've really taken advantage of us.

And you know, we have over a \$300 billion deficit. They don't take our cars, they don't take our farm products, they take almost nothing. And we take everything from them: millions of cars, tremendous amounts of food and farm products.

So the U.K. is way out of line. And we'll—we'll see, the U.K., but European Union is really out of line. U.K. is out of line, but I'm sure that one—I think that one can be worked out. But the European Union is—it's an atrocity what they've done.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Prime Minister Keir Starmer of the United Kingdom/European Union-U.S. Trade

Q. Well, as you know, the Prime Minister, Starmer, wants a closer relationship with the EU. So what would be your message to—

The President. Well, Prime Minister Starmer has been very nice. We've had a couple of meetings. We've had numerous phone calls. We're getting along very well, and we'll see whether or not we can balance out our budget.

With the European Union, it's a \$350 billion deficit. So, obviously, something is going to take place there.

European Union-U.S. Trade

Q. Follow up on this, sir. On the European Union, what's your timeline? And are you thinking along the lines—

The President. Where? Where?

Q. —of 25 percent, 10 percent?

The President. With who? With who?

Q. EU.

Q. EU. How much?

The President. I wouldn't say there's a timeline, but it's going to be pretty soon.

Q. What's happening with USAID?

Tariffs/Inflation/U.S. Trade Deficit

Q. Are you concerned that prices may rise because of the tariffs—

The President. No, no—

Q. —and Americans are going to feel the—

The President. —I'm not concerned. We may have, short-term, some—a little pain, and people understand that, but long-term, the United States has been ripped off by virtually every country in the world. We have deficits with almost every country—not every country, but almost—and we're going to change it. It's been unfair.

That's why we owe \$36 trillion. We have deficits with everybody. We help everybody. We've been helping everybody for years, and to be honest, I don't think they appreciate it. So we're going to change that, and we're going to change it fast. We're going to make America great again.

We have to focus on our country. We have tremendous potential, if properly used. And we have to focus on our country.

Tremendous deficits with China, tremendous deficits with the European Union, tremendous deficits with Mexico and Canada. And why? Or what's the purpose of that? Why would we have deficits?

And yet, you look at—if you look at pharmaceuticals and drugs, if you look at various products, it's much cheaper in other countries. We're not going to allow that much longer. We're not going to take it.

U.S. Agency for International Development

Q. Are you planning on closing USAID, or what's going on there? What's happening?

The President. Well, it was—it's been run by a bunch of radical lunatics, and we're getting them out. USAID, run by radical lunatics, and we're getting them out, and then we'll make a decision.

Canada/Mexico/Tariffs

Q. Mr. President, have you spoken with anyone from Canada or from Mexico since you imposed the tariffs?

The President. I've spoken with people from Canada. I've spoken with people from Mexico. And I've spoken to a lot of other people too.

Q. So—

Q. Will you say who? Prime Minister Trudeau or someone on—

The President. I'm speaking with Prime Minister Trudeau tomorrow morning, and I'm also speaking with Mexico tomorrow morning. And I don't expect anything very dramatic. It—we put tariffs on. They owe us a lot of money, and I'm sure they're going to pay.

Panama Canal

Q. On Panama, sir. Would you send troops to retake the Canal of Panama?

The President. About what?

Q. Would you send—Panama—the canal of Panama, would you send U.S. troops?

The President. I don't think troops will be necessary in Panama. What Panama has done is terrible financial security for this part of the world.

And you know, 70 percent of the signage on the Panama Canal was written in Chinese. That's not right. So it wasn't meant for China. It should have never been made. The deal was a ridiculous deal.

We lost 38,000 people building the Panama Canal—one of the great wonders of the world. Thirty—think of it—38—it was the most expensive project ever built by this country, if you take it forward—the most expensive project ever built. We lost 38,000. And what happens? China owns it all of a sudden? It's not going to happen. We're not going to let that happen.

We have national security concerns. And they wouldn't let it happen either.

Canada-U.S. Trade/Mexico-U.S. Trade/Border Security/Fentanyl

Q. Mr. President, what would Canada and Mexico need to do for you to lift the tariffs? What are—specifically do you want?

The President. They'd have to balance out their trade, number one.

They've got to stop people from pouring into our country. And we've stopped it. They haven't stopped it. We've stopped it. They have to stop people from pouring in.

And we have to stop fentanyl, and that includes China. Fentanyl has killed, this year, at least 200,000 people. It's pouring in from China through Mexico and Canada, and they've got to stop it. And if they don't stop it, the tariffs are going to get worse—a lot worse.

Q. Mr. President—[*inaudible*]—going to the border?

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:16 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to U.S. Special Presidential Envoy for Special Missions Richard A. Grenell; and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel. The transcript was released by the Office of Communications on February 3.

Categories: Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters, Joint Base Andrews, MD.

Locations: Joint Base Andrews, MD.

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