

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2025

Remarks on Welcoming United States Citizen Marc Fogel Upon His Return From Detention in Russia and an Exchange With Reporters

February 11, 2025

The President. Everybody knows Marc. He's become a very famous guy. He's a very happy guy tonight. So, it's—it's just a—a real honor—an honor to have you at the White House.

Mr. Fogel. I feel like the luckiest man on Earth right now. And I want you to know that I am not a hero in this at all, and President Trump is a hero. These men that came from the diplomatic service are heroes. The Senators and Representatives that passed legislation in my honor to get me home are the heroes. I am in awe of what they all did.

My family has been a force.

The President. It's true.

Mr. Fogel. I think my 95-year-old mother is probably the most dynamic 95-year-old on Earth right now. And I am so indebted to so many people. I—I think I remember a Churchill quote that he said when the RAF was fighting the Luftwaffe. And he said that never have so many owed so much to so few. And I put myself, fortunately and unfortunately, into that category. And I said, "Never has one owed so much to so many."

That this superorganism of people that came to my support and the love that I was given — sustained me for 3½ years in a prison that had me in hospitals for more than 100 days. I was given more than 400 injections in that time.

And knowing I had the support of my fellow Pennsylvanians, my family, my friends, it was so overwhelming that it brought me to my knees and it brought me to tears.

But it was—it was my energy, it was my being that—that kept me going that whole time. And I will forever be indebted to President Trump, to Steve over there—what a dynamic man this guy is. *[Laughter]*

The President. That's true.

Mr. Fogel. When I met him, the energy, the can-do attitude just exudes from his body. And when he smiled at me and introduced me and I got the feel for what has happened—you know, it's not just me, it's—it's everybody.

And Secretary Rubio, who met my son a while back.

I'm—I'm a middle-class schoolteacher who's now in a—a dream world.

The President. We're going to show you the Lincoln Bedroom in a little while.

Mr. Fogel. *[Laughter]* I have- ——

The President. It's a very special, special place. Appropriate for tonight, I think. Very appropriate.

Mr. Fogel. And thank you all. And I love our country, and I'm so happy to be back here. And I wish I could articulate it better.

The President. You've done beautifully.

Mr. Fogel. Thank you.

The President. And he's got a great mother. And when I saw the mother at a rally, she said, "Will you—if you win, will you get my son out?" And I promised—she's 95 years old. And I said, "We'll get him out." And we—we got him out pretty quickly.

Mr. Fogel. She told me that—that exact——

The President. Yes.

Mr. Fogel. ——that exact words. And——

The President. I remember. She—she made quite an impression.

Mr. Fogel. And you also did.

The President. Yes.

Mr. Fogel. And I'm—in awe of what you've done——

The President. Thank you.

Mr. Fogel. ——and your team.

The President. It's great to have you back.

Mr. Fogel. Oh——

The President. You're going to have a great life.

Yes.

President Vladimir Vladimirovich of Russia/Release of Marc Fogel

Q. Mr. President, did you speak directly to President Putin about Marc?

The President. Well, I don't want to say that. I just want to say that I appreciate very much what they did in letting Marc go home.

And I appreciate Steve Witkoff, the job he did. And Marco, behind the scenes, was unbelievable. And so many of these people were unbelievable. They—represent him. They're from his area. And we—just wanted to get him back home.

I—had to get him back home because I would have had big trouble with his mother.
[Laughter]

And—we're going to take him for a little tour of the Lincoln Bedroom, which nobody gets to see. And it's very special. Do you want to see it?

Mr. Fogel. I would love to. And—I also should make mention that—that President Putin was very generous and statesmanlike in granting me——

The President. It's true.

Mr. Fogel. ——a pardon. I mean——

Q. What were the terms of this deal, Mr. President?

The President. Very fair. Very, very fair. Very reasonable. Not like deals you've seen over the years. They were very fair.

Q. What were they?

The President. And I think that's going to lead—and we're—somebody else is being released tomorrow that you will know of. But we wanted to get this done. Very important. And Steve

wanted to actually fly over and get Marc and get him home properly, because it could be a pretty tough trip.

President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia/Release of Marc Fogel

Q. So, is this the—so, is this the beginning of a deal, sir? Is this—is this the start of a——

The President. I think there's goodwill, in terms of the war. You know, a million and a half soldiers, young people, have been killed.

Mr. Fogel. I've met many of them.

The President. And it's—yes. And it's—it's a terrible thing going on, so we want to get that done. I think—I think this could be the—very important element. You could be a big part of it, actually, because it could be a big, important part of getting the war over with Ukraine.

And we appreciate President Putin's—what he—what he did. He was able to pull it off for you, right? He was able to pull it off——

Mr. Fogel. [Laughter] I'm here.

The President. ——we—we think. And you're here.

Mr. Fogel. [Laughter] I'm here.

The President. And you're here. So, it was great. We'll tell you a little bit more about it tomorrow.

But I think we've made great progress—progress on the war also. Getting the war—I want to get the war ended. That war should not have been—it would have never happened if I was President. It would not have happened.

And it did happen, and now you have all blown-up cities and dead people—so many dead people. Should have never, ever happened.

And you could be a big catalyst for—just this evening, it's a very important evening for ending that war, and I think they all want to see it ended.

[At this point, several reporters began asking questions at once.]

Ukraine/Russia

Q. Does that mean you gave assurances about Ukraine?

Q. How does it change your—how does it change your perspective on Putin and your attitude——

The President. Well, I don't want to get into that. I only can say this: We got a man home whose mother and family wanted him desperately, whose State wanted him. He's—become a big symbol. And it's an honor to have played a small role in that.

And I just—I want to tell you, these people—they—all played a role, and we got him home. And he's—healthy. He looks good, actually. To me, you look damn good, I'll tell you that.

Mr. Fogel. I think when expectations are low——

The President. Yes.

Mr. Fogel. ——maybe—that helps a little bit. [Laughter]

The President. When you go "kerplunk," right?

Conditions of Marc Fogel's Detention

Q. Can you tell us about the conditions in the prison that you were in, sir?

Mr. Fogel. You know, I think I need a little bit of time to sort of——

The President. Yes.

Mr. Fogel. ——digest all of that. There were times when it was extremely trying. There were times when I could manage it. But I—think I need some more time to, you know, process it.

The President. It wasn't—it wasn't easy, right? It wasn't easy.

Mr. Fogel. Every second, every minute, every day had a challenge over and over.

The President. But you're—in good shape, and we compare that to what we saw 2 days ago come home. They were very, very ill. Those people are very ill. They were treated really badly.

Ukraine/Negotiated Release of Marc Fogel

Q. Mr. President, your predecessor left you almost \$4 billion in unused aid for Ukraine—to Ukraine. Are you going to use this money? Are you going to send——

The President. Well, we're going to see, but my predecessor——

Q. ——weapons to Ukraine?

The President. ——should have had this gentleman out a long time ago. You know, we did it in 2½ weeks. He's—he had 4 years to do it. He should have had Marc out a lot earlier. It's——

Q. Has——

The President. It's a shame. It's a shame.

Mr. Fogel. It was very——

The President. Should have had——never had the war, to start off with. Should have never had—that war would have never happened if I was President.

Q. And what about the—[inaudible]——

The President. But he should have had him back 3½ years ago. So, it was—it was too bad, but he didn't do it. But we did it.

Thank you all very much. Thank you very much.

Come on, Marc.

Tariffs/U.S. Trade Policy

Q. Mr. President, are reciprocal tariffs still coming tomorrow, or are you waiting until you meet with Modi?

The President. We'll see what happens.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:35 p.m. in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Malphine Mafa Fogel, mother of Mr. Fogel; U.S. Special Envoy to the Middle East Steven C. Witkoff; and former President Joseph R. Biden, Jr. The transcript was released by the Office of Communications on February 12.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Marc Fogel, release from detention in Russia; Interviews With the News media: Exchanges with reporters, White House.

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