

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2025

Remarks at an Executive Order Signing Ceremony and an Exchange With Reporters

February 14, 2025

The President. Thank you very much for being here. We have largely an energy group today. We're looking to be very energy dominant, and we will be in a very short order. These are great professionals.

But before we do that, we'll be signing an Executive order having to do with COVID and schools.

Lindsey.

White House Senior Associate Staff Secretary Lindsey Halligan. Yes. So, this first Executive order, it prohibits Federal funding for COVID-19 mandates—vaccine mandates in schools.

The President. Okay, and that will—meaning they want to clear that up——

Associate Staff Secretary Halligan. Yes.

The President. ——the discrepancy.

Associate Staff Secretary Halligan. So any schools that require students to be vaccinated with the COVID-19 shot, then there's no more Federal funding. So——

The President. Okay.

[*At this point, the President signed an Executive order titled, "Keeping Education Accessible and Ending COVID-19 Vaccine Mandates in Schools."*]

Okay. That solves that problem.

COVID-19 Vaccine Mandates in Schools

Q. Sir, will the Department of Education have to handle that request?

The President. Yes, it is up to the Department of Education.

Okay. Thanks.

Associate Staff Secretary Halligan. Okay. And then——

Secretary of Transportation Sean P. Duffy. Can I make one comment, Mr. President?

The President. Yes, please.

Secretary Duffy. As a father of nine, I thank you. We should have parental freedom to decide what vaccines our kids take, as opposed to school systems and Governors forcing upon the people that love these kids the most, which is the parents. So thank you for signing that.

The President. Great. Thank you very much. People wanted that very badly.

Okay.

Associate Staff Secretary Halligan. Okay. And here is an Executive order establishing the National Energy Dominance Council. So that will be chaired by the Secretary of the Interior, Mr. Burgum, and the Vice Chair, Chris Wright.

And so this will reduce costs with respect to energy, establish American independence with energy, and also unleash energy dominance.

The President. Good. Thank you. And this is a big deal. We have more energy than any other country, and now we're unleashing it, to put it nicely.

And I'd like to ask Doug—you're going to be heading it up, you and Chris—would you say a few words about it, please?

Secretary of the Interior Douglas J. Burgum. Yes, absolutely, sir. Good afternoon. President Trump wisely understood that, under the Biden administration, there was a war against American energy, and today that war officially has ended.

President Trump, on day one, declared a national energy emergency, and this is a real emergency, because under the Biden administration, restricted the production of oil and gas. Production is still coming, but when you stop holding leases, when you take 625 million acres of land out of—ocean land out of production possibilities through an Executive order, you're really restricting the balance sheet of America.

But today, as President Trump said, this is unleashed. The National Energy Dominance Council will be made up—all the folks that are standing beside me here, other Cabinet leaders, and many more represent President Trump's wise decision that we need a whole-of-Government approach to unwind.

The Biden administration had a whole-of-Government approach that had the war against U.S. energy. Now we need to turn that around 180 degrees and unleash that potential.

We've got to unleash it from the Gulf of America all the way up to Alaska. We have amazing resources in this country, and we haven't been getting a return on them. Many of these are under public lands. The interior has 500 million acres of surface; 700 million acres of subsurface minerals, critical minerals; and offshore, close to 2 billion acres.

And that balance sheet makes the—is the biggest balance sheet in the world, and it's been completely underutilized.

Everybody knows we have \$36 trillion in debt as a country, but no one knows how many hundreds of trillions of dollars of assets we have. And President Trump is asking us to go get a return on that investment for the American people.

And, with that, we're going to have prosperity at home with lower prices, and we're also going to have peace abroad, because the wars that we've been engaged in or our allies have been fighting over the past few years have been funded by the oil sales of our adversaries.

So we have an opportunity, and we—also, we're in an AI arms race with China. The only way we win that is with more electricity. And we also have an energy emergency in terms of electricity—too much intermittent, unreliable; not enough baseload. We've been shutting down the baseload that we have. President Trump is going to reverse that, and it's going to allow us to win the AI arms race, which is the most important thing that we have to do relative to our future.

So, with that, I want to say, again, thank you to President Trump.

The President. Yes.

Secretary Burgum. And I want to thank my fellow members of the Energy Council here. I'm going to kick it over to the vice chair, Chris Wright, the—who's the Secretary of the Department of Energy.

Secretary of Energy Christopher A. Wright. Thank you, Secretary Burgum. Today is truly a great day for our country today. And Secretary Burgum laid out so many of the problems the last

4 years. If you put barriers in front of energy, you make it more expensive, you make it less reliable, make it harder to do business here, and harder for our consumers to pay their bills.

With this fantastic action from our President, we now have authority across the Government to lean in to fix these problems. And I'll start out with one specific right away.

This morning I signed our first LNG export license, unpausing the pause in inaction. The Commonwealth LNG project that will be on the Gulf Coast in Louisiana is now officially ready to go.

This will be a large construction project for American workers. It will draw demand for more American energy production that will be shipped overseas to our allies. Many more of those to come.

We're also working aggressively to roll back standards that have made appliances more expensive for Americans. And dishwashers that take 2 hours long and don't get your dishes clean—[laughter]—nobody likes that. That's about standing in the way. And with this President—President Trump—and our new National Energy Dominance Council, there's so many things we can do to make American lives better, bring down costs, and grow opportunities.

And with that, I'm going to kick it over to a fellow member of the Council, our Administrator of the EPA, Lee Zeldin.

Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lee M. Zeldin. Thank you, Secretary. And honored to be serving on the Energy Dominance Council. At EPA, we're doing our part to power the great American comeback. And President Trump has made it clear that he wants EPA to be doing our job to ensure that we are unleashing energy dominance however we can help, that we are assisting in making America the AI capital of the world, that we are pursuing permitting reform, that we are helping to bring back American auto jobs.

This is the mandate of the American public, that the Trump mandate was clear, and the guidance from President Trump to me when he asked me, thankfully, for the opportunity for us to be able to serve together in partnership to unleash energy dominance. This is a moment that we must meet.

To that end, it is important to note that the prior Biden-Harris EPA issued a waiver to California for tailpipe emissions. This was a rule that should have been submitted to Congress. We will submit it to Congress. Congress will have the opportunity, through the Congressional Review Act, to make that waiver go away. We will do everything in our part to help the American people to make life in America more affordable.

The golden age of American success is upon us. If you're excited about the last 3 weeks, that was just a taste of the main event, the entrée to come—the next 4 years being the greatest term in the history of the American Presidency.

With that, I'd like to introduce Sean Duffy.

Secretary Duffy. Thank you. So, first of all, thank you for the work on dishwashers. We use more water to wash our dishes before we put them in the dishwasher.

The President. That's right.

Secretary Duffy. We're not saving water; we're using more water. So thank you for that.

But I'm also joining the EPA. We've introduced our rules to start to look at the CAFE standards. So we're looking at how much it costs for end users when they put gas in their car. And the Biden-era standards are costing billions of dollars in taxes and carbon credits, which drive up the costs of vehicles.

And so we're going to remedy that, rectify it, and make sure we're bringing down the cost of a car, number one.

Number two, if I could just mention, Mr. President, per your direction, we are going to move forward with a permitting process for the Texas GulfLink deep water port, making sure we can move energy in and out of the country. So that's—that was held up for 5 years, and it was stonewalled, bureaucrats got in the way. We're now going to move forward with that, making sure we have great oil infrastructure in the country.

The President. That's great. Thanks. Great job.

Secretary Duffy. Howard Lutnick.

The President. Yes.

Secretary of Commerce Howard W. Lutnick. So the nanny State. You're feeling the end of the nanny State, from straws made of paper to regulation endlessly harming Americans and holding us back. It slows down our production and manufacturing, which we were talking about with the Prime Minister of India yesterday, you're hearing that about energy dominance. It's going to go away.

We're going to care about Americans. The Trump administration and this President cares about Americans. And you're going to feel a change. You're going to feel the price of energy coming down. You're going to feel prices coming down. You're going to feel an explosion. The golden age of manufacturing of America has always been there. It's just been stifled by regulation, and that time is over.

The President. All right. Thank you very much, Howard.

Please.

National Economic Council Director Kevin A. Hassett. Mr. President, I just want to say that you've built such an incredible team and, Secretary and Chairman Burgum, that he's been working on this his whole life. And so what I expect you to see, sir, is action as early as next week that is going to shock people about how good it is for Americans. And so thank you for your leadership, sir.

The President. Thank you very much, Kevin.

And we are also working on a project that has been under wraps for 20 years. Everybody wanted it. It's been held up by New York. It's a pipeline that will bring down the energy prices in New York and in all of New England by 50, 60, 70 percent. It should have been done years ago. We'll be speaking to New York and the—New York is actually the biggest beneficiary, because their energy costs are very high. This will reduce it very substantially.

But the—all of the Governors want this to happen, and I think it's going to happen. It's now going to happen. It's something that's—would rather not have to go eminent domain. We'll do that if we have to in New York. But hopefully, we won't have to do that.

This, again, will bring down energy prices in New England by numbers that nobody can even believe—probably 50, 60 percent, maybe even more than that. A lot of them don't even pay energy because they have no energy. They use logs. They go out, and they cut down a tree. It's really a terrible situation.

So we're going to get this done, and we can have it done—once we start construction, we're looking at anywhere from 9 to 12 months, if you can believe it. It's going to go very rapidly.

The other thing I'd like Doug to mention—the 635 million acres that Biden so viciously took out of our—our net worth. If you look at it from the standpoint of a company, you'd talk about net worth. They've destroyed our net worth. We're putting it back. It will be back as of this afternoon.

And, Doug, could you mention that—all of the millions and millions of acres that he just handed back to nobody?

Secretary Burgum. Yes, the—right—the Executive order by President Biden that wiped out these trillions from our balance sheet, President Trump signed an Executive order instructing me, as the Secretary of Interior, to unban that ban, and that's been accomplished. And so, those are back on the U.S. balance sheet.

The President. Okay.

Offshore Energy Resources

Q. I'm sorry, which one is that?

Secretary Burgum. The 625 million acres of offshore that was banned from further lease sales.

The President. Further anything. You couldn't even——

Secretary Burgum. 625 million acres——

The President. Right.

Secretary Burgum. ——is one-third the size of the lower 48 that was taken off our balance sheet. It's back on there now. President Trump cares about the American people. He knows that these public lands belong to the public. They don't belong to Washington bureaucrats from the prior administration. And we're going to make sure that we get a return on investment for the American people.

The President. The amount of money that he took off our balance sheet—if you look at as a balance sheet—it was incalculable. Nobody's ever seen anything like it. And he did that, I guess, in the last few days of the administration. He just wiped it out—635 million acres—which, if you sit down and look, it's like, that's a major part of the ocean. And he just gave it away and took it away. And fortunately, it wasn't done with an act of Congress or anything. And we did it in a, I think, very abbreviated, very quick, and very legal procedure. And it's now back on our balance sheet. It's back as part of our country.

What they did was so horrible. It was just a terrible thing to do, an unbelievable thing to do.

Also, they mentioned dishwashers and sinks and showers and the whole thing. We're going to get rid of those restrictions. You have many places where they have water—they have so much water, they don't know what to do with it. But people buy a house, they turn on the sink and water barely comes out. They turn—take a shower, water barely comes out, and it's an unnecessary restriction.

And basically, I think we were going to be going back to the Trump rule. We had it and everybody was happy. And then these people came in and they restricted it again. So we're going back, and we'll get it approved by Congress. In addition, we'll get it approved by Congress. So, for 4 years, it's good, but we're going to get it permanently taken care of.

And again, very environmental, very environmentally friendly, but we want to be able to—when somebody turns on a sink to wash their hands or presses the button for a dishwasher and there's barely enough water to—I mean, there's no water. And you know what they do? They press the button 10 times. They run it 10 times, so it ends up costing a lot more.

So I know you're working on that. And where are we on that?

Administrator Zeldin. We're working closely with the Department of Energy with regards to rules——

The President. Right.

Administrator Zeldin. ——that were enacted during the Biden administration. Inside of the EPA, we are overhauling the WaterSense standards that are there, to update them for the American people, to bring down cost of living and combat inflation and just pursue common sense.

The President. Good. Well, we have more oil and gas than anybody else in the world. We're opening up ANWR again. As you know, we got something—Ronald Reagan couldn't do it. No President was able to do it. I got it.

And the first week in office, the Biden administration terminated that. ANWR is the biggest site, probably bigger than Saudi Arabia. We don't know yet. But it's of that size or bigger. And we hit gold, and I call it liquid gold. But we hit gold. And they—for whatever reason, they terminated it. And we were just ready to start utilizing it.

This could take care of all of Asia energy-wise. Very close to Japan. In fact, Japan wants to go and be our partner doing the pipeline going right into the ships. So they expressed tremendous interest. So did Prime Minister Modi of India.

And just in closing, both Prime Minister Modi and the Prime Minister of Japan—both very good people—they said: "We couldn't make a deal. We couldn't get any energy." I mean, you wonder what was going on with our country. They couldn't make a deal to get energy—any energy from the Biden administration. They just couldn't do it. There was nobody to deal with. They didn't know how to go about it. And they're very happy that we're here.

But we're going to really benefit our taxpayers, and we're going to benefit our country.

So I want to thank everybody for coming. This is a very big bill. This is really going to be energy dominant. We're going to be energy dominant like nobody else. And this doesn't even discuss all of the electricity that we're going to be producing for all of the AI plants.

You know, they need double the electricity, at least, that we have right now. So you take all of our electricity that we have all over the country just for AI, to do it right and to win that war, which we're leading by a lot because of what we've done over the last few weeks. We're leading by, actually, a lot. But if you take all of it, we have to double our electricity needs just for the AI, and that doesn't include the other technologies.

So it's a real honor to sign this bill. We're going to also work on CAFE standards. Lee, you're going to be doing that and make that whole situation—bring that back into reality and, I think, very quickly—having to do with cars.

Thank you very much.

[*The President signed an Executive order titled, "Establishing the National Energy Dominance Council."*]

India-U.S. Trade Relations

Q. Did Modi cut any tariffs yesterday as part of your meeting, sir?

The President. No. But in 2 weeks, we will have another one. Yesterday was very big. Reciprocal tariffs was very big. And it—I explained to the Prime Minister of India—Prime

Minister Modi; very good man—his tariffs are very, very high. India's tariffs are among the highest.

And I said, "Well, now, you know"—we were very low. We were the lowest. They're just about the highest. There are others as high, but not much higher. And I said: "No, no. From now on, what we do is what you charge us, we charge you. It's very simple. So whatever you're charging us—you can go as high as you want. Whatever you charge us, we charge you."

Q. Did he make any pledges about BRICS?

The President. And I wouldn't say they were thrilled to hear that, but that's the way it is.

Tariff, I told you, is a beautiful word. Fourth most beautiful.

U.S. Trade Policy/U.S. Dollar/Domestic Energy Production

Q. Did he make any pledges about BRICS nations not undermining the dollar? You had threatened——

The President. Yes. Yes.

Q. ——a hundred-percent tariffs.

The President. BRICS. The BRICS nations, I think that's breaking up very rapidly. We said that if they're going to go and do anything to undermine the dollar—that includes China. I don't even know that they're a member of BRICS. But they had a few nations get together to try and play cute. And I said, "We're going to put a hundred-percent tariff on every one of those nations." And at the mere thought of saying that, I think that's all broken up, that idea has no longer sailed.

No, that would be a terrible thing for our country. It'd be bad for the world. They wanted to undermine the dollar. Six nations got together. They wanted to undermine the dollar. That doesn't—that didn't work out too well. Not going to happen. And we're getting along with a lot of nations now, frankly. There's a lot of respect for the United States.

We have regained our—the respect that we should have. And—but we've also done things to deserve it. I mean, we freed up our country, and you're going to see this is basically energy dominance. And it's going to be environmentally clean, environmentally wonderful, and taxes will be very reasonable based on this.

We're going to make more money than anybody has ever made with energy. We have more energy than anybody else, and it's clean energy—very clean, beautiful energy. We're lucky we have it. I call it liquid gold under our feet. And we're going to utilize it.

So this is a very big bill, and the—I have a very talented group of people behind me. This gentleman was the number-one man in all of the oil industry. They said, "There's nobody like him." Chris. Chris Wright.

And you know Doug. Doug actually made a tremendous fortune in technology. And he said, "I'm going to run for the Governorship of"—he loves his State—"of North Dakota." And he did, and he made it so energy powerful that he's—I think he's—I think you're more proficient at energy than technology. But what do I know?

And this guy, everybody knows him. Sean. He's been—he's done a fast study on transportation, and he knows—he's learned a lot over the last few months. He's learned a lot. He's really been great.

And Howard has built one of the great companies, Cantor Fitzgerald. It was wiped out—completely wiped out, other than a few people left in Europe—and he rebuilt the company into a bigger, better company. Cantor Fitzgerald was—is one of the most—absolutely, one of the top

companies on Wall Street—stocks, bonds, trading. And he took that—I mean, he literally watched the plane go into the building, go into the World Trade Center. Amazing story. That alone is an amazing story.

He was delayed because his wife insisted that he finally, after years, take his child to school. So he took his child to school that one day, because normally he would have been in the building at 6 o'clock in the morning. That's that business, right? So you owe your wife a lot and your child——

Secretary Lutnick. I do.

The President. ——a lot. Right?

Secretary Lutnick. I do.

The President. But his wife insisted that he take his child to school. For 5 years, he didn't do it. He was horrible. What kind of a father was he? *[Laughter]* "Okay, I'll do it." And he took—and he was, therefore, driving down at 8:43, whatever the time was, down the West Side Highway, and he saw the plane go into the side of the building. He said, "Wow." And he occupied the top three floors of the World Trade Center—of the one building of the World Trade Center. And you know what happened there. He lost a hundred-percent of the people in that. All—his whole company was there. And he rebuilt his company step by step over years and became bigger and stronger, and he gave a tremendous amount of the profit to the families of the people that died, which he didn't have to do. And now he's working with us.

He did an incredible job. I mean, anybody in that world, they know Howard Lutnick very well. And I'm honored to have him running Commerce. He's going to be incredible. And he loves it. He loves the country.

And Lee was a great lawyer, a great Congressman, very successful person, both as a lawyer and as a Congressman, and knows a lot about the environment, cares about the environment, and we were lucky that—I was very happy that you joined. And he——

Administrator Zeldin. Thank you for the call.

The President. ——he was with me right from the beginning. Always was with me. And I've always been with him.

And Kevin Hassett, we know. He's—everybody knows Kevin, and he's fantastic.

And you and—Lindsey, you and your team are incredible. The job you've did——we—done, we really appreciate. Thank Will. And the job you guys are doing is really fantastic. We're knocking this out.

Brian [Brian Glenn, Real America's Voice], do you have a question?

Liquefied Natural Gas/Domestic Energy Production

Q. I actually do. I wanted—what kind of piqued my interest is, growing up on the Texas Gulf Coast, natural gas, the LNG that you mentioned——

The President. Yes.

Q. ——what's the potential for, like, new jobs or growth in that area? I mean, because that's—that part of the country—Southwest Louisiana, Southeast Texas—they depend on that.

Secretary Wright. I would say that that potential is simply tremendous. You know, 20 years ago, the United States was the biggest importer of natural gas in the world, and we had natural gas prices two or three times higher than they are today. But with shale revolution and great entrepreneurs in Texas and Louisiana and across our great country, we are now, today, the largest

net exporter of natural gas in the world, and so much of the world is depending upon—natural gas is the fastest growing energy source. Has been for 50 years. We were the driver of that, and then we paused.

We stopped our ability to grow natural gas exports. Both the Japanese Government and Indian Government expressed great distress about that. They're going to count on energy imports from the U.S., and we may just change our mind. So I think they're thrilled to see the actions of this President say America is open for business.

Yes, we have the energy. We have the people. We have huge job opportunities and investment opportunities, not just in the oil and gas industry, but all those surrounding communities that are lifted up by that more production here.

And as we produce more production at scale, not only does it allow us to export, but it becomes more efficient, and it helps us drive down the cost for our domestic consumers as well.

Q. Yes, I know they're really happy. To just let you—[laughter]——

The President. They are, very happy.

Q. —on behalf of Southeast Texas, thank you, because I grew up in that area.

The President. Thank you, Brian.

Q. Thank you.

The President. And I will say this, that this all started 8 years ago when I got elected. We were doing this—not to the extent that we're doing it now, but we were doing this, and we became number one in oil and gas by far.

Secretary Wright. By far.

The President. And we were number three, even number four—some would say we—when I left, we were number one by a lot. And then they pulled way back, and the prices started going through the roof. And then they went back to my plan. But by that time, the prices had already gone up, so they really disrupted it. But now we're going to take it to a new level.

It's going to be amazing, and we're also—it's very powerful: clean coal. We have more coal than anybody. This is good, beautiful, clean coal.

And if you notice, China is opening up a coal plant a month. Germany is now opening up a coal plant every 2 months. Very powerful. It's probably the most powerful source of energy in terms of generation—generation of electricity and other things. And we're going to utilize our good, clean, beautiful coal and oil and gas. We're—we have more than anybody of everything, and we're going to take advantage of it.

And I appreciate everybody being here.

[Several reporters began asking questions at once.]

Q. On the energy——

The President. Yes. Please.

Senator Roger F. Wicker/Secretary of Defense Peter B. Hegseth

Q. Can I ask you—can I ask you, sir, about what's happening in Munich? Senator Roger Wicker shepherded Defense Secretary Hegseth through his confirmation. He got him through that process, and then he had some tough words for him overseas. He said it was a "rookie mistake" for Secretary Hegseth to outline what would or would not happen as far as Ukraine's membership in NATO goes.

The President. I——

Q. And then——

The President. I haven't heard that. I mean, Roger is a very good friend of mine and Pete is—obviously, he's been doing a great job. I haven't heard——

Q. Did you know what he was going to say?

The President. Let me—let me look at—you're telling me something I'm—I have not heard about.

Q. The question I had is, were you aware of what Secretary Hegseth was going to say in his speech at NATO?

The President. Generally speaking, yes. Generally speaking, I was. I'll speak to Roger. I'll speak to Pete. I'll find out.

Q. Mr. President——

Domestic Energy Production/Energy Infrastructure

Q. On the energy dominance council. That——

The President. Yes.

Q. ——is for all forms of energy? Does that include——

The President. All forms of energy.

Q. ——wind and solar?

The President. Yes.

Q. And the pipeline you mentioned, sir, is that Constitution Pipeline in New York? Can you——

Secretary Burgum. Yes.

Q. ——is that the project it's going to be?

The President. I believe it—yes.

Secretary Burgum. Yes.

The President. Yes, that's what it is. And, you know, they've been trying to get it for 20 years. And what it means is, for New York—Upstate New York and even everywhere in New York—also other States, but, in particular, New England—that New England will now—I think will cut the energy prices, and big cuts in New York too, but cut the energy prices literally in half. We have the permits. We have permits that—just about everything we need—a New York permit. And I would imagine they want to do it, because their energy prices will come down so—so far. And it's a lot of jobs for New York. It's a great thing for New York. Everybody wants it.

We'll be meeting with the various Governors—the Governor of New York and the other Governors too, and we can have it built in about 9 months—let's say 1 year. But we can actually have it built in pretty close to 9 months. It's all set. We have most of the permits—almost all of the permits.

U.S. Steel Production/Tariffs

Q. And on—just—you're prioritizing energy dominance today. You've also prioritized trade balance. The oil industry is a little worried about the steel tariffs. I mean, they put 20,000 feet of steel in the ground at a well. How will you balance that? Is there a possibility for an exemption?

The President. You're talking about steel and aluminum?

Q. Indeed, steel tariffs. Yes.

The President. So the steel—I saved the steel industry in my first term by putting on tariffs, because China was dumping massive amounts of steel—others also, but mostly China. And I put very substantial—we took in 600 billion dollars' worth of tariffs from China. No other President has taken up—literally haven't gotten 10 cents from China. Not 10 cents.

And hundreds of billions of dollars came in from China, and they understood it. They understood what I did.

But the dumping stopped. And had I not done that, you wouldn't have one steel mill—I think I can say—not one steel mill operating in this country, and we need steel. We need steel. I mean, there are some things you have to have, and steel is one of them for military, et cetera.

So I think steel is going to be very strong. It's going to be very strong. I think it will go back to being really powerful. We saved it.

It—I mean, we were talking about U.S. Steel last week. We—U.S. Steel would have been closed—totally closed. We saved it, and now it's going to become, I think, very, very profitable.

The tariffs are going to save a lot of industries.

Q. Mr. President——

U.S. Steel Corporation/Nippon Steel

Q. Can I just follow up on U.S. Steel, just very quickly, sir?

The President. Yes, go—go ahead. Yes, finish up. Go ahead.

Q. Do you—is—if the Japanese company that's interested in U.S. Steel wants to take a minority stake as opposed to full ownership, is that fine with you?

The President. A minority stake I wouldn't mind greatly. But what they're doing right now is, they're going to be investors, and they're going to be investing in, I think, debt and various other things. But we didn't want to let U.S. Steel go to a foreign company.

And U.S. Steel was the greatest company in the world for a period of 15 years. It was—you know, it was the big deal 80 years ago or so. And psychologically, we can't—we can't even think about letting that happen.

But what is going to happen—and we've already seen it—you see it in the stock price—with the tariffs, U.S. Steel is going to be a real powerhouse again.

Vice President James D. "J.D." Vance/Europe

Q. Mr. President, can I just follow up on Jacqui's [Jacqui Heinrich, Fox News] question about Munich? Vice President Vance's speech to the conference has ruffled quite a few feathers in Europe.

The President. What did he say to ruffle them? I don't——

Q. He was talking about the freedom of speech and migration in Europe. Do you believe that European leaders have a fundamentally different view of the world than this administration's?

The President. Well, I heard his speech, and I tell you—you're talking about J.D.'s speech, right?

Q. Yes, sir.

The President. I heard his speech, and he talked about freedom of speech, and—I think it's true in Europe. It's losing—they're losing their wonderful right of freedom of speech. I see it. I mean—I thought he made a very good speech—actually, a very brilliant speech. Yes. And Europe has to be careful.

And he talked about immigration, and Europe has a big immigration problem. Just take a look at what's happened with crime. Take a look at what's happening in various parts of Europe. I thought his speech was very well received actually. I've heard—I've heard very good remarks.

Ukraine/Russia/Gaza Conflict

Q. And in regards to Ukraine as well. Yesterday, you mentioned that you thought Ukraine's NATO aspirations were one of the main reasons that the war broke out.

The President. Yes.

Q. Who do you blame for the war, Ukraine or Russia?

The President. Well, I think this: I think that there are a lot of people to blame. All I can say is, very simply, if I were President, that war would never have happened. And you know what else wouldn't have happened? The Middle East wouldn't be all blown up, and October 7 wouldn't have happened either.

Those two areas—you wouldn't have inflation, you wouldn't have October 7, you wouldn't have Russia and Ukraine fighting. None of those things would have happened if I were President.

Q. Sir, follow-up on the Middle East.

Q. Mr. President—Mr. President——

Q. Earlier this week——

The President. Yes, please.

Tariffs/U.S. Automobile Industry

Q. —you—mentioned auto tariffs the other day. When do you plan to unroll those?

The President. Howard, I'd say over the next—sometime—maybe around April 2.

Secretary Lutnick. Correct.

The President. I wouldn't have done them on April 1. [Laughter] Believe it or not—this is—I'm a little superstitious.

No, literally, we had it planned for April 1. I said, "Let's make it April 2." You know how much money that costs? That cost a lot of money just that one day—[laughter]—but we're going to do it on April 2, I think. Is that right?

Secretary Lutnick. That's right.

The President. Okay? Thank you.

Department of Justice Prosecutors/2024 Presidential Election

Q. The lead prosecutor in Eric Adams case resigned today, saying anyone who didn't press forward would be a "coward." What's your reaction to that and—to the overall implication that politics were at play here?

The President. Well, I don't know about it. I mean, obviously, I'm not involved in that.

But I would say this, that what—if they had a problem—and these are mostly people from the previous administration, you understand, so they weren't going to be there anyway. They were

going to all be gone or dismissed. If not, they know on Tuesday, they're all being—you know, the whole country is being—because what you do is you come in and you put new people in. So, when you say "resign," they were going to be gone anyway.

But I know nothing about the individual case. I know that they didn't feel it was much of a case. They also felt that it was unfair with the election.

Look, I would know that better than anybody, because I was weaponized more than any human being in the history, probably, of the world, and I won the election in a landslide—winning all seven swing States, winning the popular vote, and everything else—because the people got it. It was weaponized, and I was weaponized, literally, weeks before the election.

But I think there's also something to be said—I read that there's something to be said for what they were doing. It looked to me—it looked to me to be very political.

But why didn't they bring this up like 4 or 5 weeks ago, 6 weeks ago, or whenever it happened? You know, they just sat around and didn't complain. Then all of a sudden, they complained, and they know they're all being dismissed anyway. So, you know, that's the way it is.

Q. Sir, can I ask you, earlier this week——

The President. That's called politics, I guess.

Q. Mr. President——

Q. Earlier this week——

The President. Yes, please.

Hostages Held by Hamas in Gaza, Palestinian Territories

Q. Earlier this week, you predicted that all hell would break loose if Hamas didn't hand over all of their hostages. What do you expect to happen tomorrow in terms of Gaza?

The President. I don't know what's going to happen tomorrow at 12 o'clock. If it was up to me, I'd take a very hard stance. I can't tell you what Israel is going to do.

But I watched the last people come out, and I looked at a before and an after picture. One guy was a big, strong, healthy guy. Could—you—could say he was a little bit overweight. He's not overweight anymore. He looks like he just came out of the Holocaust. It looks like a Holocaust picture. I've looked at them for a long time. And they've been treated very badly.

The young lady who came out last week, her hand was blown off. I mean, literally, her hand was trying to stop a bullet that was headed for her face. She put up her hand. She goes like this—

[*The President lifted his hand up.*]

——and wiped out her fingers and lot of her hand.

No, I would—I would take a different stance, but it depends.

Look, it depends what Bibi is going to do. It depends what Israel is going to do. But—and now I understand they've totally changed—Hamas has totally changed. They want to release hostages now again.

But you have to see—this started by them saying, "We're not going to release the hostages as we said we were." I said, "Good, you have till 12 o'clock on Saturday"—which is tomorrow at 12 o'clock—"to do it." And we didn't hear anything. Then all of a sudden, 2 days ago, they said, "No, we've decided we're going to release the hostages." So—but I actually think they should release all of the hostages.

Remember, they're probably as—as bad as they looked—I mean, I don't like to say that, but they looked real bad 4 days ago, 5 days ago, when I saw them. And the young ladies that came out were treated really badly. You don't know what happened, but I do. They were treated really badly.

But as bad as they look, the ones that follow probably will look a lot worse. I think they're sending out their most healthy. And they've been hit hard on that— Hamas—so they probably didn't want to release. But they—obviously, they changed their mind. I said, "12 o'clock tomorrow," and all of a sudden, 2 days ago—yesterday, they said, "We're going to"—they're going back to releasing them.

But this all started by them saying, "We are not going to release any more hostages." And then yesterday, they said they are going to release the hostages, but I think they should release all of the hostages.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Federal Workforce Reduction Efforts

Q. About 75,000 workers took this deferred resignation. It's a little bit short of the 5- to 10-percent goal you were hoping to hit. Do you think you'll have to make up the rest of that number in layoffs?

The President. No. Look, that's 75,000 more than we would have had. And nobody knows what that final number is, because, in the end, I think a lot of people aren't going to show up to work. A lot of people—they got used to staying home and, quote, "working," but, you know, I wonder if they had other jobs or other things. You know, you have a lot of—they have a lot of problems with that.

No, 75,000 is a lot of people, and we paid them well. You know, we gave them a lot of months of severance pay—if you call it that.

But no, I think you'll probably have some more too, in addition.

Q. Without layoffs?

The President. It's a big, tremendous saving for our—we want to downsize Government, but make it better. Run it better, but downsize.

Yes, please.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer of the United Kingdom

Q. Sir, can I ask about the U.K.? I understand that you had a phone call with Keir Starmer yesterday.

The President. I did. I just——

Q. How was the——

The President. ——signed a letter to him. He asked for a meeting, and I agreed to the meeting. We're going to have a friendly meeting—very good. We have a lot of good things going on. But he asked to come and see me, and I just accepted his asking.

Q. Do you have a date for that, sir? And what do you hope to——

The President. Very soon. I think he wants to come next week or the week after.

Q. And what do you hope to discuss?

The President. I don't know. It was his request, not mine. But you know, I've met him twice already. We get along very well. He's a very nice guy.

Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you. Thank you very much. I appreciate it. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:07 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba of Japan; Allison Lutnick, wife of Secretary Lutnick, and their son Kyle; White House Staff Secretary William O. Scharf; Gov. Kathleen C. Hochul of New York; Or Levy, Eli Sharabi, and Ohad Ben Ami, who were released from Hamas captivity in Gaza, Palestinian Territories, into Red Cross custody on February 8; and Emily Damari, who was shot in the hand as she was dragged from her home in southern Israel during the Hamas attacks of October 7, 2023; and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel. Secretary Duffy referred to his children Evita, Jack, Lucia-Belen, John-Paul, Paloma, Maria Victoria, Margarita, Patrick, and Valentina Duffy. A reporter referred to Danielle R. Sassoon, U.S. attorney for the Southern District of New York; and Mayor Eric L. Adams of New York City. The transcript was released by the Office of Communications on February 15.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Executive order signing ceremony; Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters, White House.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Ben Ami, Ohad; Biden, Joseph R., Jr.; Burgum, Douglas J.; Damari, Emily; Duffy, Sean P.; Halligan, Lindsey; Hassett, Kevin A.; Hegseth, Peter B.; Hochul, Kathleen C.; Ishiba, Shigeru; Levy, Or; Lutnick, Allison; Lutnick, Howard W.; Lutnick, Kyle; Modi, Narendra; Netanyahu, Benjamin; Scharf, William O.; Sharabi, Eli; Starmer, Keir; Vance, James D. "J.D."; Wicker, Roger F.; Wright, Christopher A.; Zeldin, Lee M.

Subjects: 2024 Presidential election; Artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies; Automobile industry, strengthening efforts; China, trade with U.S.; Coal-based energy production, expansion efforts; COVID-19 vaccines; Environmental Protection Agency; Europe, migration issues; Federal workforce, reduction efforts; Freedom of speech; Fuel efficiency standards; Gas pipeline infrastructure, improvement efforts; Gaza, hostages held by Hamas; Hamas political-paramilitary organization; India, Prime Minister; India, trade with U.S.; Inflation; Israel, attacks by Hamas of October 7, 2023; Israel, Prime Minister; Japan, Prime Minister; National Economic Council; New York, Governor; Oil and natural gas, domestic production; Russia, conflict in Ukraine; Secretary of Commerce; Secretary of Defense; Secretary of Energy; Secretary of the Interior; Secretary of Transportation; September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks; U.S. Steel Corp.; U.S. steel production, promotion efforts; U.S. tariffs on imports, adjustment; Ukraine, Russian invasion and airstrikes; United Kingdom, Prime Minister; Vice President; Water-use efficiency, regulation efforts; White House Senior Associate Staff Secretary; White House Staff Secretary.

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