

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2025

Remarks in an Exchange With Reporters Upon Arrival in West Palm Beach, Florida

February 16, 2025

The President. So Daytona was fantastic. The crowd was amazing. The people love that sport, and they're wonderful people that run it. And they had a little rain delay, but we'll go home and watch it, I guess—or some of you will. And others will try and create peace throughout the world.

Do you have any questions, please?

Russia/Ukraine/U.S. Diplomatic Efforts

Q. Sir, did you speak to Secretary Rubio this morning?

The President. I did.

Q. What is the latest with the negotiations in Saudi Arabia? What's he taking——

The President. We're moving along. We're trying to get a peace with Russia-Ukraine, and we're working very hard on it. It's a war that should have never started.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy of Ukraine

Q. Do you expect Zelenskyy to be involved in these conversations? What will his role be?

The President. Yes, I do. I do. He will be involved, yes.

International Military Aid to Ukraine

Q. Mr. President, would you allow the Europeans to buy U.S.-made weapons for Ukrainians?

The President. Yes, I would.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization

Q. Sir, Zelenskyy said today that Russia is going to wage war on NATO. Do you agree with that? Do you have any concerns about——

The President. No, I don't agree. I don't agree with that. Not even a little bit.

Russia

Q. Vice President Vance said that the United States would potentially take military action against Russia if they won't come to an agreement. Do you agree with that stance?

The President. I don't know if that's what he said. I don't think he said that.

President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia

Q. Sir, based on your conversations—based on your conversations with President Putin, what do you think he wants, ultimately, in Ukraine?

The President. I think he wants to stop fighting. I see that. We spoke long and hard. Steve Witkoff was with him for a very extended period, like about 3 hours. I think he wants to stop fighting.

They have a big, powerful machine. You understand that. And they defeated Hitler, and they defeated Napoleon. You know, they've been fighting a long time. They've done it before and—but I think he'd like to see—I think he would like to stop fighting.

Ukraine Conflict

Q. Do you think he wants the whole of Ukraine, or just a part—like, what do you think he wants in terms territory?

The President. No, I think he wants to stop. That was my question to him. Because if he's going to go on, that would have been a big problem for us, and that would have caused me a big problem, because you just can't let that happen.

I think he wants to end it, and they want to end it fast—both of them. And Zelenskyy wants to end it too.

Ukraine/Russia

Q. Sir, when do you think that could actually happen? When do you think the fighting can stop?

The President. Well, we're working to get it done. I mean, you know, it's too bad it started. It would have been a lot easier to end it before it started. Right? But it started because we had an incompetent President that—he didn't—he didn't know what he was doing. That should have never started.

That war was so easy to stop. Remember this: that under Bush, they took a lot. Under Obama, they took a lot. Under Biden, they're trying to take the whole thing. And under Trump, they took nothing—nothing. Nothing was gone, not even a little bit. So it's too bad. It's really too bad.

A lot of people are dead right now that should be alive, and a lot of cities are destroyed that can never come back like they were. Those beautiful golden domes and all of the multicolored domes that were a thousand years old, they're all laying in—you know, just shattered. So it's very sad. They ruined a culture.

Cease-Fire and Hostage-Release Deal Between Israel and Hamas

Q. They're beginning phase two—they're beginning phase two of the cease-fire deal——

The President. Yes.

Q. —between Israel and Hamas. What is—what's going on there? Have you been briefed on the latest relating to that?

The President. Well, I told you—I have been briefed. I told Bibi, "You do whatever you want." Because, you know, my statement was, "They've got to come back now." The reason I made that statement: because they said they weren't going to deliver—they were not going to deliver the people that they said they were going to deliver, that they agreed to deliver. And they did agree to do that, but they broke that agreement. When I made the statement, they delivered everybody, plus an American.

Now, the good news is, they look like they're in pretty good shape, because the people from the week before didn't look like they were in good shape. They looked like Holocaust survivors, frankly—horrible. Whatever happened to them was horrible.

But that will be up to Israel what the next step is, in consultation with me.

U.S. Military Aid to Israel

Q. Sir, what would the—what are they supposed to use these weapons for that you've now allowed to be shipped? Given the fact that there's a cease-fire supposed to be in effect, why ship those big bombs now?

The President. Peace through strength. You understand that, right? It's called peace through strength. You know, they contracted for those weapons a long time ago, in the Biden administration, and then Biden wouldn't deliver the weapons.

But I look at it differently. I say, "peace through strength." They were sitting there. Nobody knew what to do with them. They bought them. But I believe in that very strongly.

Q. On the EU——

Q. Sir, do you have an update on your——

European Union/U.S. Trade Policy

Q. Sir, on the EU. The European Union is talking about banning food imports from the U.S., kind of along the lines of your reciprocal tariffs.

The President. Why is that? Why?

Q. They says it's like the reciprocal tariffs. They don't like the—[inaudible]——

The President. That's all right. I don't mind. Let them do it. Let them do it. They're just hurting themselves if they do that. I can't imagine it, but doesn't matter.

We're having reciprocal tariffs. Whatever they charge, we charge. Very simple.

If a certain country, like India, which is very high tariff—if they charge us x dollars, we charge them x dollars. It's all right. It's a fair—it's a fair thing to do. Even the media said it was fair. And it's going to be very good for the United States.

The President's Schedule

Q. Do you have an update on your timing of your meeting with Putin in Saudi Arabia?

The President. No, we—there's no time set, but it could be very soon.

Q. Like this—this month or——

The President. Well, I—it will be soon. We'll see what happens. But they're meeting right now, and that's more—I mean, this should have been done 4 years ago—3 years ago, before it started. But it should have been done immediately after it started, as opposed to now, 3 years later.

Egg Prices/Inflation

Q. Sir, egg prices have reached an alltime high. What's your administration——

The President. Which is? What?

Q. Egg prices have reached an alltime high.

The President. Well, there's the flu. And it was a long—before I ever got here, it was at an alltime—this didn't start—remember, I've been here for 3 weeks. And when you saw the inflation numbers, I've been here for 3 weeks. I have had nothing to do with inflation. This was caused by Biden.

I had 4 years of virtually no inflation. So I'm just taking over.

But I'll tell you what, this country has made more progress in the last 3 weeks than it's made in the last 4 years, and we're respected again as a country.

Thank you very much. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4 p.m. on the tarmac at the Palm Beach International Airport. In his remarks, he referred to U.S. Special Envoy to the Middle East Steven C. Witkoff; Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel; and Israeli hostages Or Levy, Eli Sharabi, and Ohad Ben Ami, released on February 8, and Sagui Dekel-Chen, Alexander Trupanov, and Yair Horn, released on February 15, from Hamas captivity in Gaza, Palestinian Territories, into Red Cross custody. The transcript was released by the Office of Communications on February 17.

Categories: Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters, West Palm Beach, FL.

Locations: West Palm Beach, FL.

Names: Ben Ami, Ohad; Biden, Joseph R., Jr.; Bush, George W.; Dekel-Chen, Sagui; Horn, Yair; Levy, Or; Netanyahu, Benjamin; Obama, Barack; Putin, Vladimir Vladimirovich; Rubio, Marco A.; Sharabi, Eli; Trupanov, Alexander; Vance, James D. "J.D."; Witkoff, Steven C.; Zelenskyy, Volodymyr.

Subjects: Automobile racing; Egg prices; Europe, trade with U.S.; Florida, Daytona 500 NASCAR Cup Series Motor Race in Daytona Beach; Florida, President's visit; Gaza, conflict with Israel; Gaza, hostages held by Hamas; Inflation; Israel, military operations in Gaza; Israel, Prime Minister; Israel, U.S. assistance; News media, Presidential interviews; North Atlantic Treaty Organization; Russia, conflict in Ukraine; Russia, President; Secretary of State; U.S. Special Envoy to the Middle East; U.S. tariffs on imports, adjustment; Ukraine, international military aid; Ukraine, President; Ukraine, Russian invasion and airstrikes; Vice President.

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