

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2025

Remarks Following a Document Signing Ceremony and an Exchange With Reporters in Palm Beach, Florida

February 18, 2025

The President. I want to thank some of the great people from the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office. They're here to take photographs, and it's my honor to do so. Also, the fire department, the great firefighters. So they're here throughout the room, and I want to thank you very much for being here. I'll be with you in a little while. We'll do some great photos. We have plenty of time.

Policemen, policewomen, and firemen, firewomen—they're here, and we appreciate it very much. You've done a fantastic job.

Oh, I think it's very important to state that incredible things are happening in our country. I think we've made more progress in 3 weeks than they've made in 4 years, especially with respect to the reputation of our country, and people are respecting us again as a country and as a powerful country and maybe a smart country.

But maybe not so smart, because when you look at some of the waste, fraud, and abuse that's being uncovered by DOGE and the people at DOGE—these are young—often young, but super brilliant people, incredible computer scientists and other things. And they're finding levels of fraud and waste and abuse like, I think, nobody ever thought possible.

But before we do that, I just want to ask Will to come over. We've—I've just finished signing some Executive orders. And if we could start with that, Will, you might want to come up here and just explain what we did.

Thank you.

White House Staff Secretary William O. Scharf. Good afternoon, y'all. A short while ago, President Trump signed three items.

The first is an Executive order relating to the affordability and availability of in vitro fertilization and other fertility treatments. These are treatments that have become unaffordable for many Americans or have been unaffordable for many Americans. And the Executive order is a directive to the Domestic Policy Council to examine ways to make IVF and other fertility treatments more affordable for more Americans.

The second item that we signed was a Presidential memorandum imposing radical transparency requirements on Government departments and agencies in keeping with President Trump and the administration's broader commitment to Governmental transparency. What this Presidential memorandum would do is require—as waste, fraud, and abuse is uncovered, as programs are canceled, and, ultimately, as taxpayer dollars are saved, this Presidential memorandum would require departments and agencies to make all of the details of that freely available to the public.

Lastly, we have another Executive order that President Trump signed relating to independent agencies. This Executive order would establish important oversight functions in the Office of Management and Budget and its subsidiary office, OIRA, supervising independent agencies and many of their actions and also reestablishes the long-standing norm that only the President or the attorney general can speak for the United States when stating an opinion as to what the law is.

The President. All right. Thank you very much, Will. That was the primary purpose of this conference to explain that they are all very important in their own way.

Fertilization—I've been saying that we're going to do what we have to do, and I think the women—and families, husbands—are very appreciative of it.

But that was it.

I do want to say while I'm up here, I've been contacted by some of the biggest companies in the world, and because of what we're doing economically and through tariffs and taxes and incentives, they want to come back into the United States. And we'll be announcing various very large companies—the biggest, actually. And they'll be coming back, having to do with chips and having to do also with cars and lots of other things.

We're going to be announcing some very, very big—very big—momentous, I think—momentous decisions are being made by companies all around the world—the biggest—and they want to come back into the U.S.

Car plants are being canceled in other locations now because they want to build them here. And you read about a couple—not that I want to mention names or anything—but you read about a couple of big ones in Mexico just got canceled because they're going to be building them in the United States. And that's very simply because of what we're doing with respect to taxes, tariffs, and incentives.

And I think it's a very important thing. And you'll be seeing this over the next—probably over the next 2 years, to be honest, but you're going to see a lot of it over the next couple of weeks. A lot of big ones are be—going to be announcing.

And so, while we're here, I guess we can take a couple of quick questions.

Go ahead, please. Please.

Tariffs

Q. Mr. President, have you decided specifically what the auto tariff rate should be?

The President. Yes, I probably will tell you that in—on April 2, but it will be in the neighborhood of 25 percent.

Q. And what about semiconductors and pharmaceuticals?

The President. It will be 25 percent and higher, and it will go very substantially higher over a course of a year. But we want to give them time to come in, because, as you know, when they come into the United States and they have their plant or factory here, there is no tariff. So, we want to give them a little bit of a chance.

Yes, thank you.

European Union

Q. Just following up on that. The EU—I'm sorry. Andrea Shalal [Reuters]. The EU representative is going to be here in Washington next week—I'm sorry, tomorrow. He's going to be meeting with Hassett and Greer and Lutnick.

What can the EU do to sort of avoid the reciprocal tariffs that you've talked about? And, you know, you've talked a lot about the VAT. Do you expect them to reduce that?

The President. Well, they did already, as I understand it, reduce their car tariff all the way down to what we have. And a lot of that will take place, and I think some won't do it and some will do it.

But the EU had a 10-percent tax on cars, and now they have a 2.5-percent tax, which is the exact same as us. So, already, we've saved a tremendous amount. That would be great—if everybody would do that, then we'd all be on the same playing field. Because essentially, what we're doing with the tariffs is, you know, they charge us, we charge them. Same amount. And I—it's called reciprocal, actually, and whatever they charge us, we're charging them.

And so the EU is—you know, I appreciate that they did this, but you know, the EU has been very unfair to us. We have a deficit of \$350 billion. They don't take our cars. They don't take our farm products. They don't take almost anything. They take very little. And we're going to have to straighten that out, and we will. I have no doubt about it.

Yes, go ahead, please.

Russia/Ukraine

Q. Thanks. Thank you, Mr. President. Can you tell us a little bit more about the Russia talks, your impression of—

The President. Yes.

Q. —how they went today—

The President. Sure.

Q. —and if you're perhaps more confident or less confident of a deal after what happened today?

The President. Well, much more confident. They were very good. Russia wants to do something. They want to stop the savage barbarianism. I mean, what—what's going on over there, it's—soldiers are being killed by the thousands on a weekly basis. It's ridiculous. And they're not American soldiers. They're Russian soldiers and they're Ukrainian soldiers, largely, although a lot of Koreans have been killed, as you know—quite a bit of them have been killed. They came over to fight, and a large portion have been wiped out.

But we want to—we want to end it. It was—it's a senseless war. It should have never happened. It would have never happened if I was President. And it's a shame to see it.

And I see pictures that you don't see, but I see pictures of fields that look—just horrible. It looks like Gettysburg. If you see the old pictures of Gettysburg, it's soldiers lying all over the field, body parts all over the field. They're all dead. And this is going on on a daily basis. It's a horrible thing. Both Russia and Ukraine—they're losing thousands and thousands of soldiers, and a lot of people have been killed too.

I think that's one of the things that will—you'll see historically and you'll see later on as it goes along. I think people are going to be surprised at how many people, not only soldiers, have been killed in Ukraine. A lot more people than you think.

Yes, please.

U.S. Servicemembers Stationed in Europe

Q. President Trump, as part of a peace deal with Putin, would you be willing to consider removing all American troops from Europe?

The President. Well, nobody has asked me to do that, so I don't think we'd have to do that. I wouldn't want to do that. But that question has never really come up.

Q. Sir—

The President. Yes. Please.

Ukraine/Russia

Q. Sir, do you support stationing European peacekeeping troops in Ukraine as part of this peace deal?

The President. If they want to do that, that's great. I'm all for it. If they want to do that, I think that's—that'd be fine.

Q. Even if the Russians are opposed——

The President. I mean, I know France has mentioned it, others have mentioned it.

Q. Even if the Russians are——

The President. U.K. has mentioned it. But yes, if—well, if we have a peace deal, I think having troops over there for—from the standpoint of Europe—we won't have to put any over there, because, you know, we're very far away, but having troops over there would be fine. I would not object to it at all.

We're talking about this now: peace. We have either a cease-fire or a peace itself, and we're looking to do both. Would start off with the cease-fire. And if they want to do that—I know France was willing to do that, and I thought that was a beautiful gesture.

Yes, please.

Ukraine/Russia/Hamas Attacks of October 7, 2023, on Israel/Inflation

Q. Sir, do you have any message for Ukrainians who, after 3 years of fighting, might feel betrayed or disappointed at not having a seat at these initial talks in Saudi Arabia?

The President. Well, I think I'm really disappointed in what's happened. I've been watching this for 3 years. It's a war that would have never happened if I was President. And I've been watching these—these, you know, people being killed at levels that you've rarely seen—not—not even close since the Second World War, and I'm very disappointed. I hear that, you know, they're upset about not having a seat. Well, they've had a seat for 3 years and a long time before that.

This could have been settled very easily. Just a half—a half-baked negotiator could have settled this years ago without—I think, without the loss of much land, very little land; without the loss of any lives; and without the loss of cities that are just laying on their sides.

You have those magnificent golden domes that are shattered, will never be replaced. You can't replace them. Thousand-year-old domes that are so beautiful. You can't replace that. A whole civilization has changed because of what—so, when they're worried about not being seated, you mean somebody that should have gone in and made a deal a long time ago. You could have made a deal. This is one that could have made a deal. There was no talk of this during the Trump administration. Putin would have never, ever done it.

And by the way, we wouldn't have had October 7. You know that. We wouldn't have had October 7 either in Israel, and we wouldn't have that mess that's going on over there.

It's like you—we have great fire people here. We're putting out fires. All over the world, we're putting out fires. So that wouldn't have happened.

And you know what else wouldn't have happened? Inflation, because it was caused, really, by the cost of energy going through the roof because of their bad energy policies, and—and also their spending—their terrible spending, wasteful spending on the "green new scam." It's a scam. It's a whole big scam.

Yes, please.

Associated Press/Geographic Names

Q. Yes, sir. I want to ask you a little closer to home. What would it take for you to reconsider the restrictions on the Associated Press?

And secondly, some of your advisers are concerned with the Associated Press's style guide, using language and giving guidance to not use words like "illegal immigrant" or to use phrases like "gender-affirming care," and they're concerned about that being an encroaching amount of liberalism in the way in which the press writes about things. Do you share those concerns?

The President. Well, I do think that some of the phrases that they want to use are ridiculous, and I think, frankly, they've become obsolete, especially in the last 3 weeks, because many things have happened in the last 3 weeks.

And I didn't know about that, but I would say that if they want to use certain phrases like that—and I guess some are okay, but many aren't.

But the Associated Press just refuses to go with what the law is and what has taken place. It's called the Gulf of America now. It's not called the Gulf of Mexico any longer. I have the right to do it, just like we have the right to do Mount McKinley, and nobody is even challenging that. But only the Associated—essentially, it's primarily the Associated Press, and I don't know what they're doing, but I just say that we're going to keep them out until such time as they agree that it's the Gulf of America. We're very proud of this country, and we want it to be the Gulf of America.

Now, the Associated Press, as you know, has been very, very wrong on the election, on Trump, and the treatment of Trump, and other things having to do with Trump and Republicans and conservatives. And they're doing us no favors, and I guess I'm not doing them any favors. That's the way life works.

But you know, thank you for the question. Who are you with?

Q. Axios, sir.

The President. It's a very good question. *[Laughter]* Thank you.

Yes.

Ukraine/Russia/Gaza, Palestinian Territories/North Atlantic Treaty Organization

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. We're hearing that Russia wants to force Ukraine to hold new elections in order to sign any kind of a peace deal. Is that something that the U.S. would ever support?

The President. Well, we have a situation where we haven't had elections in Ukraine; where we have martial law—essentially martial law in Ukraine; where the leader in Ukraine—I mean, I hate to say it, but he's down at 4 percent approval rating; and where a country has been blown to smithereens.

You've got—most of the cities are laying on their sides. The buildings are collapsed. It looks like a massive demolition site. The whole—I mean, so many of the cities—I mean, they haven't done it in Kyiv, because, I guess they don't want to shoot too many rockets in there. They've done it 20 percent, but they haven't done it 100 percent. If they wanted to do it 100 percent, it would probably happen very quickly. But you have cities that are absolutely decimated.

And yes, I would say that, you know, when they want a seat at the table, you could say, the people have to—wouldn't the people of Ukraine have to say, like, you know, "It's been a long time since we've had an election"?

That's not a Russia thing. That's something coming from me and coming from many other countries also.

Q. Would you be concerned about Russia putting up a puppet——

The President. You know, Ukraine is being just—just wiped out. Look at what's happening to the cities. That—there are cities, there's not even a building standing. It's a massive—it's—you talk about Gaza. I mean, it's—it's—literally, these cities look like Gaza. Actually, many have, percentage-wise, more buildings knocked down than in Gaza.

So, you know, people are tired of it. People want to see something happen.

And you know, the other thing that—it's been bothering me for a long time, because I—I solved the problem with NATO. They paid hundreds of billions of dollars into the funds of NATO when I said, "You got to pay," because the United States was paying for European countries, and then they take advantage of us on trade.

But I've seen it. Look, we have to—they have to pay. They have to find out, where is the money going to? We have—I believe President Zelenskyy said last week that he doesn't know where half of the money is that we gave him. Well, we gave them, I believe, \$350 billion, but let's say it's something less than that. But it's a—it's a lot.

And we have to equalize with Europe, because Europe has given us a—given a very much smaller percentage than that. I think Europe has given \$100 billion, and we've given, let's say, 300-plus, and it's more important for them than it is for us. We have an ocean in between, and they don't.

But where is all the money that's been given? Where is it going? And nobody—I've never seen an accounting of it. We give hundreds of billions of dollars. I have—I—I don't see any—any accounting.

So I want to see peace. Look, you know why I want? Because I don't want all these people killed anymore. I'm looking at people that are being killed, and they're Russian and Ukrainian people, but they're people—doesn't matter where they're from on the whole planet. And I think I have the power to end this war, and I think it's going very well.

But today I heard, "Oh, well, we weren't invited." Well, you've been there for 3 years. You should have ended it 3 years—you should have never started it. You could have made a deal.

I could have made a deal for Ukraine that would have given them almost all of the land—everything—almost all of the land, and no people would have been killed, and no city would have been demolished, and not one dome would have been knocked down. But they chose not to do it that way.

And President Biden, in all fairness, he doesn't have a clue. What he—he was so bad for this. He was so bad, so pathetic, and so sad.

But with all of that being said, look, we—it is what it is.

When I left, there was no chance that this could have happened, but it happened because we had incompetent leadership at many different levels.

But when you see what's taken place in Ukraine, with millions of people killed, including the soldiers—millions of people killed, a big percentage of their cities knocked down to the ground. I don't know how anybody even lives there.

You know, when they say they took a poll and Zelenskyy is at 4 percent, who's living there? You know, I mean, people are—it's hard to believe that people live there. Their cities are being knocked down.

And this is something that would have never happened. And by the way, for 4 years, it didn't happen. It was never going to happen.

Go ahead.

Ukraine/Russia

Q. Can I ask one follow-up question? How would you counter the perception—because Russia is pushing for this, obviously; they don't really hold true elections—that that would be a capitulation of some sort? How would you guard against, potentially, Russia installing a puppet Government?

And then, finally, how would that new election have an impact on getting Zelenskyy to sign the rare earth minerals deal?

The President. Look, you have leadership—and I like him personally. He's fine. But I don't care about personally. I care about getting the job done.

You have leadership now that's allowed a war to go on that should have never even happened, even without the United States. Look, we had a President who was grossly incompetent. He had no idea what he was doing. He said some very stupid things, like going in for portions and all of the things. He made a lot of bad statements. But he's grossly incompetent, and I think everyone knew that.

This is something that should have never happened—would have never happened. And I used to discuss it with Putin. President Putin and I would talk about Ukraine. It was the apple of his eye, I will tell you that. But he never—there was never a chance of him going in.

And I told him: "You'd better not go in. Don't go in. Don't go in." And he understood that, and he understood it fully. But I'm only interested—I want to see if I can save maybe millions of lives. This could even end up in a World War III, I mean, to be honest with you.

You've been hearing—now Europe is saying, "Well, I think we're going to go in, and we're going to go." All of a sudden, you're going to end up in World War III over something that should have never happened. And you know, it's a very sad situation.

Yes, please.

White House Senior Adviser Elon R. Musk/Ukraine/Social Security Program/Government Regulations/U.S. Foreign Assistance Programs

Q. Mr. President, in a court filing, the White House said that Elon Musk is not a DOGE employee and has no authority to make decisions. Can you clarify for us today——

The President. Well, Elon Musk——

Q. ——what his exact role is there?

The President. Yes, yes. Elon is, to me, a patriot. So, you know, you could call him an employee. You could call him a consultant. You could call him whatever you want. But he's a patriot.

I mean, look at the kind of things—I just said, "Just write it down, just in case that question got asked." Right? And which—I'm surprised it took so long, actually.

But you know what? Ukraine is a bigger deal, because people are dying by the thousands a week—thousands. But look at this. From 90 to 99, Social Security: 6,054,000 people. Well, that's okay. Maybe that's possible. You know, 90 to 99. Maybe it's possible. It's a lot of people, though, with that.

But people that live to 100 to 109: 4,734,000. Wow, that's a lot. That means over 100 years old. There are 4 million people. I don't know—I don't know too many. I know people that are doing great in their nineties, but not too many people over 100. But over 120—from 120 years old—people that are 120 years old, up to 129: 3,472,000 people. Wow.

You know that can't possibly be because the record is like—I think it's one person—a woman lived to 127. But they have 3,472—okay.

But now we're going really in. People from 130 years old to 139 years old: 3,936,000. Wow. I wonder if people are getting paid with all this. I mean, are these checks—and that's what we're checking right now.

People from 140 years old to 149 years old: 3,542,000. A hundred and forty years old and beyond. Now we're really going because we're looking to break the record by 25 years. People from 150 years old to 159 years old: 1,345,000. These are in the—by the way, these are in the computer files.

These are—this is what they do well. They're super—I asked Elon, "Who are these DOGE people?" He said they're super brilliant computer people, and they love the country.

It's simple.

Q. Does he——

The President. Wait a minute. People from 160 years old to 169 years: 121,000. So 160-year-old people. A hundred and seventy to a hundred and seventy-nine thousand: six thousand oh-eighty-seven.

But now let's go into the real numbers. From 200 to 209 years old: 879 people. From 210 years old—I haven't met any of them. And if I did, I'd—I would bless them. I would worship the ground they walk on. Two hundred and ten to two hundred and nineteen years: eight hundred and sixty-six.

From 220 years old to 229 years old: 1,039. And then, you have two people—from 240 years old to 249 years old: one person. And there's one person that's 360 years old.

That's just that. And then, where's the money being spent? Right? Let's go into that for just a second.

Five hundred and twenty million dollars for a consultant on the environment. It's called environmental, social, and governance, investments in Africa and mobilize private-sector resources: \$520 million. Somebody got \$520 million for an environmental—sounds like an environmental study. That's the most—I've always been one that paid a lot of money for my environmental studies, but they—you know, I paid like \$50,000 not \$520 million. Five hundred and twenty million dollars for ESG.

Twenty-five million dollars to promote biodiversity, conservation, and promote licit livelihoods by developing socially responsible behavior in the country of Colombia. Well, that's nice. Twenty-five million going to Colombia for something that nobody ever heard of.

Forty million dollars to improve the social and economic inclusion of sedentary migrants. Forty million. Forty-two million dollars for Johns Hopkins—great place—to research and drive social and behavior change in Uganda. Forty-two million. What about us? What about social change in our country?

Seventy million dollars for a center at Purdue to research university-sourced, evidence-based solutions to developmental challenges. I mean, these are massive numbers on things that nobody ever heard about.

Ten million dollars for Mozambique voluntary medical male circumcisions. Ten million dollars for circumcisions in another country.

Nine-point-seven million for UC Berkeley to develop a cohort of Cambodian youth with enterprise-driven skills. In other words, let's teach them something about enterprise. What about our people? Can't we teach them about enterprise? Two-point-three million for strengthening independent voices in Cambodia.

Thirty-two million dollars to the Prague Civil Society Centre, which is a very liberal group of people. I wonder how much of that money came back to the people that approved it. Fourteen million dollars for improving public procurement in Serbia. Four hundred eighty-six million dollars to the Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening, including \$22 million for inclusive and participatory political process in Moldova.

And \$21 million for voter turnout in India. Well, why are we giving \$21 million to India? They've got a lot of money. They're the—one of the highest taxing countries in the world in terms of us. We can hardly get in there because their tariffs are so high. I have a lot of respect for India. I have a lot of respect for the Prime Minister. He just left, as you know, 2 days ago. But we're giving \$21 million for voter turnout. It's voter turnout in India. What about, like, voter turnout here? Oh, we've done that, I guess. We did \$500 million, didn't we? It's called the lockboxes.

Q. But closer to home——

The President. Twenty million dollars for fiscal federalism in Nepal. Listen to these numbers. These are—this is all fraud. Nineteen million dollars for biodiversity conservation in Nepal.

One-point-five million for voter confidence—we want to give them confidence—in Liberia. Fourteen million dollars for social cohesion in Mali. Two-point-five million for inclusive democracies in South Africa.

Forty-seven million dollars for improving learning outcomes in Asia. Asia is doing very well. They're doing a lot better than we do in the schools, aren't they?

Two million dollars to develop sustainable recycling models to increase socioeconomic cohesion among marginalized communities in Kosovo and Ashkali and in Egypt.

We're talking about hundreds of billions of dollars. I could—I could—by the way, I could read this all day long. I could go on all day long, and you'll see hundreds of billions of dollars. And we're doing it.

But when I saw the Social Security numbers, I said, "Wow, that's really something." So we have—let's just go above 100 years old. We have millions and millions of people over 100 years old. Everybody knows that's not so.

We have a very corrupt country—a very corrupt country. And it's a sad thing to say, but we're figuring it out.

Now, the good thing about Social Security and what I read is if you take all of those numbers off, because they're obviously fraudulent or incompetent—but if you take all of those millions of people off Social Security, all of a sudden, we have a very powerful Social Security with people that are 80 and 70 and 90, but not 200 years old. You know, so it's a very positive thing.

How about over here? Yes, please.

Social Security Administration Acting Commissioner

Q. Your reaction to Michelle King, the head, resigning after the DOGE investigation?

The President. Who resigned?

Q. The head of Social Security.

The President. I don't know. I mean, I—resigned or got fired? I think got fired. You know, when you fire somebody, they always resign, and then they say, "We resigned." But when you have numbers like that, I think, really, it's "Got fired." They have to get fired. Who would keep them? How could you have numbers like this?

Now, the big thing is, how many of these people got paid? Were they getting paid? Were they getting paid? How many of them were getting paid Social Security? Because that's—if that's the case, it's a massive fraud.

We'll have to call those great Palm Beach police into this situation, right? You guys would figure that out very quickly.

But how many of them are being paid? I mean, maybe millions of them, but it's a total fraud.

Also, a lot of illegal immigrants are on Social Security that shouldn't be there.

Yes, please. Go ahead.

Federal Workforce Reduction Efforts

Q. Mr. President, there was a big wave of probationary Federal workers who were fired over the weekend. Some of these workers focused on nuclear weapons security were immediately rehired. Do you have any concerns about how these terminations have played out?

The President. No, not at all. I think we have to just do what we have to do. It's—you know, you're going to—it's amazing what's been found right now. It's amazing.

Yes, some—if we feel that—in some cases, they'll fire people and then they'll put some people back—not all of them, because a lot of people were let go.

Don't forget, I got elected on the basis of making our Government stronger and smaller, because we have millions of people that—obviously, they're paying millions of people that shouldn't be paid. And that has also to do with workers.

Yes, please. No, go ahead. Axios, New York Times.

U.S. DOGE Service/White House Senior Adviser Elon R. Musk

Q. Sorry.

Mr. President, given your concerns about corruption, you said that if there were any conflicts of interest with Elon Musk, you wouldn't—

The President. Yes.

Q. —let him anywhere near it.

The President. That's right.

Q. DOGE and SpaceX employees are now working directly at the Federal Aviation Administration and the Defense Department—agencies that have billions of dollars in contracts with Musk's companies, or that directly regulate—

The President. Yes.

Q. —his companies. How is that not a conflict of interest?

The President. Well, I mean, I'm just hearing about it, and if there is—and he told me before I told him, but obviously, I will not let there be any conflict of interest.

He's done an amazing job. They've revealed—in fact, he's going to be on tonight a big show called "Sean Hannity" at 9 o'clock, and he's on, and I'm on, and we talk about a lot of different things.

And any conflicts—I told Elon, any conflicts, you can't have anything to do with that. So anything to do with possibly even space, we won't let Elon partake in that.

Yes. Please.

Guantanamo Bay, U.S. Naval Base Detention Facility

Q. On immigration, sir. You said you would be sending the worst of the worst to Guantanamo Bay. What we're finding out is that there are a lot of low-risk migrants who don't have a criminal background who are also being sent.

The President. Yes.

Q. Are you thinking about this differently now about who is being sent?

The President. No, they're going to be brought back to their countries. And with some persuasion, every one of those countries—every one in the—as you know, every country is taking the people back. So some of them are going to be brought back to—many of them—any of them that are low-risk, as you say, are going to be brought back to their countries.

Q. But why hold them in Guantanamo?

The President. Yes, go ahead, please.

Venezuela

Q. Can you give us a bit of an update on where you stand with Venezuela?

The President. Yes. Sure.

Q. Its oil—there are—there is, basically, a monthly license that can soon extend to a 6-month license.

The President. Well, you know, we had Venezuela on the run, and it looked like that was going to be very good. And when Biden came in, as he always does, he screws it up. And they started buying millions and millions and millions of dollars of oil—billions of dollars, actually, of oil. And it gave them a new lice—a new, really, lease on life.

And—but we'll see. We had some pretty good discussions with a lot of people within our Government—in the United States Government that are involved in that. And Venezuela is a little bit early. But you know, we were not buying from Venezuela.

When Biden came in, for whatever reason, instead of just taking the beautiful, as I call it, liquid gold—we have more than anybody—they started paying a fortune to Venezuela. And we're looking at that actually. Why did they do that? Why were they doing that? Why would they go to the enemy and give them billions and billions of dollars?

Now, with that being said, as you know, Venezuela has said very strongly, they will not take any—any—illegal immigrant, any of the people that they sent over to us. They sent their gangs, probably the worst gang anywhere in the world—as bad as MS-13, maybe worse—and they came out of the jails of Venezuela. They emptied their jails into our country, and they said, "We'll never take them back." Well, they took them back, and they're taking them back, and they are taking them back rapidly. They were sending a lot of people to Venezuela. They said they wouldn't take them back, and they are taking back.

But we're looking at Venezuela very seriously, and we're going to be able—don't forget, I've only been here for 3 weeks.

Venezuela

Q. If I could just a follow-up, if you don't mind.

The President. Yes, please.

Q. Just a little clarity on: Are you inclined to continue to allow Venezuela, through, I think, Chevron and other oil companies, to export those petroleum products, or are you——

The President. Maybe not.

Q. ——inclined to pull back on that?

The President. Yes, maybe not. We're looking at that now. I just got here. When I was—when I left, they weren't doing anything. They were ready to go, "We give up." And then Biden came along, and he gave them, —literally, billions of dollars. I couldn't believe it, actually.

And we have so much under our feet—liquid gold. We have so much. And it was pretty amazing. So we're looking at the whole situation, why he did it.

All right, how about one more? Yes, please.

Mexico/Immigration Enforcement/Canada

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. What can you tell us about the CIA drone flights over Mexico? Is this the next step in the war against the cartels?

The President. Well, we're going to see.

Q. Should they have authority——

The President. Yes.

Q. ——to take lethal action?

The President. Mexico has allowed a tremendous number of people to go through their country into ours, and even people coming from Mexico, and illegals—totally illegal. They've allowed people to empty jails into Mexico and then let them come through with this totally ridiculous open-border policy of the Biden administration.

So millions of people have come in, and hundreds of thousands and, actually, millions are criminals. They came in from jails all over the world that release them into Mexico, and they come into our country.

And they also came in from Canada, by the way—large numbers through Canada. In fact, when we closed up the one border, they came in through the other border. So Canada was—is not an uninterested party.

But I will say this. We're dealing with Mexico. I have a very good relationship with Mexico. But I think Mexico is largely run by the cartels, and that's a sad thing to say. And if they wanted help with that, we'd give them help.

But Mexico—if you look at what's gone on with Mexico for years now, but now, especially, it's—it's run by the cartels. And they've allowed millions of people to come into our country from jails and prisons of other countries, from all over the world—not just South America—Africa, Asia, all over—a lot from the Congo in Africa—a lot. They opened their jails. They came in through Mexico, and we have some of the worst criminals coming in from the Congo and other places. So it's not just South America, and it's not just Venezuela. But they opened their jails.

And you know, the crime rates in Venezuela and other places all over the world has gone way down. You know why? Because they've given us their prisoners. They've—given us their drug lords and their gang members.

And it's hard to believe that we accepted this. It's hard to believe that we allowed open borders, and we're taking in, you know, hundreds of thousands and millions of people coming in from all over the world that are absolute stone-cold criminals. In fact, 11,088 murderers, and many of those people have murdered more than one person.

Why are they giving us these people? And why are we taking these people?

Under Biden, you know, you had a border czar that never went to the border—happened to be a Vice President—never went to the border, never called the border people.

I call them all the time. I speak to them all the time.

But here's the good news, we have the most secure border we've ever had right now—as secure and even more secure than I had it 4 years ago. And the Border Patrol is doing incredible. ICE is doing incredible. Tom Homan is unbelievable. And Kristi Noem has been just working very, very hard—very, very hard.

And we have the best numbers we've ever had, and we're going to keep it that way. And we're going to find out how a thing like this could have happened to our country, because who would allow this to happen? What they've done to our country is so sad.

Thank you very much. Thank you.

Q. Will you still be meeting with President Putin before the end of the month?

The President. Yes, probably. Probably.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:13 p.m. at the Mar-a-Lago Club. In his remarks, he referred to President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia; President Volodymyr Zelenskyy of Ukraine; Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India; former Vice President Kamala D. Harris; and White House Border Czar Thomas D. Homan. A reporter referred to European Union Commissioner for Trade and Economic Security Maroš Šefčovič; National Economic Council Director Kevin A. Hassett; and U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson L. Greer. He also referred to Executive Orders 14215 and 14216. The transcript was released by the Office of Communications on February 19.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Document signing ceremony, remarks following in Palm Beach, FL.

Locations: Palm Beach, FL.

Names: Biden, Joseph R., Jr.; Harris, Kamala D.; Homan, Thomas D.; Modi, Narendra; Musk, Elon R.; Noem, Kristi L.; Putin, Vladimir Vladimirovich; Scharf, William O.; Zelenskyy, Volodymyr.

Subjects: 2024 Presidential election; Associated Press; Automobile industry, strengthening efforts; Border security; Canada, immigration enforcement cooperation with U.S.; Europe, defense relationship with U.S.; European Union, trade with U.S.; Federal workforce, reduction efforts; Florida, President's visit; Gaza, conflict with Israel; Geographic names, efforts to restore American greatness; Government accountability and transparency, strengthening efforts; Guantanamo Bay, U.S. Naval Base in Cuba, detention facility; Illegal immigration; In vitro fertilization and reproductive assistance services; India, Prime Minister; Inflation; Israel, attacks by Hamas of October 7, 2023; Israel, military operations in Gaza; Manufacturing industry, domestic investment; Mexico, immigration enforcement cooperation with U.S.; News media,

Presidential interviews; North Atlantic Treaty Organization; Russia, conflict in Ukraine; Russia, President; Secretary of Homeland Security; Semiconductor manufacturing; Social Security program; U.S. DOGE Service; U.S. foreign aid programs, funding and policies; U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement; U.S. tariffs on imports, adjustment; Ukraine, President; Ukraine, Russian invasion and airstrikes; Ukraine, U.S. assistance; Undocumented immigrants, deportation of criminals; Venezuela, oil supply and refining; Venezuela, U.S. sanctions; Voter participation; White House Border Czar; White House Senior Adviser; White House Staff Secretary.

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