

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2025

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Prime Minister Keir Starmer of the United Kingdom and an Exchange With Reporters

February 27, 2025

President Trump. Thank you very much. It's a great honor to have Prime Minister Starmer in the Oval Office. It's a very special place, and he's a special man. And the United Kingdom is a wonderful—this is a wonderful country that I know very well. I'm there a lot.

And I'll be going there, and we expect to see each other in the near future. We'll be announcing it. But we're going to be discussing many things today. We'll be discussing Russia-Ukraine. We'll be discussing trade and lots of other items. And I think we can say that we're going to be getting along on every one of them.

We've had a tremendous relationship. And frankly, the Prime Minister and I have met twice before, and we—we get along very famously, as you would say. *[Laughter]*

And I look forward to it very much. We look forward to the day and the meeting. We'll be having a luncheon after this, and then another work session. And I believe we're going to have a press conference at the end, so I look forward to it.

And, Mr. Prime Minister, thank you very much. Thank you.

Prime Minister Starmer. Thank you, Mr. President. Can I say thank you for your hospitality, for your leadership?

We have met a number of times, we've talked a number of times, and we have had a very constructive conversation. I'm sure we will today.

And of course, our countries have been bound together for a very long time now, the closest alliance, I think, of any two countries——

President Trump. That's right.

Prime Minister Starmer. ——when it comes to prosperity and security. And I know that, together, we will strengthen that even further.

And on issues like Ukraine, thank you for changing the conversation to bring about the possibility that now we can have a peace deal. And we want to work with you to make sure that peace deal is enduring, that it lasts, that it's a deal that goes down as a historic deal that nobody breaches. And we'll work with you to make sure that that absolutely happens.

And it is my pleasure to bring from His Majesty the King a letter. He sends his best wishes and his——

President Trump. Great gentleman.

Prime Minister Starmer. ——regards, of course. But he also asked me to bear this letter and bring it to you. So can I present——

President Trump. Yes.

Prime Minister Starmer. ——the letter from the King to you?

President Trump. Thank you very much.

Am I supposed to read it right now?

Prime Minister Starmer. Yes, please do. [*Laughter*]

President Trump. I will do that.

Prime Minister Starmer. I've got to tell him what your reaction is. [*Laughter*]

President Trump. Well, he's a——

Prime Minister Starmer. So I need to know.

President Trump. He is—he's a great gentleman. A great, great gentleman.

[*At this point, President Trump read the letter.*]

Oh, that's—wow.

Well, that is really nice. I must make sure his signature is on that. [*Laughter*] Because, otherwise, it's not quite as meaningful. And it is. [*Laughter*] It is. And that's quite a signature, isn't it? Huh? Beautiful.

Q. What did it say?

President Trump. He is a beautiful man, a wonderful man. And we appreciate it. I've known him—gotten to know him very well, actually—first term and now second term.

Perhaps you'd like to say what that very important paragraph——

Prime Minister Starmer. Yes, so this is a letter from His Majesty the King. It's an invitation for a second state visit.

This is really special. This has never happened before. This is unprecedented. And I think that just symbolizes the strength of the relationship between us.

So this is a very special letter. I think the last state visit was a tremendous success.

President Trump. It was.

Prime Minister Starmer. His Majesty the King wants to make this even better than that. So this is truly historic and unprecedented second state visit.

President Trump. That's a great, great honor.

Prime Minister Starmer. And he wants to talk that through with you.

President Trump. And that says at Windsor. That's really——

Prime Minister Starmer. Yes.

President Trump. That's really something.

Prime Minister Starmer. Yes. What I haven't got yet is your answer. [*Laughter*]

President Trump. The answer——

Prime Minister Starmer. I do need to——

President Trump. The answer is yes. On behalf of our wonderful First Lady, Melania, and myself, the answer is yes. And we look forward to being there and honoring the King and honoring, really, your country.

Your country is a fantastic country, and it will be our honor to be there. Thank you very much.

Prime Minister Starmer. Well, thank you very much, Mr. President. I shall happily take that back to His Majesty.

President Trump. It's beautiful.

Prime Minister Starmer. Thank you.

President Trump. Thank you.

Thank you. I'm going to keep that one. [*Laughter*]

Prime Minister Starmer. You're going to keep that one.

[*Several reporters began asking questions at once.*]

Andrew and Tristan Tate

Q. President Trump, Andrew—President Trump, Andrew and Tristan Tate landed in Florida today on a private jet after being released from custody in Romania. They are accused rapists, human traffickers, not thought of as good people in many circles.

Did your administration pressure the Romanian government to release them? And if so, why?

President Trump. I know nothing about that. I don't know. You're saying he's on a plane right now?

Q. He's back. They already landed.

President Trump. Yes. I just know nothing about it. We'll check it out. We'll let you know.

[*Several reporters spoke at once.*]

Prime Minister Starmer. I do—look, just—obviously, this involves—there's an English element here, so obviously it's important that justice is done. And human trafficking is obviously, to my mind, a security risk. And so, we'll catch up with the story in due course—[*inaudible*]—

President Trump. Sure. You're aware of—are you aware of—

Prime Minister Starmer. I am.

[*Several reporters spoke at once.*]

Q. Mr. President, on veterans.

President Trump. I didn't know anything about it.

Yes.

Federal Workforce Reduction Efforts

Q. Mr. President, on veterans. Veterans make up—

Q. Will you ask for—will you allow him to be extradited, sir?

Q. —thirty percent of the Federal workforce. Are you tracking how many veterans have been fired so far—far?

President Trump. Yes, we are.

Q. Do you want DOGE to avoid—

President Trump. We are, and—

Q. —letting them go?

President Trump. —and we take good care of our veterans. And we're watching that very carefully, and we hope it's going to be as small a number as possible.

But we are having great success in slimming down our Government. It's been, really, very successful. And some took payouts and buyouts. And others took other things, and some people, we're finding out, don't even exist. We're finding that we have a lot of people that don't exist that people thought that did.

We will be making a statement on that, but we're taking care of our veterans. We love our veterans. We're going to take good care of them.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

President Trump. Okay, please.

Ukraine/Russia

Q. Mr. President, could you be persuaded, as part of a peace settlement in Ukraine, to provide air cover, a backstop security position to the contributions that Europe might make as well?

President Trump. Well, so President Zelenskyy is coming to see me on Friday—Friday morning. And we're going to be signing, really, a very important agreement for both sides, because it's really going to get us into that country. We'll be working there. We'll have a lot of people working there.

And so, in that sense, it's very good. It's a backstop, you could say. I don't think anybody is going to play around if we're there with a lot of workers and—having to do with rare earths and other things, which we need for our country.

And we appreciate it very much, and I look forward to seeing him. We'll be talking about it, and we'll also be talking about that today with the Prime Minister.

Prime Minister Starmer. Yes, I mean, we—as you know, we've already indicated that we'll play our full part in making sure that any deal, if there is one—and I hope there is, and I think this is a historic moment—to make sure it's a lasting deal. And we are about to have a discussion about how we can make that work.

President Trump. But I have to say this, as I said yesterday, you know, you're talking about a peacekeeping force. We have to make a deal first. Right now, we don't have a deal. We have Russia. We have Ukraine. I think we're very well advanced. I think Russia has been acting very well. We have representative Steve Witkoff and Scott and Marco and J.D. We're all involved, every one of us, and a lot more.

But I think we're very well advanced on a deal, but we have not made a deal yet, so I don't like to talk about peacekeeping until we have a deal. I like to get things done. I don't want to give it the bad luck sign. We don't want to do that.

But we've had very good talks with Russia, and we've had very good talks, as you know, with Ukraine.

Yes, sir.

United Kingdom/European Union

Q. Mr. President, does the Prime Minister have to choose a closer relationship with the EU, as he is seeking, and a good trade relationship with you? Which one should he go for?

President Trump. Well, I think we have just a great relationship. We actually had a good relationship before. We've met a couple of times, and I'm very impressed with him and very impressed with his wife. I must say, she's a beautiful, great woman, and I said you—

Prime Minister Starmer. I second that. *[Laughter]*

President Trump. I said you—I said you're very lucky. He's very lucky.

And no, I—we've had a very good relationship.

Q. Are you worried about Britain potentially undoing some of the benefits of Brexit by seeking a closer tie to the EU, who you said was set up to——

President Trump. No, I don't worry about that.

Q. ——"screw" the United States?

President Trump. I don't—I thought, you know, frankly, what they did was the right thing at the time, and I think that will probably prove out over the centuries. You know, you have a long time to go, but I think—I predicted that was going to happen, and it did happen. And it will work itself out. It's—I think it's already worked itself out.

Yes.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Chagos Islands

Q. Mr. President—can I ask on Chagos, Mr. President? Keir Starmer has signed a deal to give away the Chagos Islands to Mauritius. Will you approve that deal?

President Trump. Well, we're going to have some discussions about that very soon. And I have feeling it's going to work out very well. They're talking about a very long-term——

Prime Minister Starmer. Yes.

President Trump. ——powerful lease——

Prime Minister Starmer. *[Inaudible]*

President Trump. ——a very strong lease—about 140 years, actually. That's a long time. And I think we'll be inclined to go along with your country. Yes, I think it's sounding like——

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

It's a little bit early. I—we have to give—be given the details, but it doesn't sound bad.

Yes. Please.

United Kingdom/European Union/North Atlantic Treaty Organization/Ukraine/Russia

Q. Mr. President, you obviously can do business with our Prime Minister, Keir Starmer. You said yesterday that the EU was constructed to "screw" the U.S. when it comes to trade. What can our Prime Minister say to you to persuade you not to impose tariffs on the United Kingdom?

President Trump. Yes, did I use the word that you said——

Q. I thought——

President Trump. ——that bad word?

Q. I think so. I'm sorry to repeat it.

President Trump. Yes.

Q. *[Inaudible]*—I'm sorry.

President Trump. Well, I think that the EU——

Q. You said, "take advantage of."

President Trump. Yes, I've had problems with the EU because—and we're not talking about—we happen to have a great relationship with you, but we did have and we do have problems with the EU because they've tariffed us. They do it in the form of a VAT tax, which is about 20 percent, and many other taxes.

They sue our companies. They sued Apple—got \$16- or \$17 billion, which was, I think, totally a ridiculous decision. And they're suing Google for a lot of money. They're suing a lot of other companies, and we don't like the way they're treating our people, no. We don't like the way they're treating our companies.

They sell us cars. We don't sell them cars. They don't take our cars. They don't take our—much of our agriculture. And we have a deficit with them of about \$350 billion, so I wouldn't say it's been such a great relationship, personally, but other people did because it's politically correct to say that it's been good. But it hasn't been good. And we're going to change that.

And we are going to have reciprocal tariffs. We're not going to have tariff; we're going to have reciprocal. Whatever they charge us, we're going to charge them. Which, for many years, foolishly—I would have done that, but then, all of a sudden, we had COVID, and we had other things to think about. So it took me a little while to get that on, and we—but we had—in my first 4 years, we had the greatest economy in the history of, I think, the world, but certainly in the history of our country. I think we're going to have that again. But the EU was very, very tough on us in—from the standpoint of trade.

Then you could take it a step further and go into NATO, and that was a very tough situation for us. I mean, that's been a very tough situation because we were paying a disproportionate share, and it wasn't good. So, as you know, they paid hundreds of billions of dollars after I got involved, and they evened it out a little bit, but not very much.

And then, if you look at the war, we're in for \$300 billion plus, and they're in for \$100 billion. They get their money back, and now we'll get our money back also.

But under Biden, you wouldn't have done that. Biden did a terrible job, I have to say. I hate to say that about somebody that sat here just before me, but he did a terrible, terrible job. That war should have never happened—the war between Russia-Ukraine.

Frankly, October 7 should have never happened—Israel. That should have never happened. What happened there should have never—

Inflation should have never happened. Afghanistan should have never happened. The way they got out—not getting out, but the way they got out.

So—but I can say that as far as—we're here for a different reason. We're talking about a very different place. And this is some place that I—I have investments there. I own Turnberry.

Prime Minister Starmer. Yes, of course.

President Trump. I own Aberdeen.

Prime Minister Starmer. Yes.

President Trump. And I own a great place called Doonbeg in Ireland. So, you know, I have a great warm spot for your country.

Prime Minister Starmer. On our trade, obviously, it is fair, balanced, and, in fact, you've got a bit of a surplus. So we're in a different position there. And obviously, we contributed hugely in real—relation to Ukraine. And taken together with Europe, it was about 50 percent—

President Trump. It will work out.

Prime Minister Starmer. —when it's all in.

President Trump. It will work. It's going to work out.

[*Several reporters spoke at once.*]

Yes. Go ahead, please.

Q. Thank you. So does that mean there won't be any sanctions on the U.K., then?

President Trump. We'll have to take a look.

Q. Any tariffs?

President Trump. I mean, we're going to have a good discussion today. And we have some very talented people on the other side, and we have some people that probably aren't as talented to them, but they're pretty good.

Marco, what do you think? [*Laughter*] Our people are pretty good. No, we're going to have a good discussion, and we'll be talking about that.

Please.

[*Several reporters spoke at once.*]

Russia/Ukraine/President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia

Q. Mr. President, I just wanted to ask, Mr. Starmer—the Prime Minister has said that he believes that Vladimir Putin would be at risk of invading Ukraine again without a sufficient backstop. Do you think that Vladimir Putin would be likely to invade again——

President Trump. No.

Q. —in the event of a peace deal?

President Trump. I don't think so. I think when we have a deal, it's going to be the deal. I don't think if—if I didn't win the election, I don't think we'd be even talking to Putin right now or anybody else. I think it would just—you know, I don't know if you're looking at the stats, but thousands of people are being killed a week—soldiers, mostly, because the towns have been destroyed. But thousands of soldiers. This was a very bad week, by the way. I get——

Prime Minister Starmer. Yes.

President Trump. —I get the stats.

Prime Minister Starmer. Terrible numbers.

President Trump. And you're talking about human life, number one. I want to see that—and it doesn't involve American soldiers, but it's Russian and Ukrainian soldiers. And I can think—I think I'm speaking for both.

Prime Minister Starmer. Yes, yes. Nobody wants to see that.

President Trump. Number one, we want to see that stop.

And number two, I want to stop paying the kind of money that we're talking about. You know, we're helping, and we're helping NATO, but we're helping a lot more than anybody else, by far, and I want that to stop also.

[*Several reporters spoke at once.*]

Q. Mr. President—Mr. President, the Europeans——

President Trump. Jeff [Jeff Mason, Reuters]. Jeff, go ahead.

Tariffs/China-U.S. Trade/Border Security/Illegal Drug Interdiction Efforts

Q. Thank you, sir. You talked about trade tariffs this morning on your social media site.

President Trump. I did. Yes.

Q. Just a question about China. A 10-percent tariff has already been implemented on China. Are you planning to do an——

President Trump. Correct. Now, that's an additional 10 above the 10.

Q. This will be an additional 10 above?

President Trump. Correct.

Q. And is there—from the talks with Canada and Mexico so far, are you not seeing the progress that you wanted——

President Trump. I don't see it at all, no.

Q. ——in order to extend that pause?

President Trump. Not on drugs. We've done a great job. If you look at Tom Homan, he's been incredible—and Kristi. They've done a great job in terms of the border. But the drugs continue to pour into our country, killing hundreds of thousands of people. We're losing substantially more than 100,000 people. I mean, dead. They're dead. The families are destroyed after that happens.

So it's—you know, it's not just that. That's the ultimate. But the families are absolutely destroyed. The drugs come in through Mexico. They come—a lot of them, not all of them—but a lot of them come from China. And that's why we did that. It's 10 plus 10, in case——

Q. Ten plus ten for China?

President Trump. Was there confusion on that?

Q. There was, sir. Yes.

President Trump. Okay. Ten plus ten. It's a second ten.

And I think you'll—I think you're going to see—eventually, you're going to see drugs stopping, because the country should not be allowing those drugs to come into the United States of America, and we're not going to allow it to happen.

So that goes on on the 4th of March. And then on the 2d of April, we have reciprocal tariffs. That's reciprocal, where we charge countries what they're charging us. And nobody should have a problem with that. We have reciprocal, and we—it's reciprocity.

It's something that I think—everybody I've spoken to said that's fair, and I—it is. If somebody charges us 25 percent, we charge them 25. If somebody charges us 10 or 15 or 30 or 70, we charge them an exact like amount.

And it's pretty simple, but it's reciprocal tariffs, because the United States has been taken advantage of by many, many different countries, including our friends—friend and foe. And in many cases, our friends took bigger advantage of—and where—when you talk about the EU—we're talking about the EU. The EU has been really a—very bad to us in terms of trade.

And I'm a different kind of a President. I can't let that happen.

Thank you.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Q. Mr. President——

Q. You said just now that you——

Q. What would you be willing——

President Trump. Yes. Please, ma'am. Go ahead.

President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia

Q. Sorry. Mr. President, what would you be willing to do if Vladimir Putin did not stick to the terms of any deal on Ukraine?

President Trump. If he not what?

Q. He did not stick to the terms of any deal on Ukraine, because he has a history of not sticking to his word when it comes to international agreements.

President Trump. I think he'll keep his word. I think—I think he's—I've spoken to him. I've known him for a long time now. You know, I've known him—we had to go through the Russian hoax together. That was not a good thing. It's not fair.

That was a rigged deal and had nothing to do with Russia. It was a rigged deal with inside the country, and they had to put up with that too. They put up with a lot. It wasn't just us. They had to put up with it—with a phony story that was made up.

I've known him for a long time now, and I think he will—I don't believe he's going to violate his word. I don't think he'll be back—when we make a deal, I think the deal is going to hold.

Now, they're going to have security. You're going to have security.

Prime Minister Starmer. Yes.

President Trump. You're going to have soldiers. I know France wants to be there. He's—the President has said he wants to have soldiers there. I don't think we're going to even be necessary.

But I don't think there'll be any problem with keeping the deal with the security.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Prime Minister Starmer. Oh, we're going to discuss this——

President Trump. Please. Do you want to say something?

Prime Minister Starmer. No, I was just going to say, I mean, the deal, if we get it, is going to be hugely important. I don't think it would have happened if the space hadn't been created for it by yourself.

But if there's a deal in, we've got to make sure it's a deal that lasts, that it is not temporary, that lasts——

President Trump. That's right.

Prime Minister Starmer. ——and that's why we need to make sure that it's secure. And we've lent in and said we'll play our part. And we've talked and we will talk about how we work with yourself, Mr. President, to ensure that this deal is something which is not violated, because it's very important, if there is a deal, we keep it.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

President Trump. And that will be—and I think I can say that will be the easy part. That's the part we look forward to——

Prime Minister Starmer. Yes.

President Trump. ——because putting security there, that's the part we all look forward to. That's easy.

The difficult part is getting the deal made.

Prime Minister Starmer. Yes.

President Trump. So—but I think we've come a long way.

Did you have something?

Q. On a personal level——

President Trump. You have such a—he's got such a nice face.

Q. Aww. *[Laughter]*

President Trump. He's smiling. But—no, he's smiling. But watch, he'll ask a total killer question. *[Laughter]* Those are the ones——

Q. No, I was going to ask a nice—I was going to ask a nice——

Prime Minister Starmer. I've known him a long time.

Q. Yes.

President Trump. They're the ones that get you. *[Laughter]* No, he looks like a nice guy.

The President's Relationship With Prime Minister Starmer

Q. I was going to ask you, on a personal level, Mr. President, what do you get on most—what's your common ground with Sir Keir Starmer? Because you're both from different political backgrounds.

President Trump. It's true. I think I can say this, because we've known each other now, really, for a little while. This is not our first meeting, as you know. He loves his country, and so do I. That's our common theme: He loves his country, and I love our country. And we also have two countries that have gotten along for the longest period of time.

Prime Minister Starmer. We have. Yes.

President Trump. Number-one ally on each side. And we have good—France and Australia—we have a lot of good ones. But we've had a long-time relationship—a long time, hundreds of years.

And we like each other, frankly, and we like each other's country, and we love our country. And I think that's our common thread. Okay?

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Q. On tariffs.

President Trump. Yes, please.

Q. On tariffs. You—you just said, with China——

President Trump. Who are you with?

Q. I'm with the Independent.

President Trump. Oh, that's good.

Q. It's—on tariffs.

President Trump. It's independent, yes?

China-U.S. Trade/Tariffs

Q. You just said with China—thank you—[laughter]—"We charge them." "We charge them," as in, we charge China. But the tariffs are—are paid eventually by American importers and consumers. What do you—

President Trump. No, they're not. No, I think they're paid for by the country.

Q. But how—

President Trump. But you know, look, we can get into that. I had—I put a lot of tariffs on in my first term, and we made tremendous amounts of progress because of those tariffs. China paid us hundreds of billions of dollars. Billions. We never had a—because they took advantage.

And President Xi is a friend of mine, but he know—he knows better than anybody he took advantage of our country. He took advantage of Presidents that didn't know what they were doing.

And they expect them. They actually expect them. The smart countries expect them from me, because they know me and they know our country. But they got away with—they got away with murder for decades, and we just can't let that happen anymore.

Behind you, please.

President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia

Q. Oh, that's very kind. Mr. President, it sounds as though one of you completely trusts President Putin and one of you doesn't trust him an inch. Have I got that right? And why do you trust him?

President Trump. No, look, you know, it's trust and verify. Let's call it that. And I think we both can be that way. It's—you have to verify, because you never know what's going to happen.

I know a lot of people that you would say no chance that they would ever deceive you, and they're the worst people in the world. I know others that you would guarantee they would deceive you and—you know what?—they're a hundred-percent honorable. So you never know what you're getting.

No, I have confidence that if we make a deal, it's going to hold.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Fentanyl/Canada

Q. Mr. President, on—on fentanyl, Mr. President. Less than 1 percent of all fentanyl that comes into the U.S. is apprehended at the Canadian border. So why use fentanyl as a reason to impose tariffs on Canada?

President Trump. Because they should be apprehending much more. They're only apprehending 1 percent. You're right about that. It's a little more than that. But they should be apprehending much more, because a lot comes through Canada.

And as Mexico gets stronger, in terms of the border, it goes up to Canada, and a lot of drugs are coming in through Canada. We can't have that.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Yes, go ahead, please. In the back.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy of Ukraine

Q. Is there anything you can say tomorrow to President Zelenskyy to reassure him that his country's war hasn't been in vain and its sovereignty is not going to be threatened by any deal with Russia?

President Trump. Well, you know, he's coming. Perhaps he's already on his way. And we're going to be signing the deal together, probably in front of the media, and we're going to be having a good conversation.

No, we want to work with him, President Zelenskyy, she said before. We want to work with him, and we will work with him. I think the President and I actually have had a very good relationship. It maybe got a little bit testy because we wanted to have a little bit of what the European nations had.

You know, they get their money back by giving money. We don't get the money back. Biden made a deal. He put in \$350 billion, and I thought it was a very unfair situation.

Prime Minister Starmer. We're not getting all of ours. I mean, some—quite a bit of ours was gifted. It was given. There were some loans, but mainly it was gifted, actually.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

North Atlantic Treaty Organization/Ukraine

Q. Mr. President, the Euro—the Euro—Mr. President, the Europeans want Ukraine to be part of NATO as part of this deal. Are you willing to budge on that at all, or is it a firm no?

President Trump. Well, I could be very nice and say, "Oh, well, we'll work to it." Look, it's not going to happen. It's just not going to happen. That's what started this whole thing.

Q. Mr. President——

President Trump. Biden said that, and, all of a sudden, the guns started. That was one of the primary reasons this started.

And this was long before President Putin. They never said—it was an impossibility.

So we can say: "Oh, gee. Well, we'll try." But that's something that's just not going to happen.

And then the other question you'll ask is about the land. "Will you get your land back?" Well, they've fought long and hard on the land, and you and I will be discussing that, and we're going to certainly try and get as much as we can back.

But on the NATO, it's just not—that's not going to happen.

Yes, please.

Ukraine/Russia/Critical Minerals Supply

Q. Mr. President, you talked about having common ground with Keir Starmer, but there are things you disagree on as well. You described Zelenskyy as a dictator. He describes President Putin as a dictator. Do you see that as a problem?

President Trump. The relationship between President Zelenskyy and President Putin is not a good one. You've noticed, right? It's not a good one. It's not a good relationship, and we're going to have to try and work something out. Sometimes that happens.

I get along with both. I have a very good relationship with President Putin. I think I have a very good relationship with President Zelenskyy. And now we're—you know, we're doing the deal, and we're going to be in there. We're going to be actually in there, digging our hearts out.

And hopefully—you know, we need the rare earth, and we have some here, but we don't have enough. We're—our economy is very strong, and we need a lot of things that, in some cases, we don't have here.

So I think we're going to have a very good relationship, but the relationship between them is not the best.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Q. Mr. President, do you still think that Mr. Zelenskyy is a dictator?

President Trump. Did I say that? I can't believe I said that.

Next question.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

President Trump. Yes, please. Go ahead.

Ukraine

Q. Yes. George Parker from Financial Times. Can you see any situation where U.S. forces could be deployed as a backstop in a peacekeeping operation in direct confrontation with Russian forces?

President Trump. Well, there is a backstop that—you know, first, you're got to have European countries because they're right there. We're very far away. We have an ocean between us.

But we want to make sure it works. So I don't know—when you say "backstop," you mean a backstop psychologically——

Q. Militarily.

President Trump. ——or militarily or what?

Q. Militarily.

President Trump. But we are a backstop because we'll be over there. We'll be working in the country. We're going to be—that's a great thing economically for them, because, you know, when you talk about economic development, we're going to have a lot of people over there. So we'll be working in the country. So I don't—I just don't think you're going to have a problem.

I think when we have an agreement—you can say whatever you want about security, who's going to do it or—that's going to be a very pleasant conversation.

The hard conversation is will we have an agreement, and I think the answer is yes. I think Russia will agree, and I think that—I really believe Ukraine will agree also.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Ukraine/Peacekeeping Forces

Q. Just to follow up on that. If British troops are in Ukraine keeping the peace and get attacked by Russia, will you come to their aid?

President Trump. If the British people are in Ukraine——

Q. If British soldiers are——

President Trump. ——and they get attacked?

Q. If British soldiers are in Ukraine keeping the peace.

President Trump. You know, I've always found about the British: They don't need much help. They can take care of themselves very well.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Q. That sounds like a "no," you'd leave them to it.

President Trump. You know what? No. It sounds like it's evasive, but it's not evasive. [Laughter] You know, the British are——have been incredible soldiers, incredible military, and they can take care of themselves. But if they need help, I'll always be with the British. Okay? I'll always be with them.

But they don't need help. You look at their career, you have done very well over the years, haven't you, huh? Come here.

Prime Minister Starmer. We have. I'm very proud of our country.

President Trump. Come here.

[President Trump and Prime Minister shook hands.]

Prime Minister Starmer. And we have——but we've also always been there backing each other up——

President Trump. Yes.

Prime Minister Starmer. ——between our two countries. That is why this is the greatest alliance for prosperity and security, I think, the world has ever seen. Whenever necessary, we've absolutely backed each other up, and that's at the core of the relation- ——

President Trump. Could you take on Russia by yourselves?

Prime Minister Starmer. Well——[laughter].

President Trump. All right. One or two more.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

President Trump. Yes, ma'am.

Q. In his remarks at the Munich Security Conference, Vice President Vance condemned free speech violations in the U.K., particularly. Could you respond? What is your message——

President Trump. Well, I have an idea.

Q. ——to the U.K.?

President Trump. We have the man right here. Come on. Let's go. [Laughter] Let's go, J.D. Let's——we're putting you on stage.

Vice President James D. "J.D." Vance. Great. Yes. Look——[laughter]——I said what I said, which is that we do have a——of course, a special relationship with our friends in the U.K. and also with some of our European allies, but we also know that there have been infringements on free

speech that actually affect not just the British—of course, what the British do in their own country is up to them—but also affect American technology companies and, by extension, American citizens.

So that is something that we'll talk about today at lunch. Thank you.

Prime Minister Starmer. We've had free speech——

Q. On Zelenskyy.

Prime Minister Starmer. ——for a very, very long time in the United Kingdom. And it will last for a very, very long.

Q. So you don't agree it's under threat, then?

Prime Minister Starmer. Well, no. I mean, I—certainly, we wouldn't want to reach across U.S. citizens, and we don't. And that's absolutely right.

But in relation to free speech in the U.K., I'm very proud about our history there.

AUKUS Trilateral Security Partnership

Q. Will you discuss AUKUS now? Will you be discussing AUKUS with the Australians and—and the Brits? Will you discussing—be discussing AUKUS with the Prime Minister, sir?

President Trump. What does that mean?

Q. AUKUS, the Australia-U.S. defense alliance with the U.K.

President Trump. Yes, well, we'll be discussing that. We've had another great relationship—and you have too—with Australia.

Prime Minister Starmer. Yes. Yes.

President Trump. We've had a very good relationship with Australia.

Please.

Q. Mr. President, what—while we have the Vice President here, are you both disappointed that the AfD didn't come first in the German elections, given your previous support for them?

President Trump. No. Whatever happens with Germany, look, the relationship has been very strong with Germany, but we'll have to see what happens. They have a lot of things going on right now. We'll have to see.

No, I'm not disappointed about anything. If anything, you would say that the group that we would be most opposed to lost, and—but we got along with them also. We have a very good relationship with all groups in Germany.

Q. Mr. President——

Q. On measles, sir. On measles.

Immigration Enforcement Actions

Q. ——former Blackwater CEO Erik Prince was on our channel, NewsNation. He was talking about his proposal to use private forces to assist in deportations. Have you read that proposal, and do you support it?

President Trump. No, I haven't seen it. I don't think it's necessary. Our people are doing a phenomenal job. I wouldn't be opposed to it, necessarily, but I'd go to our military people and I'd go to Tom Homan and Kristi, I'd go to the various—and ask. But I don't see it as being—we're doing unbelievable—unbelievably in getting people out, getting criminals out, people that should

have never been here, that the Biden administration, with their stupid open borders, should have never allowed. They came in from prisons and jails and mental institutions, and gang members and drug dealers coming into our country like this.

We're getting them out, and we're doing really well. I mean, they've—the level of effectiveness has been incredible. Everybody's talking about it.

How about one more?

Q. Mr. President, on measles.

President Trump. Wait, not—you've asked enough. [*Laughter*]

Q. Mr. President, one on the Middle East.

President Trump. Go ahead. You look so nice. [*Laughter*]

Q. Thank you.

President Trump. Here we go. Here's the kill. [*Laughter*]

Ukraine

Q. Mr. President, are there areas, specifically, of Ukraine that you're talking about in giving back—specifically Crimea? It—are—have you gotten to those details yet on such an agreement?

President Trump. Well, we—you mean the areas that were taken?

Q. Yes.

President Trump. There are a lot of areas that were taken. Yes, we've talked about it. A lot of the sea line has been taken. And we'll be talking about that, and we're going to see if we can get it back or get a lot of it back for Ukraine if that's possible. We'll be seeing about that. Okay?

Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you very much. Appreciate it. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:51 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to King Charles III of the United Kingdom; U.S. Special Envoy to the Middle East Steven C. Witkoff; Secretary of the Treasury Scott K.H. Bessent; Secretary of State Marco A. Rubio; Victoria Starmer, wife of Prime Minister Starmer; White House Border Czar Thomas D. Homan; Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi L. Noem; and President Emmanuel Macron of France. The transcript was released by the Office of Communications on February 27.

Categories: Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters, White House; Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials : United Kingdom, Prime Minister Starmer.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Bessent, Scott K.H.; Biden, Joseph R., Jr.; Charles III, King; Homan, Thomas D.; Noem, Kristi L.; Putin, Vladimir Vladimirovich; Rubio, Marco A.; Starmer, Keir; Starmer, Victoria; Tate, Andres; Tate, Tristan; Trump, Melania; Vance, James D. "J.D."; Witkoff, Steven C.; Xi Jinping; Zelenskyy, Volodymyr.

Subjects: Afghanistan, withdrawal of U.S. military forces; AUKUS trilateral security partnership; Australia, relations with U.S.; Canada, counternarcotic efforts; Chagos Archipelago, territorial status; China, President; China, synthetic opioid supply chain; China, trade with U.S.; European Union, trade with U.S.; Federal workforce, reduction efforts; Germany, elections; Illegal drugs, interdiction efforts; Israel, attacks by Hamas of October 7, 2023; Mauritius, relations with United Kingdom; Mexico, counternarcotic efforts; North Atlantic Treaty Organization; Opioid epidemic, efforts to combat; Russia, conflict in Ukraine; Russia, President; Secretary of Homeland Security;

Secretary of State; Secretary of the Treasury; Tariffs; U.S. Special Envoy to the Middle East; Ukraine, critical minerals supply; Ukraine, international military aid; Ukraine, President; Ukraine, Russian invasion and airstrikes; Ukraine, U.S. assistance; Undocumented immigrants, deportation of criminals; United Kingdom, defense relationship with U.S.; United Kingdom, King; United Kingdom, Prime Minister; United Kingdom, relations with Mauritius; United Kingdom, relations with U.S.; Vice President; White House Border Czar.

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