

*Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2025*

**Remarks and an Exchange With Reporters During a Tour of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts**

*March 17, 2025*

*Q.* Mr. President, when you speak with President Putin tomorrow, what is your primary message to him? What is your main message to him?

*The President.* Well, thank you very much. We're here to have our first board meeting—the Kennedy Center. And it's in tremendous disrepair, as is a lot of the rest of our country—most of it—because of bad management.

This is a shame, what I've watched and witnessed. They spent a fortune—\$250 million—and they built these rooms that nobody is going to use, rooms underground. And I've often wondered what are the big cubes that they have outside that block the view. They're cubes with a door in them, so that people can get down to rooms that nobody is going to use. And it's a shame. It's a shame.

The other thing is, we're going to have a little problem with some people that work here. We had—Lee Greenwood wanted to sing a little song today and because of the cost in the union structure, for him to sing a song just for the Board—just a Board meeting—it was going to cost \$30,000. That doesn't sound too good. They wanted \$30,000 to move a piano. So you can't have that.

So we're going to fix it up. But it's really emblematic of our country. But the Kennedy Center—you look at the columns outside. You look at—I mean, they're supposed to be covered by something, whether it's marble or whatever—granite. They were never covered. They were painted. But bringing it to more modern times.

A lot of money has been given to it, and the money has not been properly spent. They built rooms underground with no windows, no nothing, that will not be used ever. You're not going to have people using them. Such a waste of money. Such a terrible waste.

But we'll make it—we'll bring it back. We'll make it great again. But it is so much like what I'm witnessing in other places, where you have open borders, where you have men playing in women's sports. It's all the same thing. It's all the same mentality and thinking. So I'm very disappointed when I look around.

The bottom line: It has tremendous potential. And we'll work with Congress. As you know, it's a very public—a very public facility. And we'll do what has to be done. We'll be having a meeting with the Speaker in the not-too-distant future.

I think it's important to save this structure and this building. I think maybe we close up some of the work that's been done and built because it was done terribly. It was done terribly. The concept was very bad.

*Prestige of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts/District of Columbia*

*Q.* Mr. President, why was it so important for you to come here today to the Kennedy Center? You have so much on your plate. Why come today here?

*The President.* This represents a very important part of DC and, actually, our country. And I think it's important to make sure that our country is in good shape and is represented well.

When people look at this, I've been hearing for a long time that they come here and they're very disappointed. When they come here, I want them to be excited.

We're bringing a big move on to Washington, DC. We're going to stop the crime. We actually worked with the Mayor. We took down a lot of tents. They were all over the place in front of the State Department, and they did a good job of that. I was very happy with what the Mayor did. She was able to get them out quickly and at my direction and at the direction of the administration. But we're cleaning up Washington, DC. This is a big part of Washington, DC.

*The President's Message to Visitors and Patrons/Russia/Ukraine*

*Q.* Mr. President, for Americans visiting Washington, perhaps they're thinking about seeing a show at the Kennedy Center.

*The President.* Yes.

*Q.* What would you tell them? They've never been here before. They want to come check it out. What do you tell them?

*The President.* Yes. I'd say, "Come here and see a show." I was never a big fan of—I never liked "Hamilton" very much, and I—I never liked it. But we are going to have some really good shows.

I would say this, "Come here and watch it, and you'll see, over a period of time, it'll improve very greatly, physically." And we're going to get some very good shows.

The thing that does well are Broadway hits. And we have some beauty. I guess we have "Les Mis" coming—

*John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts Interim Executive Director Richard A. Grenell.* Yes.

*The President.* —and we have some others. But the Broadway hits have done very well.

So I'm going to spend some time. We have a good board. In the meantime, we're running the country, and we're running it well. We have tremendous things to report.

Tomorrow I'm speaking with President Putin of Russia to save some soldiers who are in deep trouble. They're captured, essentially. They're surrounded by Russian soldiers. So I give it to you, a lot of different—I give you a lot of different things in one news conference, but it's a big deal. They're surrounded by Russian soldiers.

And I believe it was—if it wasn't for me, they would be—they wouldn't be here any longer. I was able to get them not to do anything at this moment. But it's a bad situation in Russia, and it's a bad situation in Ukraine.

What's happening in Ukraine is not good, but we're going to see if we can work a peace agreement—a cease-fire and peace, and I think we'll be able to do it. I'm speaking to President Putin tomorrow morning.

Yes.

*Ukraine/U.S. Security Assistance*

*Q.* Mr. President, Ukrainian forces have all but pulled out of the Kursk region in Ukraine.

*The President.* Yes.

*Q.* Do you think there was any effect of the pause on aid and intel to Ukraine that may have contributed to this loss of land?

*The President.* No, not at all. No. Really the opposite. I think it was appreciated. And we have to understand and you have to understand that if I see somebody doing something bad, that's going to cause a lot of death—the only reason I'm involved—and this is Russia and Ukraine, but a lot of people—it's humanity. I'm involved for humanity. A lot of people are being killed over there, and we had to get Ukraine to do the right thing. It was not an easy situation. You got to see a little glimpse at the Oval Office.

But I think they're doing the right thing right now, and we're trying to get a peace agreement done. We want to get a cease-fire and then a peace agreement.

*Russia/Ukraine/International Military Aid/Former President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.*

*Q.* The counter to that—is a counter to that work towards a peace agreement for Russia—

*The President.* Who are you with?

*Q.* I'm with NBC, sir.

Is it counter to that work towards a peace agreement to have Russia specifically attack this region so strongly?

*The President.* So we're going to see how it all works out. This was Joe Biden's deal. This isn't Trump's deal. This is Joe Biden's deal.

He gave \$350 billion to Ukraine, and he shouldn't have done it. It wasn't secured. Europe gave \$100 billion, and it was in the form of a loan. They get their money back. And they should've—they should actually have much more in it than us. But Joe Biden was grossly incompetent, and it's a shame what they did. Three hundred and fifty billion dollars. We could have rebuilt our entire Navy for that kind of money.

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

*Former President Biden's Son R. Hunter Biden/South Africa Land Reform Practices*

*Q.* Sir, there were 18 Secret Service agents protecting Hunter Biden in South Africa this weekend. Who's paying for that, and do you plan to revoke his Secret Service protection?

*The President.* Well, we have done that with many. I would say if there are 18 with Hunter Biden, that will be something I'll look at this afternoon. Okay?

*Q.* Sir—

*The President.* I just heard about it for the first time.

So you have 18 Secret Service in—going—

*Q.* In South Africa.

*The President.* Where was he exactly?

*Q.* In South Africa. That's where—

*The President.* In South Africa.

*Q.* Yes.

*The President.* And South Africa, you know, is on a watch list. You know that?

*Q.* Yes.

*The President.* Because what they're doing to people is brutal, and I've stopped having money go to South Africa. You know that. Billions of dollars.

So he's in South Africa? That's very interesting. All right. I'm going to take a look at that. Thank you very much.

*Vandalism in Wichita, Kansas*

*Q.* Sir, a Catholic church in Wichita, Kansas, over the weekend was vandalized: statues destroyed, glass smashed, graffiti all over the place. Church officials in Kansas call it a hate crime. I know you—have—you signed an EO eradicating anti-Christian bias. But, sir, what more can the White House do to protect places of worship, like Saint Patrick's Church in Wichita, Kansas?

*The President.* Well, we're going to take a look. I love Wichita. You know, I got big votes there. We won that State by a lot. We'll take a look at that.

When did this happen?

*Q.* This happened over the weekend, sir. Again, statues destroyed, glass——

*The President.* Terrible. Yes.

*Q.* ——smashed, graffiti.

*The President.* I think it's a terrible thing. And this was a Catholic church?

*Q.* Yes.

*The President.* Okay.

*Q.* Saint Patrick's Catholic Church.

*The President.* I'm going to take a look at it.

*Q.* And the perpetrator was caught.

*Q.* Mr. President, tomorrow, when you have this talk with——

*The President.* Okay. Thank you very much.

*Q.* Thank you.

*Q.* Thank you, Mr. President.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:59 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to musician Lee Greenwood; Speaker of the House of Representatives J. Michael Johnson; and Mayor Muriel E. Bowser of Washington, DC. A reporter referred to Michael A. Gonzalez, who is suspected of burglary, criminal desecration, and criminal damage to property of the St. Patrick Catholic Church in Wichita, KS, on March 14.

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