

**Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel
and an Exchange With Reporters**

April 7, 2025

President Trump. Thank you very much. It's an honor to have a very, very special person—I've dealt with him for a long time—Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister of Israel. And we had lunch together. We had meetings together, along with his very capable staff.

And I think we've come up to some pretty good solutions and conclusions, and we'll be working a little bit after this. And then I assume you're going back home.

Prime Minister Netanyahu. Yes, I am.

President Trump. You—this is a quick stop, in and out. But we appreciate you being here, and we are a friend of Israel, as you know.

I would say that I'm by far the best President that Israel has ever even thought of seeing, and it's an honor to be so. And I—and to be so thought of.

Many friends in Israel. They are not in an easy area. It doesn't go easy, but we are helping them. And likewise, they've been helping us very much. And so we'll see how it all works out.

But we had great discussions today, I think, on the obvious subject of Iran and also the less obvious subject, with respect to Israel, and that's trade. And I think the Prime Minister is going to tell you a little bit about trade and what they're doing for the United States.

So I want to thank you all for being here. Thank you very much. And——

Prime Minister Netanyahu. Thank you.

President Trump. ——Benjamin, thank you very much.

Prime Minister Netanyahu. Thank you, Mr. President.

President Trump. Thank you, Bibi.

Prime Minister Netanyahu. Thank you, Donald. Thank you.

Mr. President, I want to first thank you for inviting me again to the White House. You've been a remarkable friend of the State of Israel. You stand by us. You're standing with us. You are a great, great champion of our alliance.

And you actually do the things that you say you do, and I think that people respect that enormously. I certainly do, and the people of Israel do, and I think the Jewish people do as well. We just saw your representative in the Department of Justice fighting anti-Semitism, standing up for Israel in international forums. I just want you to know, from the heart, it's deeply, deeply appreciated.

As you said, we had the opportunity to talk today about many subjects.

First, if I can mention tariffs. It's a subject of some interest today. I can tell you that I said to the President a very simple thing: We will eliminate the trade deficit with the United States. We intend to do it very quickly. We think it's the right thing to do. And we're going to also eliminate trade barriers—a variety of trade barriers—that have been put up unnecessarily. And I think Israel can serve as a model for many countries who ought to do the same.

I recognize the position of the United States. It says, you know, "We're allowing other countries to put tariffs on us, but we don't put tariffs on them." And you know, I'm a free-trade champion, and free trade has to be fair trade. And I think that's basically the position that you have put forward, Mr. President.

We are going to eliminate the tariffs and rapidly. I had the opportunity to speak to Secretary Lutnick yesterday. We talked about how we could effect this quickly, and I hope to bring the solution very quickly.

We're not talking about intentions. We're not talking about, you know, just words. We're talking about results.

President Trump. That's great.

Prime Minister Netanyahu. And those results are going to come. And that's the first point.

President Trump. Thank you very much. That's very nice. Thank you.

Prime Minister Netanyahu. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. President.

Q. Mr. President, what about the hostages deal?

Q. Mr. President——

Prime Minister Netanyahu. Well, I didn't finish——

Q. What about the hostages?

President Trump. Let him—let him finish.

Prime Minister Netanyahu. I didn't finish. *[Laughter]*

Q. Okay.

Prime Minister Netanyahu. Or even begin. We spoke about not only the hostages but about Gaza. The hostages, obviously, is a human story of unbearable—just unbearable agony. I speak to the families. I spoke to them yesterday. I spoke to another one when I was in Hungary before I came here. I speak to them every day. They're in agony. The hostages are in agony, and we want to get them all out.

Steve Witkoff, who is President Trump's very able representative, helped us get a deal that got 25 out. We're working now on another deal that we hope will succeed. And we're committed to getting all the hostages out, but also eliminating the evil tyranny of Hamas in Gaza and enabling the people of Gaza to freely make a choice to go wherever they want. I mean, they should have that choice.

And the President put forward a vision, a bold vision, which we discussed as well, including the countries that might be amenable and are amenable to accepting Palestinians to have their free choice if they choose to go there, and I think that's the second thing that we discussed. But the hostages came right on top.

We also discussed the situation in Syria. We have had neighborly relations with Turkey that have deteriorated, and we don't want to see Syria being used by anyone, including Turkey, as a base for attack in Israel. Turkey is a country that has a great relationship with the United States. The President has a relationship with the leader of Turkey. We discussed how we can avoid this conflict in a variety of ways, and I think we can't have a better interlocutor than the President of the United States for this purpose.

And of course, we also discussed Iran.

Look, we're both united in the goal that Iran does not ever get nuclear weapons. If it can be done diplomatically in a full way, the way it was done in Libya, I think that would be a good thing. But whatever happens, we have to make sure that Iran does not have nuclear weapons.

That's the end of my speech.

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

Iran/Tariffs/Illegal Immigration/Border Security

Q. Mr. President, many Israelis want to know——

President Trump. Just to add to that——

Q. ——what is your specific plan——

President Trump. ——we are having direct talks with the——

Q. ——to getting all the hostages out?

President Trump. Wait a minute. Wait, wait, wait.

We're having direct talks with Iran, and they've started. It will go on Saturday. We have a very big meeting, and we'll see what can happen.

And I think everybody agrees that doing a deal would be preferable to doing the obvious. And the obvious is not something that I want to be involved with or, frankly, that Israel wants to be involved with if they can avoid it. So we're going to see if we can avoid it.

But it's getting to be very dangerous territory, and hopefully, those talks will be successful. And I think it would be in Iran's best interest if they are successful. And we hope that's going to happen.

And we had just a lot of good talks on a lot of things.

I appreciate very much what you said about the tariffs. We've been ripped off and taken advantage of by many countries over the years and can't do it anymore. We just can't do it anymore. We can't be the stupid people anymore.

And it's all because of the people that sat in this seat right here—not your seat, but this seat. *[Laughter]* They allowed things to happen to our country that they shouldn't have allowed to happen on trade and other things—many other things.

I mean, look at what's happened with our last President, where he allowed millions of people to come into our country with an open border. Who would want an open border? How stupid is that? But he allowed millions and millions of people, and of the millions—and I think it was 21 million people, but let's say three of them were serious criminals, serious murderers and drug dealers and gang members and people from jails. All the jails emptied out right into our country, right along the open border on the—on Mexico—generally, the Mexico—open. They came in from Canada too, by the way, a lot, but generally speaking, on the southern border.

And what a shame it is that we are now working very hard to get them out—get the criminals out, get the murderers out, the drug dealers, the mentally insane. Get them out. They dropped the mentally insane in our country too.

And this was all done by the Biden administration, and it's a disgrace that we have to work so hard. And then we have judges that try and protect these people, but they didn't protect us when the people were being let in. But to get them out is never easy with these people.

So I think we're doing a great job. The border is the best it's ever been. It's—even as strong as it was—I had a great, solid border—I think it might even be tougher right now and stronger.

So people are coming into our country, but they're coming in legally. We have a legal process, and we have that moving along properly. Because we need people to come into our country, but we want people that can love our country and cherish our country.

So that's where we are. And with that, any questions?

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Trade Negotiations/Tariffs/China-U.S. Trade

Q. Mr. President, your reaction to the markets today, and would you be open to a pause in tariffs to allow for negotiations?

President Trump. Well, we're not looking at that. We have many, many countries that are coming to negotiate deals with us, and they're going to be fair deals, and, in certain cases, they're going to be paying substantial tariffs. They'll be fair deals.

As you know, I spoke this morning with the Prime Minister of Japan, and we had a very good conversation. They're coming. And I said, "One thing, you're going to have to open up your country," because we sold no cars, like zero cars, in Japan, and they sold millions of cars into our country. They don't really take our agriculture—a little bit of it, just to keep us slightly happy, but they don't take what they're supposed to be taking.

So we have a great relationship with Japan. We're going to keep it that way, but they're coming in to meet, and other com—countries are coming in.

With China, as you know, against my statement, they put a 34-percent tariff on, above what their ridiculous tariffs were already. And I said if that tariff isn't removed by tomorrow at 12 o'clock, we're putting a 50-percent tariff on above the tariffs that we put on.

So they've gone—for years, they've become a rich country because of people, again, that were in the White House that allowed this to happen. Hundreds of billions of dollars a year they'd make on make on us on trade, and it shouldn't be that way.

And I have a great relationship with President Xi. I hope it's going to stay that way. I have great respect for China, but they can't do this.

We're just—we're going to have one shot at this, and no other President is going to do this, what I'm doing. And I'll tell you what, it's an honor to do it, because we have been just destroyed, what they've done to our system.

You know, we have \$36 trillion of debt for a reason, and the reason is that people allowed it to get that way. So we'll be talking to China. We'll be talking to a lot of different countries.

And I think, you know, if we can make a really fair deal and a good deal for the United States—not a good deal for others. This is America first. It's now America first.

And we didn't put America first; we put America last. The people that were in the Oval Office put America last, and we're not going to stand for it.

Yes.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Q. President Trump, there have been some mixed messages—sorry——

Q. Mr. President, who is going to represent the U.S. in the talks with Iran? Mr. President—

—

President Trump. Yes. Go ahead, please.

Q. —who is going to represent the U.S. in the talks with Iran?

President Trump. Go ahead.

Trade Negotiations/Tariffs/China-U.S. Trade

Q. Two questions. Do you expect any of these deals to be made before April 9?

And secondly, there have been some mixed messages from your administration. You're talking about negotiations, and yet others in your administration are saying that these tariffs are actually permanent. What is the actual—what's actually going on here?

President Trump. Well, it could be—they can both be true. There can be permanent tariffs, and there can also be negotiations, because there are things that we need beyond tariffs. We need open borders.

You know, we almost had a deal with China where we were going to open up China. It was almost done. Some of you remember it, during my first term. And it was very disappointing. We ended up making a great deal. Fifty billion dollars' worth of product or so. Fifty billion. You'd like that in Israel.

And I made that deal, but it wasn't the deal that I wanted. It was—the deal that I wanted was that, plus they were going to open up China so that our companies could go into China and compete with other countries and China for the—you know, for the large number of people.

And at the very end, that deal was terminated, and we went to a piece of the deal. And there—so there are a lot of things outside of tariffs, but tariffs are very important. But there are a lot of things, like opening up countries that were totally closed.

China is essentially a closed country. In fact, it is a closed country. And what they do is, they charge tariffs so that if you sell cars or if you sell anything, nobody is going to buy it, because the price is out of control.

But that's true with a lot of other countries also. So we're going to get fair deals and good deals with every country, and if we don't, we're going to have nothing to do with them. They're not going to be allowed to participate in the United States.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Hold it. Hold it. Hold it.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Just relax. We have time. This gentleman has all day long. *[Laughter]*

Q. Mr. President, many of—thank you for the chance.

President Trump. Go ahead.

Cease-Fire and Hostage-Release Deal Between Israel and Hamas/Houthi Rebel Group/U.S. Military Readiness/U.S. DOGE Service

Q. Many Palestinian Americans who voted for you voted for you and not for Biden because you've promised them to end the war in Gaza.

President Trump. Right.

Q. Do——

President Trump. Very honored by that vote too.

Q. The war is still going on, and there is no hostage deal. Do you have any update on that?

President Trump. Well, I'd like to see the war stopped, and I think the war will stop at some point that won't be in the too-distant future. Right now we have a problem with hostages. We're trying to get the hostages out. We got quite a few of them out, but it's a long process. It shouldn't be that long.

We have a big problem that we've done—I think I'll ask Pete to maybe talk about it for a second, because a lot of people are asking. The Houthis—we've been very tough and very successful militarily. We've really damaged them badly. These were people shooting down ships and other things, by the way—flying objects, like airplanes, and we've put a major hurt on the Houthis, which nobody's been able to do. We've really hit them hard, and they know it. And they don't know what to do. And it's every night, night after night, and we've gotten many of their leaders and their experts—their experts on missiles.

I mean, they actually make missiles. Nobody thought that, but they make missiles. It's highly sophisticated, and they're very tough. But they've been very badly damaged. Nobody else was able to do that but us.

Pete, do you want to discuss that, please?

Secretary of Defense Peter B. Hegseth. Yes, sir.

Well, it's been a bad 3 weeks for the Houthis, and it's about to get worse. It's been a devastating campaign, whether it's underground facilities, weapons manufacturing, bunkers, troops in the open, air defense assets. We are not going to relent, and it's only to get more unrelenting until the Houthis declare they will stop shooting at our ships.

And we've been very clear with the Iranians as well. They are—they should not continue to provide support to the Houthis, and that message has been made very clear.

So we have a lot more options and a lot more pressure to apply. And we know, because we see the reports, how devastating this campaign has been on them, and we will not relent.

President Trump. We have a great military. There's no military like our military. And despite Biden having given a lot but never—but nevertheless, a pretty small piece, but it was a lot of our military away in Afghanistan in one of the dumbest situations, I think, and maybe the most embarrassing situation we've ever been involved in. That short period of time in Afghanistan, what a disgrace that was. But left a lot of our military behind. Left—you see them in their annual parades, where they're parading trucks that are armor-plated and different things that they kept, but it's many billions of dollars we left behind.

But despite that, we have a tremendous military. That was a very small portion, because we rebuilt the military during my first term. And we have great, great things happening with our military.

We also essentially approved a budget, which is in the facility—you'll like to hear this—of a trillion dollars. One trillion dollars. And nobody has seen anything like it.

We have to build our military. And we're very cost-conscious, but the military is something that we have to build, and we have to be strong, because you got a lot of bad forces out there now. So we're going to be approving a budget. The—and I'm proud to say, actually, the biggest one we've ever done for the military.

We're cutting other things that were under DOGE, but under a lot of other—when you look at a woman getting \$2 billion for environmental, and it had nothing to do with environmental, and they had \$100 in the bank and they give her \$2 billion. Many, many of those cases. All that stuff is going to be cut out.

But we are getting a very, very powerful military. We have things under order now the likes of which we've never had before. We've never had the kind of aircraft, the kind of missiles—anything that we have ordered. And it's, in many ways, too bad that we have to do it, because hopefully we're not going to have to use it. But the military is very, very powerful, and it's going to remain that way.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Go ahead, please. Please.

Q. Thank you——

President Trump. Yes, green.

Iran

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. I want to ask you about Iran, because this is the first time we hear that the U.S. is having a direct contact with the Iranians. Is it possible to give us some more information? At what level is the U.S. represented?

President Trump. High level. Very high level, yes.

Q. And——

President Trump. We're dealing with the Iranians. We have a very big meeting on Saturday, and we're dealing with them directly. You know, a lot of people will say: "Oh, maybe you're going through surrogates or you're not dealing directly. You're dealing through other countries." No, we're dealing with them directly.

And maybe a deal is going to be made. That would be great. That'd be—it would be really great for Iran, I can tell you that. But hopefully, we're not going to have to get into that.

We are meeting, very importantly, on Saturday at almost the highest level, and we'll see how it works out.

Please.

Tariffs/China

Q. How do you ensure, Mr. President, that these tariffs don't drive U.S. trading partners into the hands of the Chinese? That they don't——

President Trump. I'm not worried about it. I'm not worried about it. They want to be in the hands of the U.S. They don't want to be in the hands of the Chinese. The Chinese have turned out to be really not very good at that. People that are with us, they're with us, but we cannot be taken advantage of any longer.

I used to watch these deals for years. I've been talking about it for years. You know, I've been talking about it for 35 years, how our country is being ripped off. I mean, which it—30 years ago, it was Japan. Then it was something else. Then it was another group. Then it was China. China is doing the best job of it, frankly. And it's just not going to happen. Not going to happen.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

European Union/North Atlantic Treaty Organization/Domestic Energy Sources/Egg Prices/National Debt

Q. And then the EU? Mr. President, the EU—has said that they have offered zero-for-zero tariffs on cars and industrial goods. Is that not enough?

President Trump. Well, the EU—no, it's not. The EU has been very tough over the years. It was—I always say it was formed to really do damage to the United States in trade. That's the reason it was formed. It was formed with all of the countries from Europe—I guess most of them; not all of them, but most of them—and they formed together to create a little bit of a monopoly situation to create a unified force against the United States for trade.

So they have NATO, which is largely the same countries, and they took advantage of us dollar-wise and militarily until I got there. You know, I was able to get \$600 billion from NATO, where—they paid NATO—because most of these nations weren't even paying. We were paying for NATO, so we're paying them to guard them militarily, and they're screwing us on trade. So that's not a good combination.

So now it's really turned around. It's the opposite.

And the European Union has been very negative—very bad to us. They don't take our cars—like Japan, in that sense. They don't take our agricultural product. They don't take anything, practically. And yet they said millions of cars in a year: Mercedes-Benz, Volkswagen, BMWs. They're sending millions and millions of cars into the U.S., but we don't have a car that's been sold to the European Union—or other places, but let's go for the European Union—and it's not going to be that way. It's got to be fair and reciprocal. It's got to be fair. It's not fair.

We have a deficit with the European Union of \$350 billion, and it's going to disappear fast. And one of the reasons and one of the ways that that can disappear easily and quickly is, they're going to have to buy our energy from us, because they need it. They're going to have to buy it from us. They can buy it. We can knock off \$350 billion in 1 week. They have to buy and commit to buy a like amount of energy, and we have that.

You know, we have more energy than any country in the world. I don't know if you know that. This—he knows everything—[laughter]—but the one thing he may not know: We have more energy than any country in the world. We have more of every kind of energy, every form of energy, from oil and gas to coal.

And people talk about—I call it beautiful, clean coal. As you know, Germany is opening up a coal plant a week. They tried the windmills, and it didn't work. They tried all the other solutions, and they were ready to go out of business. Now they're doing a coal plant a week.

China is now up to two coal plants. They're—they're opening two major coal plants every single week in China, all over China. And then we're not allowed to use coal.

Well, we have clean, beautiful coal more than anybody else. We have oil and gas more than anybody else. We have the most energy of any country in the world, including Saudi Arabia—including everybody—by a lot. And I took it to number one. We were number three, and I took it to number one during my administration.

And the reason that we were hurt so badly and the reason that we went into such incredible inflation during Biden is energy. It was also their bad spending, but energy, because they played around with this incredible thing that we had built, this administration had built, and the energy costs went through the roof. And when that went up, everything else followed.

Now, if you look at what's happening—you're going to see this today—I said we're going to try and get groceries down, right? An old-fashioned term, but a beautiful term. Eggs. So, when I got in, the press went absolutely crazy the first week. They said, "Eggs have quadrupled in price." I said: "I just got here. Tell me about it." And Brooke Rollins and our team did a great job, and eggs are down now 79 percent, and they're all over the place. And this was a problem that somebody else would have taken a long time to cure.

We have energy is down. We have interest rates are down. We have groceries, meaning food, is down. We have everything is down at levels that nobody ever thought possible. Energy looks like it's going to be in the \$2.50-a-gallon range and maybe below that for a car, so—for gasoline.

So we are really doing amazing. I mean, we're cutting prices. Because prices got so high, people couldn't live. I mean, the prices for groceries—the prices for standard groceries, standard things were going through the roof. They couldn't live. And now those prices are coming down.

So call them groceries, but that's down, energy is down, and interest rates are down. Everything is down.

And the interest rates, the beauty there is when we refinance debt—you know, debt has become such a big factor in this country. We're going to get—we're going to start paying debt off with tariffs and other things. But it's such a big factor because the interest rate is so high. Well, now that's coming way down, so our budget is going to look a lot better because interest costs are way down.

And I guess I've done that.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Hostages Held in Gaza, Palestinian Territories

Q. Many Israelis——

President Trump. Okay. Go ahead, please.

Q. Many Israelis are watching you now on live show.

President Trump. Good.

Q. What is your specific way——

President Trump. I hope they like—*[inaudible]*.

Q. ——for getting the hostages out from the horrific captivity?

President Trump. Yes. We are trying very hard to get the hostages out. We're looking at another cease-fire. We'll see what happens. But we have—we want to get the hostages out.

The Israeli people want the hostages out. More than anything, they want the hostages out. This man is working very hard with us to do that. I mean, I don't know, I hope he's being appreciated, because he's been a great leader. He's working very, very hard on the hostages and many other things. And there are plenty of things you have to work on. That's a—it's a tough place in the world, isn't it? Huh?

Prime Minister Netanyahu. I have a good partner.

President Trump. Yes. You do have a good partner, and so do we.

We're working very hard on the hostages.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Yes, please.

Hostages Held in Gaza, Palestinian Territories

Q. If you're going to negotiate a new deal in Iran—with Iran, can you elaborate how it's going to be more effective than the JCPOA?

President Trump. Well, I can't really say that, but I think it will be different and maybe a lot stronger. But they were so happy when we made that first deal, because we did get a lot out.

You know, I had people right in this office—this beautiful Oval Office. They came in. Ten people—hostages. You know that. And I said to them, "So how was it?" And the stories they told me.

I mean, as an example, I said to them, "Was there any sign of love? You were there"—10 people. It's only 10, but it's pretty representative. "Did the Hamas show any signs of, like, help or liking you? Did they wink at you? Did they give you a piece of bread—extra? Did they give you a meal on the side, like, you know, you think of doing?" Like what happened in Germany, what happened elsewhere. People would try and help people that were in unbelievable distress. They said, "No."

I said, "All of them?" I said: "Did they ever wink at you, like 'You'll be okay. You're going to be okay'?" "No, they didn't do that. They'd slap us."

The hatred is unbelievable. And the lives—you know, they lived in a pipe. Not really a tunnel. It was a pipe. And they always thought they were suffocating—they were going to suffocate. And then they'd open up the pipe, and it was like three and a half feet high. This isn't—you know, we hear "tunnel"—is bad, but pipes are worse. And the stories I heard were incredible.

But I just said, "Was there any sign of potential love or affection?" And there were none whatsoever. It was amazing to me. There was nothing like: "Here, take this. It's a little extra meal," or something. They lived like hell.

I don't know, they seem to be—they were amazing to me, because they seemed to be pretty normal. They weren't scarred. But I guarantee, underneath, they have to be scarred. And one was there for 356 days. Another was there for about 180 days. You know, a long time. These are people that have been really, really horribly treated. I've never seen anything like it, actually. I was very surprised to hear the answer.

Please.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Trade Negotiations/European Union/Tariffs/China/Canada/Mexico

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Are there two or three countries that—on your list that you feel are farther along in getting their tariffs lowered——

President Trump. I think there are——

Q. And you've spoken with over the weekend?

President Trump. Well, I think there are many that want to get rid of tariffs right now. European Union. I mean, as badly as they've treated us, they've—you know, they brought their car tariffs essentially off. I guess they brought it down to 2½ and, I hear, maybe to nothing.

Q. But, sir, do you feel that——

President Trump. But it's not only tariffs. It's nonmonetary tariffs. It's tariffs where they put things on that make it impossible for you to sell a car. It's not a money thing. It's—they make it so difficult, the standards and the tests. They drop a bowling ball on the top of your car from 20 feet up in the air, and if there's a little dent—[laughter]—they say, "No, I'm sorry, your car doesn't qualify," when the same car from Germany or anything would dent likewise. Unless you can have an army tank, it's going to dent. [Laughter.]

So they come up with rules and regulations that are just designed for one reason: that you can't sell your product in those countries. And we're not going to let that happen. Those are called nonmonetary barriers. They make barriers that are so tough that it's impossible to qualify.

So——

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

So tariffs are a big part of it, but there's another big part of it, and that's barriers.

They also do something else. They manipulate their currency, and they drive it down. They want to drive it—they want to have low currencies. You know, it sounds better to have a high currency, a strong dollar or whatever, but they bring their currency down. And when it competes with our currency, it's very hard to sell a tractor. It's very hard to sell product, because their currency is low and ours is much higher, relatively. And so it makes it very hard.

I speak to a lot of companies that do business—tractor companies—and they say, "It's so hard to sell," because what they've done is, they've lowered the yen or they've lowered the yuan or they've lowered their currency so that it's very hard to compete. We don't want that either.

So we have a lot of things that we're talking about, but we're going to fix it properly, and it's going to be fair to everybody. And in the end, I think we're going to have a world that does a lot better, you know? But they have to respect the United States.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

And nobody but me would do this. Nobody but me would do this.

You know, it's—it would be nice to serve a nice, easy term, but we have an opportunity to change the fabric of our country. We have an opportunity to reset the table on trade.

We lose billions of dollars. We lose close to \$2 trillion a year on trade. We lose a trillion dollars a year to China—a trillion. We lose hundreds of billions of dollars a year on trade to China. We lose hundreds of billions of dollars overall, probably, 2—close to \$2 trillion. Why would we do that? Number one, why would we do that?

And then you have to say, "Is it sustainable?" Then you hear about all of the people that say, "Well, deficits." If we have a deficit with a country or if the country has a big surplus with us—like China has a massive surplus that they take and they spend on their military. Well, we don't want that. I don't want them to take \$500-, \$600 billion a year and spend it on their military. I don't want them spending money on their military.

And I shouldn't have to spend money. We shouldn't have to spend it either, because, you know, hopefully—and I said this to President Xi: "Hopefully, it's money that we're never going to use." In other words, because we're not going to use those incredible weapons that we have and that they have. We don't want that.

So it's going to be very interesting. It's the only chance our President—our country will have to reset the table, because no other President would be willing to do what I'm doing or to even go through it.

Now, I don't mind going through it, because I see a beautiful picture at the end.

But we are making tremendous progress with a lot of countries, and the countries that really took advantage of us are now saying, "Please negotiate." You know why? Because they're getting beaten badly because of what's happening. They're getting beaten badly. They're being devalued as countries.

But it's the only chance we're going to have to reset the table on trade. And when we do, we're going to come out unbelievably well. We're going to have a strong country economically again. And we're going to have those factories that are empty all over the United States.

We've lost 90,000 plants and factories. Think of this, 90,000—you wouldn't think it's possible: 90,000 plants and factories since NAFTA, which was, by the way, the worst trade deal ever, ever developed, ever had by any country, anywhere. NAFTA.

And I terminated NAFTA. Everybody said it would be impossible, and I terminated. Through Congress, we terminated it. You had to get it through Congress. It was a trap. It was a horrible thing, and we got it done. And we went to the USMCA, which was much better.

The problem is they cheat. They cheat like crazy. Canada cheats. Mexico cheats. Just one of those things.

But we are resetting a table, and we're going to have great trade. And we're going to have a very strong country. Our country is going to be at a level that it's—has maybe never been or maybe—

You know, our country was the strongest, believe it or not, from 1870 to 1913. You know why? It was all tariff based. We had no income tax. Then, in 1913, some genius came up with the idea of, "Let's charge the people of our country, not foreign countries that are ripping off our country." And the country was never—relatively, it was never that kind of wealth. We had so much wealth we didn't know what to do with our money.

We had meetings. We had committees, and these committees works tirelessly to study one subject: We have so much money. What are we going to do with it? Who are we going to give it to?

And I hope we're going to be in that position again.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Israel

Q. Mr. President, do you plan to reduce the tariffs that your Government put on Israeli goods, 17 percent?

President Trump. On where?

Q. On Israeli goods. The 17 percent. Do you plan to reduce it?

President Trump. Well, we're talking about a whole new trade. Maybe not. Maybe not.

Don't forget: We help Israel a lot. You know, we give Israel \$4 billion a year. That's a lot. My congratulations, by the way. *[Laughter]* That's pretty good.

But we give Israel billions of dollars a year. Billions. It's one of the highest of—and we give a lot of countries money.

You wouldn't believe it if I said we give Afghanistan a lot of money. Did you know that? Because that was a Biden deal. Another Biden deal. Not only did he embarrass us with that, but they give them billions of dollars, Afghanistan. Right?

So—but no, we take good care of our friends, and we don't take care of our enemies. We're not taking care of our enemies anymore, but we do take care of our friends.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Gaza, Palestinian Territories/Resettlement of Palestinian Refugees

Q. Lazar Berman for the Times of Israel. The IDF is fighting again in the Gaza Strip. I myself might be called up in a month. Do you think that's the way to pressure Hamas to get to a deal? And do you think blocking humanitarian aid is also an effective pressure tactic?

President Trump. Well, you know how I feel about the Gaza Strip. I think it's an incredible piece of important real estate, and I think it's something that we would be involved in. But you know, having a peace force like the United States there, controlling and owning the Gaza Strip, would be a good thing, because, right now, all it is—for years and years, all I hear about is killing and Hamas and problems.

And if you take the people, the Palestinians, and move them around to different countries—and you have plenty of countries that will do that—and you really have a freedom zone. You call it "the freedom zone." A free zone. A zone where people aren't going to be killed every day.

That's a hell of a place. It's a—you know what I call it? A great location that nobody wants to live in, because they really don't. And when they had good live—when they have good living, real living, where Hamas and all of the problems they have—the level of death on the Gaza Strip is just incredible.

And I've said it. I understand—I don't understand why Israel ever gave it up. Israel owned it. It wasn't this man, so I can say it. He wouldn't have given it up. I know him very well. There's no way. They took oceanfront property, and they gave it to people for peace. How did that work out? Not good.

Q. Is the immigration—sir, Mr. President, is the immigration plan still on the agenda?

President Trump. Which immigration?

Q. Gaza.

Q. From Gaza.

Prime Minister Netanyahu. Well, freedom——

Q. From Gaza.

President Trump. All it is, is a concept that I had that I think is good, and now people are copying it. You know?

Bibi, do you want to tell them? People are talking about the Trump plan, "Gee, why don't we do that?" Would you like to answer that question?

Prime Minister Netanyahu. I think what the President talked about is, first of all, to give people a choice. You know, Gaza—Gazans were closed in. In any other place, including in arenas of battle—I mean, whether it's Ukraine or Syria or any other place—people could leave. Gaza was the only place where they locked them in. We didn't lock them in. They were locked in.

And what is wrong with giving people a choice?

Now, we've been talking, including over lunch, about some countries—I won't go into them right now—that are saying, "You know, if Gazans want to leave, we want to take them in." And I think this is the right thing to do. If you give—you know, it's going to take years to rebuild Gaza. In the meantime, people can have an option.

The President has a vision. Countries are responding to that vision. We're working on it. I hope we'll have good news for you on it. [*Inaudible*]

[*Several reporters spoke at once.*]

President Trump. The people do—I will say, people love——

Q. What about Turkey?

President Trump. Excuse me. People really do love that vision. It's a long-term vision. But so importantly is to have that be a safe field, because you're right smack in the middle of the Middle East. You're right along Israel.

It should have never, ever been given away. It shouldn't have been given away by Israel. I don't know why they did it. I mean, I do know why, because they were promised peace, but that didn't work out too well, because it's one of the most dangerous pieces of land anywhere in the world. Gaza is one of the most dangerous places in the world. So they gave it away for a good intention, and it didn't work out that way.

And a lot of people liked my concept. But you know, there are other concepts that I like too. And there are some concepts I don't like. You know what I don't like? The way it is now, because right now it's a dangerous death trap—Gaza.

Yes.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Russia/Ukraine

Q. Could you talk a little bit about—thank you, sir. Can you talk a little bit about your meeting—potential meeting with Vladimir Putin? Do you still plan to meet with him? Could that happen in Saudi Arabia? And maybe you could elaborate as well a little bit on not providing tariffs on Russia, sir?

President Trump. So the reason we're not talking about tariffs with Russia is because we're not doing business, essentially, with Russia, because they're in a war. And I'm not happy about what's going on with the bombing, because they're bombing like crazy right now. They're bombing—I don't know what's happening there. That's not a good situation.

So we're meeting with Russia, we're meeting with Ukraine, and we're getting sort of close. But I'm not happy with all the bombing that's going on the last week or so. Horrible.

Q. Do you anticipate meeting in person?

President Trump. It's a horrible thing. It's a horrible thing.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Go ahead, please.

Tariffs/China-U.S. Trade

Q. Can countries negotiate to get below 10 percent?

President Trump. In terms of tariffs?

Q. In terms of the tariffs, yes.

President Trump. Look, we've been ripped off and taken advantage of for 40, 50, 60 years. And the reason we got ripped off and the way they did it was tariffs. They were charged tariffs—massive numbers of dollars.

And when you look at China—when I took over, it was at \$507 billion they were making. I call it "making." A lot of people say, "Oh, it doesn't mean anything, having a surplus." It means a lot, in my opinion. It's almost like a profit and loss statement.

And when I took over, it was \$507 billion that China was—this is originally, first term. And we were very, very tough on them, because they were taking that money, and they were building a military with it.

Then when Biden came in, he let them get away with murder. He had no idea. I'll tell you what, that man had no idea what was happening. Whether it was the border or China or anything else, he had no idea what was going on. And they got—they went wild. China went wild, and the money they make is ridiculous. Okay? It's just not going to happen.

And hopefully, we'll get along with China. If we do, that's great. And if we don't, that's okay too. But we can't let that continue, because that's an abuse—they abused the poor people that sat in this seat. That poor Biden, he was abused by them. They took advantage of him.

And I'm surprised. You know, they have smart people. They were radical-left lunatics, but they're smart. I'm surprised they'd allow that to take—you know, to happen.

But we are going to bring great trade, and we're going to be fair to other countries. And I will say this: Virtually every country wants to negotiate. If I didn't do what I did over the last couple of weeks, you wouldn't have anybody who wants to negotiate. We would have gone to these countries, "You want to talk?" And they, "Well—well, we don't want to talk."

Now they're coming to us. They're offering things.

Like even Bibi here—and this is unrelated, because it's a different kind of a relationship, but he started off our conversation today that he's cutting all of the tariffs. He's cutting everything. He's going to get down to a free base. He's going to do things that, in all fairness, other countries—if they said that—would have never even thought about doing it.

Now they're offering things to us that we would have never even thought of asking them for, because they're experiencing a lot of hurt. And the hurt is that they have taken advantage of us, and we finally fought back.

Tariffs will make this country very rich. We're rich anyway, but we're rich in a certain way. We have \$36 trillion in debt. I want to get rid of it, and we can do it quickly with proper deals.

So when countries don't allow us to sell our product, but we allow them to sell their product, when they charge us massive amounts of money for the privilege of going into their country, those days are over.

Okay.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Yes. Go ahead.

Q. Me?

President Trump. Sir.

Q. Me?

President Trump. Yes.

Q. Yes.

President Trump. He sounds so surprised.

Iran

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. On Iran, two questions, please. First, can you give us more details about where the meeting on Saturday is going to take place?

President Trump. I can't tell you that. I can just tell you there's a major meeting going on between us and Iran, and that will take place on Saturday, and it's at top level.

Q. And a second question about this. A lot of people think that those talks are not going to lead anywhere, because the Iranians——

President Trump. They may be right.

Q. ——will never give up their nuclear program.

President Trump. Sure. That's—I think that's a possibility too.

Q. If diplomacy fails, is the United States, under your leadership, ready to take military action to destroy the Iranian nuclear program and remove this threat?

President Trump. I think if the talks aren't successful with Iran, I think Iran is going to be in great danger. And I hate to say it, great danger, because they can't have a nuclear weapon.

Q. So is that a "yes"?

President Trump. You know, it's not a complicated formula. Iran cannot have a nuclear weapon. That's all there is. Can't have it.

Q. So is the U.S. ready——

President Trump. Right now we have countries——

Q. ——to take military action?

President Trump. ——that have nuclear power that shouldn't have it, but I'm sure we'll be able to negotiate out of that too, as part of this, later on down the line. But Iran cannot have a nuclear weapon. And if the talks aren't successful, I actually think it'll be a very bad day for Iran if that's the case.

Yes.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Q. Mr. President. On manufacturing, Mr. President.

President Trump. Yes, please. Go ahead.

Hamas Attacks of October 7, 2023, on Israel/Hostages Held in Gaza, Palestinian Territories

Q. Mr. President, was October 7 the death blow of a two-state solution? And would you consider classifying the Palestinian Authority as a terrorist organization for its continued "pay-for-slay" terror financing payments?

President Trump. So October 7 was a horrible day that some people, they deny it. Now, I can't believe they deny it from the standpoint of—they do it because they think it's good politically.

But October—I've seen the tapes. I've seen things that you don't want to see. October 7 was a horrible day, and it will go down as one of the really bad days in the history of the world. It was a horrible, horrible thing that happened.

And they grabbed some of these people. I'll give you an example. When I was with the 10 hostages a few weeks ago, I said, "So how many are there?" "Fifty-nine." I said: "Oh, so 59. So, we can get 59?" They sort of knew the territory pretty good. And I said, "How are they doing?" And she—they said: "Well, only 24 are living. The rest are dead."

And these are young people, largely. Young people don't die. You know, young people have an amazing ability to live. They can live through horrible things. But these are young people. And when they said that 24 are living, and the rest are dead.

And, you know, I've had parents come up—Israeli parents, largely—we have some Americans. And we had—I guess we have one left—Alex. We have the one left. But I've had Israeli parents come up to me at events and say, "My son is there." I said, "Well, how's he doing?" "Well, he's dead. But would you do me the biggest favor ever? Could you bring his body back home?"

They talked about a young dead boy and a young dead girl like they were living. And that could have something to do with religion. That could have something to do with—I guess, maybe any parent would be. But I was surprised. They said: "Sir, my son is dead. It is just as important to bring that body back home"—I asked that question—"as if he were alive."

So you have a lot of them dead, and we'll be able to bring them back. But it's a horrible thing that's happened. These are young—largely young people. Some old ones too, frankly. And those people have lived in hell. When they came off—the second group that came out, they looked like they just got out of a concentration camp. They looked exactly like the pictures that I'd see from the 1940s, the concentration camps.

And then they got a little bit better. You know, it's—but that second group, those people came out, and I said, "This is unbelievable." We're going back into a chapter in history that is one of the worst ever. It's really very bad.

Okay.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Manufacturing Investment/Electricity Capacity/Environmental Permitting

Q. Mr. President, thank you. You've said it could take 2 years to get American manufacturing fully up to speed in response to these tariffs. What happens in the meantime?

President Trump. Well, fully.

Q. Should Americans be prepared——

President Trump. Well—okay.

Q. ——potentially for years——

President Trump. Yes, I'll tell you what happens.

Q. ——of uncertainty and disruption?

President Trump. We have now \$7 trillion—think of this, \$7 trillion of commitments from companies wanting to go in, from Apple to many, many companies.

Q. But that takes time.

President Trump. Many from Taiwan. What?

Q. That takes time to fully manufacture——

President Trump. Of course it takes——

Q. ——product here in the U.S.

President Trump. Well, are you asking me a question, or are you telling me? Yes, it takes time. *[Laughter]*

You know, you've got to build a thing called a factory. You have to build your energy. You have to do a lot of things.

I'm giving them energy. You know, we're going to let them build their own power plants. They'll be their own—essentially, they're going to be in charge of the power plant because our power is not reliable enough. You have a grid that's old and susceptible to a lot of things, including bombing and weather and a lot of other things.

And we're going to give them record timing in terms of approvals of electric plants. Most of them want to build electric plants. We need massive amounts of electricity if we're going to compete with China and others.

And interestingly, we're way ahead right now in the AI race with China. But the way we lose that race is if we can't give them electric. But we have more plants being built. We have everything. We're doing so great, and we want to keep it that way. And tariffs will be an important part of it.

But one of the other things: Lee Zeldin is doing a fantastic job—head of Environmental Protection—and he's doing very rapid approvals for people to get—for big companies to—that are going to build a plant that's going to cost billions of dollars, and we're going to get them their approvals. They have to be environmentally perfect, everything good, but they're going to be in record time. A matter of months, versus a matter of many, many years. Okay?

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Go ahead.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey/Syria

Q. Yes. Liza Rozovsky from Haaretz. Turkey claims it will stabilize the situation in Syria.

President Trump. Turkey?

Q. Yes. Israel doesn't want Turkey to influence it, Syria.

President Trump. Yes.

Q. What do you think? Do you think Turkey's influence in Syria can actually make it a better, more peaceful country or vice versa?

President Trump. Well, I have great relations with a man named Erdoğan. Have you heard of him?

Q. Yes, I did.

President Trump. I happen to like him, and he likes me, and I know the press will get very angry, "He likes Erdoğan." But I do, and he likes me, and we've never had a problem. And we've gone through a lot, and we've never had a problem. We always gotten—we—as you remember, we got our minister back from Turkey. You remember that? And this was a big deal at the time.

Prime Minister Netanyahu. I remember.

President Trump. And we got him back. And I told the Prime Minister, I said, "Just—Bibi, if you have a problem with Turkey, I really think I'm going to be able to work it out." You know, I have a very, very good relationship with Turkey and with their leader.

Q. In what way though?

President Trump. And I think we'll be able to work it out.

So I hope that's not going to be a problem. I don't think it will be a problem.

Now, with that being said, I believe it was Turkey, and I said that to him. I said it. I said: "Congratulations. You've done what nobody has been able to do in 2,000 years. You've taken over Syria, with different names, but same thing." I said, "You've taken it over." He's taken it over through surrogates.

He goes: "No, no, no. No, no, no. It was not me." What—I said: "It was you. But that's okay. You don't have to say, 'Well, it sort of maybe was me. Okay.'" [*Laughter*]

But what he did, he's—look, he's a tough guy, and he's very smart, and he did something that nobody was able to do. You know, you've got to hand it to him.

Any problem that you have with Turkey, I think I can solve. I mean, as long as you're reasonable. You have to be reasonable. We have to be reasonable. [*Laughter*]

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

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:14 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba of Japan; Israeli soldier Edan Alexander of Tenafly, NJ, who was captured during the October 7, 2023, Hamas attacks on Israel; and Andrew C. Brunson, pastor, Dirilis (Resurrection) Church in Izmir, Turkey, who was detained by Turkish authorities on October 7, 2016, and returned to U.S. custody on October 12, 2018. Prime Minister Netanyahu referred to U.S. Special Envoy to the Middle East Steven C. Witkoff. A reporter referred to President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia. The transcript was released by the Office of Communications on April 8.

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

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Alexander, Edan; Biden, Joseph R., Jr.; Brunson, Andrew C.; Erdogan, Recep Tayyip; Hegseth, Peter B.; Ishiba, Shigeru; Netanyahu, Benjamin; Rollins, Brooke L.; Xi Jinping; Zeldin, Lee M.

Subjects: Afghanistan, U.S. assistance; Artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies; Border security; Canada, trade with U.S.; China, President; China, trade with U.S.; Coal-based energy production, expansion efforts; Egg prices; Electricity capacity, expansion efforts; Environmental Protection Agency; European Union, trade with U.S.; Federal deficit and debt; Free and fair trade; Gasoline costs; Gaza, conflict with Israel; Gaza, hostages held by Hamas; Gaza, humanitarian situation; Hamas political-paramilitary organization; Illegal immigration; Iran, diplomatic engagement with U.S.; Iran, nuclear weapons development; Iran, regional involvement; Israel, attacks by Hamas of October 7, 2023; Israel, military operations in Gaza; Israel, Prime Minister; Israel, relations with U.S.; Israel, trade with U.S.; Israel, U.S. assistance; Japan, Prime Minister; Japan, relations with U.S.; Japan, trade with U.S.; Manufacturing industry, domestic investment; Mexico, trade with U.S.; North Atlantic Treaty Organization; Oil and natural gas, domestic production; Red Sea attacks on commercial shipping; Russia, conflict in Ukraine; Secretary of Agriculture; Secretary of Defense; Tariffs; Turkey, President; Turkey, relations with U.S.; U.S. DOGE Service; U.S. military readiness, improvement efforts; Ukraine, Russian invasion and airstrikes; Undocumented immigrants, deportation of criminals; Yemen, Houthi rebel group; Yemen, U.S. airstrikes.

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