

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Lee Jae-myung of South Korea and an Exchange With Reporters

August 25, 2025

President Trump. Well, that's a big crowd. This is a very large crowd. You get more than most countries, I have to say. This is a very good crowd of the media.

It's an honor to be with President Lee of South Korea. We've known each other and gotten along very well.

We have some additional trade, because I hear they want to renegotiate the deal, but that's okay. I don't mind that. That doesn't mean they're going to get anything, but I don't mind.

But we're going to have some very serious discussions about different things, including trade, where we do a lot of trade with South Korea, as you know. We are thinking about contracting some ships. They build them very well in South Korea. They're also thinking about coming to our country with some shipyards to start us on the process of building ships again.

You know, in World War II, we'd build a ship a day. And today, we don't build ships anymore, which is ridiculous. We're going to start that again.

But we were the—we were like you. We were building ships all the time for everybody, and presidents and people allowed that to slip by. And now we buy ships, but we're going to be buying ships from South Korea. But we're also going to have them make ships here with our people, using our people, and we're going to go back into the shipbuilding business again. Because really, essentially, we don't build ships anymore, which is ridiculous how that ever happened.

But we were the best at it. And you can take a look at World War II, in particular, where we were doing virtually a ship a day. And it's hard to believe. These were tankers and different kinds of ships, but we were very active. And you see a lot of those shipyards sitting there idle, but they're not so idle anymore. And you're going to come in also, and you're going to be doing a lot of ships in this country, so I look forward to that.

But we have a lot of other trade things. Their a big purchaser of our military equipment. We make the best military equipment in the world, and you saw that recently with—if you take a look at what we did with the B-2 bomber, which you have one right there. They gave that to me. I guess the company gave that to me.

The B-2 bomber was so successful in what took place in the little excursion that we made—36 hours, and it wiped out the—nobody's ever seen anything like it. Thirty-six hours back and forth. Not a thing went wrong, not a screw was missing, not a bolt was missing, not a plane had not even a little bit of a problem.

And we actually had 52 tankers. We had many planes, but, you know, you looked at the B-2, the way they handled that—every single bomb hit its target. So they understand that we make the best military equipment in the world. And South Korea is a big buyer of military equipment, and we're going to talk about that also.

And we have many things to talk about, and I look forward to it. And it's a great honor to be with you.

And congratulations on your election. That was a big one. And we're with you a hundred percent.

Thank you.

President Lee. Mr. President, let me begin by thanking you on behalf of the Korean people. I would like to thank you for giving your time for today's meeting.

And I heard that you recently redecorated the Oval Office. And I would like to say that it looks very bright and beautiful, and it has the dignity of America, and it symbolizes the new future and prosperity of America.

I believe that making America great again is your goal, and I believe that that is what is currently taking place in America. And I think the most symbolic thing of that is the Dow Jones index, which reached a record high recently, although, it went down a bit. But it reached a record high. And so I think that America is becoming great again.

So I believe that there is a renaissance taking place, not only in the shipbuilding sector but also in the manufacturing industry, and I hope that Korea can be a part of that renaissance.

And one thing that I would like—that I wanted to say to you is that America's role, not as a keeper of peace, but a maker of peace, is being more—is emerging more evidently.

President Trump. Yes.

President Lee. Many wars in Europe, in Asia, in Africa, and in the Middle East are coming to peace because of the role that you are playing.

So, among the many world leaders, I don't—I believe that you are the only leader who has made such accomplishments.

And I would like to mention that there—the only remaining divided country—divided nation in the world is the Korean Peninsula, and I would like to ask for your role in establishing peace on the Korean Peninsula.

So I look forward to your meeting with Kim Jong—Chairman Kim Jong Un, and construction of a Trump Tower in North Korea and playing golf at that place. I believe he will be waiting for you. [*Laughter*]

Korea was able to attain economic growth and development through our ironclad alliance. And going forward, I hope to develop our alliance into a future-oriented alliance that encompasses areas not only limited to security but also the economy and science and technology.

The Korean people have great expectations for you, Mr. President.

Thank you, once again, for your time.

President Trump. Well, thank you very much. It's an honor to be with you.

I will say that Kim Jong Un and I had a very good relationship, as you remember, and still do. And when I came in, I didn't know him. We had two summits, but we became very friendly. Respect—it was great respect. And it was not going to be that way. Had Hillary Clinton won the election, it would have been a disaster.

But we think we can do something in that regard, with respect to North and South, and I think you are much more prone to doing that than other leaders that I've been working with from South Korea. And we'll work on that. I think it's very good to work on that.

If you remember, you were doing the Olympics, and there was a great time of hostility with North Korea, and you weren't selling tickets because nobody wanted to be blown up in the stadium during the opening ceremonies, right? And you were not selling tickets. And I was also at my formative stage with North Korea and Kim Jong Un, and we were a little bit going at it about "Rocket Man"—"Little Rocket Man," every—back and forth. [*Laughter*] And it was really nasty.

And then I got a call one day, and they wanted to get together. They wanted to talk, and we started talking. And then he said—really brilliantly, he said, "You know, the Olympics is going to be opening very soon, and we'd like to be a part of it." They actually put teams in it. You got along great.

And by the way, immediately upon that phone call, you started selling tickets, and it turned out to be a tremendous success. So it went from being empty stadiums because people were afraid to go because it was a target, potentially, to a great success. And I was very proud of that.

You had one of the most successful Olympics, and now we have the Olympics coming to the U.S., so we're very happy about that. But that was a great honor to get involved and make the Olympics so successful.

[At this point, an interpreter began translating President Trump's remarks into Korean.]

Interpreter. "Rocket Man." *[Laughter]*

President Trump. Very good.

[The interpreter resumed translating President Trump's remarks into Korean.]

President Lee. Mr. President, you mentioned about Chairman Kim, and thanks to your efforts when you were in office during your first term, the situation on the Korean Peninsula was stable. But during the short—the hiatus where you were out of office, North Korea developed further its nuclear and missile capabilities, and that led to a deterioration on the situation of the Korean Peninsula.

President Trump. And they wouldn't have done that. They would not have done that if I were President. That was not going to happen.

President Lee. I completely agree with you.

So, when Kim Yo Jong, the Deputy Director of the Workers' Party of Korea, issued a statement denouncing Korea—South Korea, she mentioned about the good relations—the not bad relationship between you and Chairman Kim Jong Un, and I believe that this is a sign that North Korea is waiting.

So I hope that you will usher in a new era of peace on the Korean Peninsula.

President Trump. I will do that. And we'll have talks. He'd like to meet with me. He didn't want to meet with Biden, because he had no respect for Biden, but we look forward to meeting with him, and we'll make relations better. You'll help that.

You had a lot of leaders. I've gone through a lot of leaders in South Korea. You know, it's been quick. You'll be there for a long time. But we—in the various leaders that I've dealt with, they were not approaching it properly, in my opinion, having to do with North Korea. But I think your approach is a much better one.

President Lee. So resolving this issue through my engagement is not an easy thing, and the only person that can make progress on this issue is you, Mr. President.

So, if you become the peacemaker, then I will assist you by being a peacemaker. *[Laughter]*

President Trump. That's good. We can do big progress, I think, with North Korea. Absolutely.

Okay. Thank you very much. Thank you very much. Good. Good job.

Okay. Questions, please?

President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia/State Affairs Commission President Kim Jong Un of North Korea/Ukraine/U.S. Security Assistance/North Atlantic Treaty Organization/President Trump's Foreign Policy

Q. Mr. President, when you met with Russian President Vladimir Putin, how soon did he say that he wanted to sit down with Ukrainian President Zelenskyy? Russia, as of now, says there's no meeting on the books and no agenda is set.

President Trump. Well, that's going to be up to them. It takes two to tango. I always say it. And they should meet, I think, before I have a meeting and probably close the deal. But I think it's appropriate they meet. They do not exactly get along well, as you can understand, and I'm sure it's a meeting that perhaps he didn't like, but he wasn't happy about coming to the United States either. That was a big concession, and I appreciate the fact that he did.

You know, I'm—I've always had a very good relationship, despite a fake "Russia, Russia, Russia" haunt that we had, but we've always had a great relationship, very good relationship, strong relationship with Russia. That's a good thing, not a bad thing, by the way. That's a very good thing.

And it's good to get along with Kim Jong Un, and it's good to get along with everybody, including President Lee. It's good to get along, and I get along with the foreign leaders. You see that with the biggest group of foreign leaders that we've ever had. Don't forget, the European Union was here also, representing a large group of countries just recently.

So I believe that we're going to get that war straightened out. We're going to get it done. I don't know that they'll meet. Maybe they will. Maybe they won't. They'd like me to be at the meeting. I said: "You ought—you guys ought to work it out. It's between you. It's not us."

Now, in the meantime, we're not spending any money on—as you know, on Ukraine. But we're selling military equipment to NATO. NATO now is taking in——

[President Trump cleared his throat.]

Excuse me. NATO now is taking in a large amount of money from the countries. They're taking in 5 percent of GDP, versus 2 percent. They're paying the 5 percent. They never paid the 2 percent, most of them—or a lot of them. NATO has a lot of money.

We are selling military equipment to NATO at full price, and NATO is distributing that equipment to wherever they are. I mean, perhaps to Ukraine. So NATO is working with Ukraine.

Biden was giving hundreds of billions of dollars just willy-nilly, just giving money. He had no idea where it was going. It was terrible, what was happening.

So we're not involved anymore in terms of the cost. We're in for \$350 billion. As you know, I also got the rare earth deal done with Ukraine, which was worth much more than the \$350 billion, but I'm not interested in the money so much. Even though we've done a great job in that regard, I'm not interested in that.

I'm interested in stopping a war where, last week, 7,109 soldiers died, both Russian and Ukraine. It's such a waste of life and humanity. They're not from this country. They're not from any other country other than Ukraine—for the most part, other than Ukraine and Russia. But it's a very important thing to me to stop it.

I stopped seven wars—wars that were raging: one for 31 years, the Congo and, as you know, Rwanda; one for 35 years. I don't have to go into them. You know the list better than I do. But we stopped a lot of wars, including, you think about it, India and Pakistan, which was probably 2 weeks away from being a nuclear war. They were shooting down airplanes all over the place.

So I was very—I'm very proud of that.

I thought this would be, in many ways, the easiest one—I have a very good relationship with Putin. I thought it would be the easiest one to stop, and it's really not. It's very complex. It's very personal from their standpoint. There's tremendous dislike personally between the two men, and we're going to have to straighten that out.

But I would like to see them meet first. They'd like me to be there. I may be there. I may not. I'll see. But I wanted them to work out their differences first, because it is ultimately between them. And when that happens, I think we'll get an end.

[Several reporters began asking questions at once.]

Ukraine/Russia

Q. You said: "Maybe they meet. Maybe they don't." How long are you willing to let this play out? And if they don't meet, will there be consequences, and how soon, for Russia?

President Trump. Yes, there could be very big consequences, but we'll see what happens. There might be very big consequences, because this is something that has to end.

This war would have never taken place—and for 4 years, it didn't take place. But if I were president, this war would have never taken place.

There has not been a war like this since the Second World War. This is the biggest thing that's happened in terms of warfare—wars. It's a whole new form of fighting. It's a drone fighting. It's a drone war. No—a drone war never existed before.

And we're actually studying it, from the standpoint of—Pete Hegseth and everybody, we're studying it and studying it very carefully. This is a whole new form of war, but it's a violent war, and there has been nothing like this since the Second World War.

So we'll see what happens over the next week or two, and at that point, I'll step in very strongly. And if I have to be there, I'll be there, and we'll either have a deal or we won't.

But a lot of people are dying, and I want to get it stopped.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

State Affairs Commission President Kim Jong Un of North Korea

Q. You said the North Korean leader, Kim Jong Un, wants to meet. When do you want to meet with him?

President Trump. With who?

Q. You said the North Korean leader wants to meet. How soon would you——

President Trump. Yes, we want to have a meeting. I'd like to have a meeting. I got along great with him. And you know, you were there.

We even had a press conference. He had his first press conference. Kim Jong Un had a press conference. This was a little different press conference. *[Laughter]* I said, "Have you done a press conference before?" "No." And you know what? He did great. He was—it was a great press conference, actually. It was historic. I doubt he's done one since.

But I said, "Would you like to meet the fake news?" He goes, "Whatever you want to do." And they came in, and they came in like—you've never seen anything like it. And then he said, "Enough." And that was the end of the press conference. *[Laughter]* That was the end. It ended very rapidly.

But he—I think he had a good time. I look forward to meeting with Kim Jong Un in the appropriate future.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

South Korea–U.S. Defense Relationship

Q. Will you reduce the number of forces in South Korea? Will you reduce the number of forces in South Korea so that the United States can have more flexibility in the region?

President Trump. Say it.

Q. Would you consider reducing the number of U.S. forces in South Korea so that the United States can have more flexibility in the region?

President Trump. Well, I don't want to say that now, because we've been friends, and we're friends. And look, we have a lot of people over there. We have over 40,000 troops in South Korea.

As you know, South Korea agreed to pay for that during my last term, and then when Biden came in. They complained to Biden that I wasn't a nice person, and he agreed not to pay. He gave up billions of dollars.

We were getting paid billions of dollars, but then Biden ended that, for whatever reason. It's unbelievable that he did.

But we have a very good relationship militarily. They would say, "But we gave you land." I said: "No, you didn't. You lease us land." There's a big difference between giving and leasing.

And maybe one of the things I'd like to do is ask them to give us ownership of the land where we have the big fort. You know, we spent a lot of money building a fort, and there was a contribution made by South Korea. But I would like to see if we could get rid of the lease and get ownership of the land where we have a massive military base.

Okay.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

South Korea–U.S. Relations/Nuclear Disarmament Efforts

Q. How are you—thank you, Mr. President. How are you planning to make—I also want to ask this question to Mr.—President Lee.

President Trump. Who—who are you with?

Q. I'm Song Yoo-jin. I am from South Korea's Arirang TV.

President Trump. Good.

Q. Thank you so much.

President Trump. Good.

Q. So, as mentioned earlier, United States is South Korea's most important and closest ally. So, in this point of view, I would like to ask you and also President Lee: What do you think are the key ways to make the South Korea–U.S. alliance greater?

President Trump. Well, I think it's great now. I mean, I'm—I feel very warmly toward South Korea. I will tell you that I have a lot of people in business that I deal with that are from South Korea. They love Trump, because they feel I've saved—I think you would have had a nuclear war if I weren't—I think you would have had a nuclear war—North Korea and South Korea. I think it would have been a disaster.

You're only 60 miles away from Seoul. They don't even need nuclear. They have their cannons, you know, howitzers, and they have them buried in the mountain. You know what I'm talking about.

And I think you would have had—if I didn't win that election, if Hillary Clinton—Crooked Hillary—won that election, I think you would have had a nuclear war. It would have taken place, and it would have been horrendous for everybody, including them.

It would have been very bad for them, because we would have had to enter the picture. And we are the most powerful nuclear country in the world by far. Russia is second. China is third. China is going to catch, eventually—5 or 6 years. They're working to catch.

One of the things we're trying to do with Russia and with China is denuclearization, and we're—it's very important. One of the things I discussed with President Putin the other day—it wasn't just that. It was also other things. And I think the denuclearization is a very—it's a big aim. But Russia is willing to do it, and I think China is going to be willing to do it too.

We can't let nuclear weapons proliferate. We have to stop nuclear weapons. The power is too great.

Okay? Thank you.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

South Korea–U.S. Trade and Investment/Domestic Energy Production/Wind Energy

Q. Mr. President, I'd like to ask you further question about South Korea and U.S. alliance. I'm Anna [Anna Jiwon Park] from the Korea Times.

President Trump. Good.

Q. And I'd like to ask you about the trade deal that's on the table.

President Trump. Yes.

Q. You mentioned about the shipbuilding industry, and President Lee mentioned about the manufacturing industry. And what other areas or sectors that you intend to focus on this trade deal, because Korea is bringing in many investments and——

President Trump. Yes.

Q. ——create jobs also. I'd like to know the opinions of both how to get a beneficial outcomes for both countries through this deal.

President Trump. Well, we're going to get along great, because we—you know, we really sort of need each other. We love what they do. We love their product. We love their ships. We love a lot of the things that they make, and they love what we have.

We're dealing with them on Alaska having to do with the oil. They need—you need oil, and we have it. So we have a big advantage in that way. We have a big—we have more oil and gas and coal and energy than any other country in the world by far.

No—for whatever reason, God was very good to us. He gave us the greatest—we didn't use it. We started to use wind. Wind doesn't work. They started to use solar panels that took over the land all over the Midwest, where the farmers said, "What happened to my land?" They'd have a 10-mile-by-10-mile solar field that they couldn't farm. The most valuable land—farming land in the world, probably the most vibrant in the world, and they put solar plants all over the place. It's ridiculous. A big, massive, black fields of solar. That all comes out of China—all plastic, all comes out of China.

But we have the greatest amount of energy in the world, and we're dealing with South Korea, as you know, in Alaska. And we're going to be making a deal, a joint venture, with South Korea. Japan is involved—also very strongly involved. So we have Japan and South Korea.

And we're actually the closest. You know, it seems like quite far away. Alaska and Korea—but actually, it's right up the little ocean—right up the little Pacific Ocean. It's actually pretty close, relatively speaking.

But we have more oil and gas and coal than any other nation in the world, by far, and we're going to use it. And that's the thing that South Korea, I think, most wants from us, I would think.

President Trump's Previous Meetings With State Affairs Commission President Kim Jong Un of North Korea/China-U.S. Relations/Tariffs

Q. Mr. President, would you go back to the DMZ to meet with the North Korean leader?

President Trump. Say it.

Q. Would you go back to the DMZ to meet with the North Korean leader?

President Trump. I loved it. Remember when I walked across the line, and everyone went crazy, especially Secret Service. I would say they were going crazy. *[Laughter]*

And I looked into those windows—you know, the windows, the glass, that you could only see if you look direct, because there's all sorts of stuff—but I looked in, and I saw more rifles pointing at me than you could—*[laughter]*—there were a lot of rifles in that building. The Secret Service was not happy.

You know the buildings I'm talking about? The two blue buildings on each side. And I walked up the middle, and I looked in the window, and I saw more guns in that room that I've ever seen in my life. *[Laughter]* I looked in the other side, and it was the same thing. And yet I felt safe.

I felt safe because I have a great relationship with Kim Jong Un.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

I hope it stays that way. I think it will. I have a very good relationship. I understand him. I spent a lot of free time with him, talking about things that we probably aren't supposed to talk about. And you know, I just—I get along with him really well.

I think he has a country of great potential—tremendous potential.

Q. Is it possible you would meet him this year or maybe next year?

President Trump. Well, I'm meeting a lot of people. I mean, it's hard to say that, but I'd like to meet him this year.

President Xi would like me to come to China. It's a very important relationship. As you know, we're taking a lot of money in from China because of the tariffs and the different things, and it's a very important relationship. We're going to get along good with China.

I hear so many stories about "We're not going to allow their students" or—no, we're going to allow their students to come in. We're going to allow it. It's very important. Six hundred thousand students. It's very important. But we're going to get along with China.

But it's a different relationship that we have now with China. It's a much better relationship economically than it was before.

With Biden, boy, what he allowed that—I mean, they just took him to the cleaners. You know the expression? They took him to the cleaners. I'm sure they have an equal expression in

South Korea, but they took that guy out for a ride like nobody's ever been ridden before.
[Laughter] Terrible.

But we have a very strong relationship. Howard, I would say you—economically with China now getting much better.

They have to give us magnets. If they don't give us magnets, then we have to charge them 200-percent tariff or something, you know? But we're not going to have a problem, I don't think, with that. We've—I think that's perhaps behind us.

You know, China, intelligently, went, and they sort of took a monopoly of the world's magnets, and nobody needed magnets until they convinced everybody 20 years ago, "Let's all do magnets." There were many other ways that the world could have gone. But—so, for—it will take us probably a year to have them. We're heavy into the world of magnets now, only from a national security standpoint.

But we have a powerful thing. It's airplane parts. They have many Boeing jets. You know, they had 200 jets that didn't fly. And I've sent them all—based on the—his word, I sent them all of the parts so their planes can fly. I could have held them back. I didn't do that, because of the relationship I have. And they're flying—their planes are now flying.

You know, we had—200 of their planes were unable to fly because we were not giving them Boeing parts, purposely, because they weren't giving us magnets, therefore, we weren't giving them.

But we have a much more powerful thing. That's tariffs. If we want to put 100-percent, 200-percent tariffs on, we wouldn't do any business with China. And you know, that would be okay too, if we had to.

But the magnet situation—we have tremendous power over them, and they have some power over us with magnets. We're going to have a lot of magnets in a pretty short period of time. In fact, we'll have so many we won't know what to do with them.

But you know the story. It's a very interesting history with magnets. And really, it's because presidents, not being businesspeople, they allowed that to happen, and they shouldn't have. But we have much more. I mean, look, in terms of playing the cards, we have much bigger and better cards than they do.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

But with that being said, I think we're—we have a great relationship. I spoke to President Xi fairly recently, and at some point, probably during this year or shortly thereafter, we'll go to China. And I think we're going to see a magnificent sight. It's a great country.

Q. Mr. President, on the National Guard——

China-U.S. Relations

Q. Both you and President Lee, actually, are planning to go to China. You mentioned either this year or next year. Could you please share more details about your plans going to China?

And also, President Lee, I think you—[inaudible]——

President Trump. Well, we'll—maybe we'll go together.

Do you want to go together? We can share a plane. We'll save energy. We'll save—
[laughter]—we'll save a little—you know, the ozone—the ozone layer.

Remember President Obama used to talk about the ozone layer, and then he'd fly to Hawaii to play a round of golf, in a 747? [Laughter]

Q. Mr. President, on the National——

Q. Would you accept the invitation, Mr. Lee?

President Trump. Well, it was sort of meant jokingly, but if you want, you can come.
[*Laughter*]

President Lee. I would like to go with—together with President Trump.

President Trump. Do I accept? Does he accept? [*Laughter*—if you want to go, I'm going to get special permission. I'm sure you can go.

But we're going to have a great relationship with China. I mean, it's happening. You see it. It's happening.

They have some cards. We have incredible cards, but I don't want to play those cards. That would—if I played those cards, that would destroy China. I'm not going to play those cards.

Deployment of National Guard Troops to U.S. Cities/Cashless Bail

Q. Mr. President, on the National Guard, you've talked a lot about Democratic-run cities and states.

President Trump. Yes.

Q. Would you also consider sending the National Guard into red States and red cities that are also seeing high crime?

President Trump. Sure, but there aren't that many of them. If you look at the top 25 cities that—for crime, just about every one of those cities is run by Democrats. And you know, one of the bad things they did: cashless bail. If you look back on time when they allowed a murderer out that afternoon—you know, he'd kill somebody, and then a couple of hours later, he's walking the streets again, oftentimes killing again, rapidly.

Cashless bail is a disaster. You saw we had a news conference today on that. We're wiping it out in DC—immediately wiping it out. It started in New York, I must tell you, and it's been a horrible thing for crime, especially violent crime. So we're going to end cashless bail, yes.

Thank you.

[*Several reporters spoke at once.*]

District of Columbia Law Enforcement/Illegal Immigration/Border Security/Proposed Renaming of the Department of Defense

Q. When will you deploy to Chicago? And how long are you keeping troops here in Washington, DC?

President Trump. Well, you heard my little discussion. I really want to be appreciated. You know, when we go into a city and wipe out the crime—so DC—it sounds so horrible. I'm embarrassed to say it in front of you, because they don't have anything like this.

Washington DC, sir, has not had a murder in 11 days. Now, he's saying, "That's a horrible thing to hear," because they don't have murders for—ever.

But Washington, DC, if you go back and check, it's been many years since we went a week without having a murder. Now we haven't had—and I would say that Washington, DC, right now, is much safer than Seoul. You know why? Because we have a friendly neighbor—we have more friendly neighbors. [*Laughter*] You have a different kind of problem. We all have different problems.

But Washington, DC, is a very safe city right now. People are going out to dinner. Restaurants are opening. Restaurants that were going to close are now going to stay open. Friends of mine are going out to dinner all the time. They didn't go out to dinner for four years. It went rampant during the Biden years. Biden—just rampant.

That's why it—Susie is very close to the mayor and has a lot of respect for her, but I view it maybe a little differently, because the Mayor would say that it's gotten better. "For 30 years, it's gotten better." No, it's gotten worse. And the worst day of all was when we just got to office for the second time, and it's in very bad shape. So the Mayor shouldn't be saying that violent crime has been getting better. It's been getting much worse.

And the day I took office, it was the worst, and we did some minor things, made it a little bit better. But then we said, "Look, we've got to stop it, because too many people are getting killed." And we have not had a murder in 11 days. It sounds crazy. I hate to say this in front of this gentleman who I respect, because they don't have murders for years—[laughter]—but we have not had a murder in 11 days. And that's going to go on for a long time.

And there will be—I guess it will happen a little bit, but we have a very safe city. This is one of the safer cities right now in the country, and in a short period of time, it will be like the border. Nobody came in through our border for the last 90 days. Three months, we had zero illegal aliens from the Congo, from South America, from all over the world, from prisons coming in, pouring into our country—nobody, not one person.

And this is done by a liberal group, a liberal think tank. They do the work.

Not one person has come into our country. Think of that. It's been amazing. And I didn't have to go back to Congress and ask—Biden could have done this by himself. I did. I said, "Close the borders." We had the great Tom Homan. We had Kristi, as you know—Kristi Noem—who did a fantastic job. She's doing a fantastic job. Pete Hegseth has been incredible with the—as I call it, the "Department of War."

You know, we call it the "Department of Defense," but I—between us, I think we're going to change the name. You want to know the truth? I think we're going to have some information on that maybe soon. But I think because, you know, Department of Defense—we won the World War I, World War II. It was called the "Department of War." And to me, that's really what it is. It's—defense is a part of that, but I have a feeling we're going to be changing. I'm going to—I'm talking to the people. Everybody likes that.

We had an unbelievable history of victory when it was Department of War. Then we changed it to Department of Defense.

So that's a little thing—has nothing to do with your country, but it's something that I think you're going to be hearing about or seeing about over the next couple of weeks. Probably, that change is going to be made over the next week or so.

Korean Peninsula/President Xi Jinping of China

Q. Are there——

Q. Mr. President——

Q. —two Koreas, North and South? Or is there one Korea waiting to be unified?

President Trump. Well, I know it as two Koreas. I mean, I just—you know, there was one Korea. It was a very large country and a very powerful country, and it was a country that went to war with China—President Xi explained it—went to war with China many times over the last 2,000 years. You had many—I think he told me, 51 times.

So, I remember, I went to President Xi. I said, "You know, we're having a problem with North Korea. Straighten it out, would you, please?" He said, "Well, we have been to war with them"—and he—I think he said 51 times. But at that time, it was the whole of Korea. It wasn't, you know, North and South. And after he explained that, I said: "All right. Not going to be that easy. I guess you're right." *[Laughter]*

But you know, you had one Korea, and it was a very big, powerful nation. Now you have two big, powerful nations, but you have a—essentially a wall in between.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Religious Freedom in South Korea

Q. Mr. President, can you elaborate—comments—the post and comments you made on South Korea earlier this morning, like raids on churches, going into U.S. military base, a "purge," a "revolution." How do you think about it?

President Trump. Well, I just——

[A reporter spoke in Korean; no translation was provided.]

President Trump. Right. I heard from intel—I heard from intel that there was a raid on churches. We're going to talk about that later. I haven't spoken about it yet, but when we meet—and you know, that would be too bad if that's the case, but I did hear that from intel, that there was a raid on churches, closing some churches. So we'll talk about that later.

I could ask you now, if you want.

Q. Mr. President, what conversations——

President Trump. Wait a minute.

Q. Excuse me.

Q. Please.

President Trump. If you'd like. Because it didn't sound to me like South Korea.

[President Lee spoke in Korean. President Trump then addressed the interpreter as follows.]

President Trump. Go ahead.

President Lee. So it hasn't been long since Korea is—has overcome the political turmoil following the self-coup by the former President. Currently, there is a fact-finding investigation by a Special Prosecutor that was appointed by the National Assembly. And this Special Prosecutor——

President Trump. Is his named "Deranged Jack Smith," by any chance? *[Laughter]* They—they took him from our country, they put—Deranged Jack—he's a deranged, sick individual.

Go ahead. Go ahead, please.

I'm only kidding. *[Laughter]* But maybe I'm not. Maybe I'm not.

President Lee. And that Special Prosecutor is not under my control, and so the Special Prosecutor is conducting a fact-finding investigation. And I would like to explain about the—what you said about U.S. bases.

President Trump. Yes.

President Lee. They did not conduct a search and seizure of American bases, but they looked into the control—the chain of command and the control system of the Korean military.

President Trump. Right.

President Lee. And I would be happy to——

President Trump. That's okay.

President Lee. ——explain about this more in detail——

President Trump. We'll work on it. I'm sure it's——

President Lee. ——during our lunch meeting.

President Trump. I am sure it's a misunderstanding, but you know, there is a rumor going around about churches—raiding churches. So we'll talk. I'm sure that's going to be worked out fine.

Okay? Yes, please. Go ahead.

Gaza, Palestinian Territories/Hostages Held in Gaza, Palestinian Territories

Q. Mr. President, what conversations have you had with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu about what is going on in Gaza? There was a U.N.-backed report that said there was a famine in Gaza. Based on what you know and what you've been briefed on, do you agree with that?

President Trump. So, I mean, I deal with Bibi Netanyahu quite a bit.

And we had great success, obviously, in Iran. We knocked out their nuclear threat. That would have been a horror show, having them have a nuclear weapon. They would have used it too. We did very well there.

Right now they're talking about Gaza City. There's always talking about something. At some point, it's going to get settled, and I'm saying: "You'd better get it settled soon. You have to get it settled soon." And that means, you know—nobody can forget October 7. People forget October 7. That was one of the most bru- —I've seen some terrible things, some brutal things. That was about as bad as it gets. And nobody can forget that.

With that being said, it's got to get over with. It's got to get over with, because between the hunger and all of the other problem—worse than hunger—death—pure death, people being killed.

And you know, I'm the one that brought back the hostages, and I did it with that gentleman right there, Steve Witkoff, and with Marco. All of us, the whole team—we worked together, even the trade people worked on it with us. And we brought back a lot of the hostages. Now we're left with, would you say 20, Steve, or would you say it's less than 20?

U.S. Special Envoy to the Middle East Steven C. Witkoff. I hope it's 20.

President Trump. And he hopes it's 20, because some could be dead. That's what he means, I assume.

Special Envoy Witkoff. Yes.

President Trump. So we have 20, but there's rumors that some could be dead. It's a terrible situation over there. Terrible, terrible situation. But it's coming to a head. It's coming to an end. We are sending—you know, we sent \$60 million of food over there just recently. And I don't even know if people know it. We distributed it ourselves.

We're giving a lot of food, spending a lot of money on food, getting it over there. We have a lot of food. We have a lot of oil, and we have a lot of—we have the greatest farmers in the world, so we have a lot of food. But we're sending a lot of it over to Gaza, and we're feeding a lot of

people. But, with all of that being said, it's a lot of people to feed. And I think that we will have—I think within the next two to three weeks, you're going to have pretty good, conclusive—a conclusive ending.

I think—it's a hard thing to say, because they've been fighting for thousands of years, if you want to know. That's a—that's been a hotbed forever. But I think we're doing a very good job. But it does have to—it does have to end. But people can't forget October 7 either.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)/President Trump's Schedule

Q. Do you have any—do you plan to attend APEC summit to be held in Korea?

President Trump. The summit in South Korea?

Q. Yes, South Korea.

President Trump. Yes, I would love to.

Q. In November.

President Trump. I'd love to. Last time, I spoke in front of your Parliament, and I loved doing that. Beautiful—beautiful respect they had for our country and a beautiful room. I remember how beautiful it was, and I enjoyed doing it.

No, I could—I could see going. I think I'm going for a trade meeting to South Korea pretty soon. You're hosting a trade meeting, so I can sneak away from that trade meeting, and we'll go and do something for the President, if he'd like me to do that. Okay?

Q. If you—

President Trump. But, so, we'll be going there fairly soon.

You know about that?

[President Lee gave a thumbs-up.]

North Korea/South Korea

Q. If you attend, then it's good chance to Kim—meet up Kim Jong Un again or maybe Xi Jinping? And how about—how do you think that will be?

President Trump. You mean set them up together?

Q. Yes.

President Trump. That'd be interesting.

We'll arrange a meeting between you and Kim Jong Un. Would you like that? *[Laughter]* That's a very tough question, right now. I don't know where that question is leading.

Anyway, look, I get along great with Kim Jong Un. And if—and whatever I can do, having to do with South Korea and getting people together, it should—you should get together, right?

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Yes, ma'am. *[Laughter]*

Q. Yes.

President Trump. Look at that beautiful smile. *[Laughter]* Until she asks the question, and then she'll turn out to be the worst one in the room.

U.S. Shipbuilding Industry

Q. Yes. I want to ask about MASGA project. MASGA. MASGA—MASGA project.

Q. Make America——

Q. Make American Shipbuilding Great Again.

Q. ——Great Again project.

President Trump. Yes. Oh, yes, sure. We're going to do that. I think we're going to do that very strongly. We're going to have a big—within a period of—you know, it takes a while. That's a hard one to start. Some companies you can start easily. Shipbuilding is a tough one to start. But we'll be doing that.

Now, with that being said, we make the best submarines anywhere in the world. We make submarines. We're 25 years ahead of anybody else in submarines. So we do that—you know, we do that.

But we really gave up the shipbuilding industry, foolishly, many years ago. But we're going to start it up again. We're going to be making our own ships again soon.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Okay, how about one or two more?

Former National Security Adviser John R. Bolton

Q. Mr. President, have you been briefed on the search on John Bolton's home and office from Friday? Have you been briefed on that?

President Trump. I have not been briefed. No, I read it just like you did.

I was never a fan of his. I thought he was stupid. I thought he was, you know, a guy that only wanted to go into war. He liked killing people. I thought he was, essentially, a bad guy, but I'm not involved in that. No, that—you'd have to ask Pam Bondi about that.

Federal Bureau of Investigation Activities/Mar-a-Lago Club in Palm Beach, Florida

Q. Are more raids coming, sir? Are more raids like that coming, sir? Are more raids like the one on John Bolton's house coming?

President Trump. More raids? I don't know. You'd have to ask the Department of Justice.

They raided my house, I can tell you that. They did a big raid on my house. They took away everything that wasn't pinned down, and they took away some of that too. No, they raided Mar-a-Lago. They started that. These were bad people that we had in our Government before. They raided Mar-a-Lago. They went into my wife's area. They went into my son's area—my young son. And what they did was a disgrace.

But how did it work out? We're—oh, I see, we're in the Oval Office. [Laughter] Oh. I guess it didn't work out too well for them, did it?

They are bad people. They're sick. They're sick people. And they came in with their guns into Mar-a-Lago—like 98 people. I wasn't there—fortunately, I wasn't there. But they are—they are very evil, very sick people, that group. And they—if they would have won the election, this country wouldn't exist as we know it. This country would have been a failed country.

And now it's the hottest country anywhere in the world by far. We are the hottest country in the world by far.

Okay. Another question.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Yes, sir. Go ahead.

Japan-U.S. Relations/South Korea

Q. Yes, President Lee met with the Japanese Prime Minister before this summit.

President Trump. That's good.

Q. So is there something to discuss regarding the cooperation among the South Korea, U.S., and Japan?

President Trump. I think so. Look, Japan is a great ally of us, and I had a little bit of a hard time getting you two together, because you're still thinking about comfort women, right? Comfort women. That's all they wanted to talk about was comfort women. And I thought that was settled, a few times, over the decades.

But there is an overlapping problem with that. Perhaps I'm wrong in saying it. Perhaps this isn't the right—but the whole issue of the women—comfort women, very specifically—we talked and that was a very—it was a very big problem for Korea, not for Japan.

Japan was—wanted to go. They—they want to get on, and—but Korea was very stuck on that. You understand.

So I don't know, perhaps you'd like to answer. It's a good question.

It was hard getting Japan and Korea together because of what took place a long time ago. But Japan wants to do it, I can say. Korea is a little bit more tenuous.

Please.

President Lee. The trilateral cooperation among Korea, the U.S., and Japan is very important, and better Korea-Japan relations is also important for the Korea-U.S. relationship as well.

Because I know that, President Trump, that you put emphasis on trilateral cooperation——

President Trump. Right.

President Lee. ——I made a visit to Japan before coming to the U.S. to settle the difficult issues that we have.

President Trump. Good.

Well, Japan wants to get along very well with you, and I find them to be great people, great country, obviously. And they want very much to get along with South Korea.

And you have something in common. You know, you want to solve the North Korea problem. But Japan very much wants to get along with you, and I'm sure they will. They're—I find the people that I deal with to be wonderful people, actually, as I do with you.

President Lee. So, when I visited Japan and met with Prime Minister Ishiba, I realized that many of the obstacles that existed between our two countries were—have now been removed.

President Trump. It's true. During my term—we removed them during my term. There was an overlay a little bit, but we removed many of those obstacles during my term.

And you know, if you look at Prime Minister Abe, who was a great man—he was a great friend of mine, and he was assassinated—but he felt very warmly toward your country. I can tell

you that. And the current Prime Minister, who I've gotten to know very well, is—feels the same way.

So I think you're going to have a great relationship with Japan.

Steve [Steve A. Holland, Reuters], go ahead.

Gaza, Palestinian Territories

Q. Just to close the loop on Gaza, is there a diplomatic push underway to try to get all this to end?

President Trump. Oh, there's a diplomatic push?

Q. No, is there?

President Trump. There has been, yeah, sure. Right now.

Steve, I would say a very serious diplomatic push. Marco or Steve, you want to—Marco, do you want to answer that first and——

Secretary of State Marco A. Rubio. Yes, we—it's never stopped.

Q. Okay.

Secretary Rubio. We've always looked to find a solution there. Ultimately, as the president said, we want it to end. It has to end with no Hamas.

Q. Thank you, Secretary.

President Trump. Steve, where are we?

Special Envoy Witkoff. I would say that we wouldn't be anywhere but for the President's Truth last week, which was a statement to Hamas that they better get their act together and—get to the peace table. But for that, it would have been all stalled.

So, as usual, he is the man who moves it.

Q. Thank you, sir.

President Trump. Thank you.

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

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:41 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, in her capacity as the 2016 Democratic Presidential nominee; Secretary of Commerce Howard W. Lutnick; White House Chief of Staff Susan Wiles; Mayor Muriel E. Bowser of Washington, DC; White House Border Czar Thomas D. Homan; and former Department of Justice Special Counsel John L. Smith. President Lee referred to former President Yoon Suk Yeol and Special Prosecutor Cho Eun-suk of South Korea. President Lee spoke in Korean, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. The transcript was released by the Office of Communications on August 26.

Categories: Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters, White House; Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials : South Korea, President Lee.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Biden, Joseph R., Jr.; Bolton, John R.; Bondi, Pamela J.; Bowser, Muriel E.; Clinton, Hillary Rodham; Hegseth, Peter B.; Homan, Thomas D.; Kim Jong Un; Lee Jae-myung; Lutnick, Howard W.; Netanyahu, Benjamin; Noem, Kristi L.; Obama, Barack; Putin, Vladimir

Vladimirovich; Rubio, Marco A.; Smith, John L.; Trump, Barron W.; Trump, Melania; Wiles, Susan; Witkoff, Steven C.; Xi Jinping; Zelenskyy, Volodymyr.

Subjects: Attorney General; Border security; Cashless bail, efforts to eliminate; China, President; China, relations with U.S.; China, trade with U.S.; Critical minerals, supply chain improvements; District of Columbia, law enforcement improvement efforts; District of Columbia, Mayor; Gaza, conflict with Israel; Gaza, hostages held by Hamas; Gaza, humanitarian situation; Gaza, U.S. assistance; Illegal immigration; Iran, U.S. airstrikes on nuclear facilities; Israel, attacks by Hamas of October 7, 2023; Israel, military operations in Gaza; Israel, Prime Minister; Japan, relations with South Korea; Japan, relations with U.S.; Japan, trade with U.S.; North Atlantic Treaty Organization; North Korea, nuclear weapons development; North Korea, relations with South Korea; North Korea, State Affairs Commission President; Nuclear disarmament, international efforts; Oil and natural gas, domestic production; Russia, conflict in Ukraine; Russia, President; Russia, relations with U.S.; Secretary of Commerce; Secretary of Defense; Secretary of Homeland Security; Secretary of State; Shipbuilding, domestic expansion efforts; Solar and wind energy; South Korea, defense relationship with U.S.; South Korea, President; South Korea, relations with Japan; South Korea, relations with North Korea; South Korea, trade with U.S.; Tariffs; U.S. diplomatic efforts, expansion; U.S. Special Envoy to the Middle East; Ukraine, international military aid; Ukraine, President; Ukraine, Russian invasion and airstrikes; Ukraine, U.S. assistance; White House Border Czar; White House Chief of Staff.

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