

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2025

Remarks on Signing a Memorandum on Restoring Law and Order in Memphis, Tennessee

September 15, 2025

The President. Hello, everybody. Nice to have you here. We have some big things to announce.

Today, at the request of Governor Bill Lee of Tennessee, who's standing with us, as you know, I'm signing a Presidential memorandum to establish the Memphis Safe Task Force. And it's very important because of the crime that's going on not only in Memphis, in many cities, and we're going to take care of all of them step by step, just like we did in DC.

We have virtually no crime in DC right now, and we're going to keep it that way. It's our Nation's Capital. We're going to keep it that way, or we're going to federalize it, if we had to, but we don't have to anymore because it's in such great shape.

This Task Force will be a replica of our extraordinarily successful efforts here, and you'll see it's a lot of the same thing, although the numbers here are really something. They're really bad. Now, we did send FBI in about 4 months ago to work, and it brought some of the numbers down, and they did a great job, but we're sending in the big force now.

We also sent them into Chicago on a—sort of a moderate basis, and we brought down crime a little bit in Chicago, but we're now going to bring it down very big. We're going to be doing Chicago probably next.

I was with a great businessman, a man who is involved in all cities through his business, and I say, "Who do you think should be next after Memphis?" And he said, "Sir, you've got to save Chicago." We're going to wait a little while. But he said: "You've got to save Chicago. You can't let it go." And this is a very prominent man that everybody knows in this room.

Another man in Memphis was saying—Bill, he was saying—very interested—he's on the board of FedEx, and he's—his hotel is about a block away. And he said: "When I walked there, I said, 'You know, I don't want to do this again. I never want to do it again. And they won't let me walk there.'" They take them in armored vehicles. They take the board members of FedEx in armored vehicles, like, a block away to the hotel. This shouldn't be the U.S. This shouldn't be the United States of America.

The Task Force will be a replica, as I said, and it's going to be, I think, equally successful. This is a tremendous success we've had in Washington, I can tell you, and everyone knows it. And people in the White House that work here and other people that I know are calling me and thanking me. They're going out to dinners and doing things that they haven't done in years.

The effort will include the National Guard, as well as the FBI, ATF, DEA, ICE, Homeland Security Investigations, and the U.S. Marshals. And more along the prosecutors, we're going to have DOJ, led by U.S. attorney for the Western District of Tennessee, who is here—or not here. Is that person here?

Attorney General Pamela J. Bondi. Not here, not the U.S. attorney.

The President. That person is going to be very busy. So we're going to have U.S. attorney for the Western District of Tennessee.

And most importantly, Pam Bondi is here. She's heading it up, and she's doing an unbelievable job in every respect beyond this. So—also worked with some of the members of the team right here on DC, and we're very proud of that effort.

We essentially had the crime down to a very low rate in 12 days, and within another 10 days after that, it was so incredible. And it continues at that level, and we're going to continue. We have to, because it's our Capital.

This team will deploy the full powers of Federal law enforcement agencies and enforcement generally to restore public safety and get dangerous career criminals off of our streets. We're going to get them off. In 2024, Memphis had the highest violent crime rate, the highest property crime rate, and the third highest murder rate of any city in the Nation. Other than that, they're doing quite well, thank you.

A person is four times more likely to be murdered in Memphis, Tennessee, today than in Mexico City. It's been—and you know Mexico City is not a cakewalk. It's been overrun with carjackings, robberies, shootings, and killings. There were 249 murders, 429 rapes, 5,616 burglaries, and 12,522 violent assaults in just the last little while in 2024 and in pieces of 2025, where it's actually gotten worse, until recently, when we sent the FBI down to see what the hell is going on.

Last month, a vicious thug carjacked an elderly woman parked at the movie theater, dragged her out of the car, and body-slammed her into the pavement, where she is still trying to recover. It probably won't be successful.

So we're not going to allow this kind of savagery to destroy our society anymore. We're stopping it. We're doing it one by one. [*Inaudible*—time, but we want to go quickly. We don't want to lose Chicago. We're going to lose Chicago. We're going to lose places like—you go to St. Louis. St. Louis—we're going to lose St. Louis. We're not going to lose. We want to save these places. You're going to lose them.

It was—the way the man said it—he was a very high-quality man—I said, "Who would you do next?" He said: "Sir, I'd do Chicago. You don't want to lose Chicago." We're not going to lose Chicago.

So we're going to have to go very big, and we're going to go probably—we're thinking about it for next, Pam. We were going to hold it off, and we were going to do some of the smaller ones. And the truth is, our people are so good.

Gady, you're doing a great job, wherever you may be.

U.S. Marshals Service Director Gadyaces S. Serralta. Thank you, sir. Over here.

The President. We're doing so good that we—I don't think we need too much practice, right? We're going to—but we've got to go and save our big cities, our great cities.

Chicago is a great city, and we're going to make it great again very soon, and I think we can do that. Despite the tremendous size, I think we can do a real job, and we're going to give you the resources that you need.

So, with that, I'd like to just end by saying we're going to make Memphis safe again. And I'd like to ask Governor Bill Lee to say a few words, and then Pam can talk. And anybody else you'd like to talk to, we'll go through the whole list. We have all day long, if we have to—[*laughter*]—because we're going to—this is a very important thing. We have to save our country from violent crime.

So, Bill, please.

Governor William B. Lee of Tennessee. Yes, sir. Mr. President, first of all, thank you.

The President. Thank you.

Gov. Lee. Thank you for your commitment for Federal resources to the great city of Memphis. And it is a great city, and it has a great history——

The President. It does.

Gov. Lee. ——and a great legacy. And we are very hopeful and excited about the prospect of moving that city forward.

I've been in office 7 years. I'm tired of crime holding the great city of Memphis back. And I have spoken today with the Director of the U.S. Marshals, with the Director of the FBI, with General Bondi. We realize that this effort of multiagencies that will combine the work of the Tennessee Highway Patrol and the local police departments—when we come together, we can make significant change in our city, in the city of Memphis, and that is a powerfully important thing for the state of Tennessee. And I want to say thank you.

The President. This will be your proudest moment. When we see you in 4 or 5 weeks, maybe sooner, you're going to see numbers that will drop and plummet like you haven't—just like we did in DC. They plummeted. Nobody could even believe it. And they're going to plummet. It'll be one of your really proud moments, and you've done a good job too.

Gov. Lee. Thank you, sir.

The President. But this will be your—maybe your proudest moment.

Gov. Lee. Thank you, sir.

The President. Okay. [Inaudible]

Gov. Lee. And the Director—as the Director said, the goal is sustained——

The President. Right. Got to keep it.

Gov. Lee. ——sustained crime lowering. And that—with this effort, I believe we can get there—we can finally get there for that city.

The President. Yes. We're going to have it sustained.

Gov. Lee. That's right.

The President. Long time.

Gov. Lee. That's right.

The President. And your people are going to get better and better. And your police force has been terrific. They're working with us very much, as you know. Started it, as I said, on a little basis, and we got it down quite a bit, but now we go in for the big march. Okay?

Gov. Lee. And Director Patel and his team have done remarkable work so far.

The President. It's true.

Gov. Lee. As you know, the numbers are great, and this will be one more step in the right direction for Memphis.

The President. That's true.

Gov. Lee. Thank you.

The President. He's doing a very good job. Thank you very much.

Gov. Lee. Yes, sir.

The President. Pam, please.

Attorney General Bondi. President Trump, at your directive, we went in, as you know—all know, to DC and took over the city of DC, working hand in hand with Metro Transit Authority, all of the agencies represented here today. Got over 2,000 violent offenders. Got two—over 200 guns off the streets of DC. And DC is safe again.

And now, Governor, working with you and working with our two U.S. Senators and all of our agencies working hand in hand, we're going to do everything we can to make Memphis safe again. That was President Trump's directive to us, and it's easy to do when you're working with such great leaders.

And, Secretary Noem, you have been instrumental in this. And Director Patel has already been into Memphis and gotten so many violent offenders and guns off the street, and that's what started it. And working—Stephen and Deputy Attorney General Todd Blanche, thank you. We've all been going nonstop, working hand in hand together.

And Gady Serralta, Terry Cole, and—and Director Driscoll of ATF, wearing two hats—*[laughter]*—and Pete Hegseth with the National Guard, all working hand in hand. And being out there for a month, you can't tell who's with what agency, but for the t-shirt they're wearing, because everyone is working hand in hand, and that's why we've been so successful.

We're going to do that in Memphis, and we're going to get crime off the streets.

The President. That's great. Thank you, Pam. Great job.

Attorney General Bondi. Thanks, President.

The President. Kristi, go ahead, please.

Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi L. Noem. Mr. President, Memphis has a high number of trafficking—significant human traffickers, child exploitation, drug trafficking. The local gangs there are extremely dangerous. And I'm so excited that you're going in there to work with not just the Governor and willing local leaders, but also our Attorney General and all the leaders that are standing here today to help protect our children.

So what's going to change dramatically is the families' lives that live there. And it's only going to happen because of you, because you're coming in.

What has started there, you're going to put on steroids. The networks that you're going to uncover across this country—because of the work that's going to happen in Memphis, we're going to see every city get safer because we're going to see those ties to other criminals that we're going to get out of the country.

So we're a nation of laws. And, sir, thank you for caring about every single city.

The President. Thank you, Kristi. Really nice.

And what makes it, to me, so exciting is the success we had here so quickly. And you know, we've taken close to 1,500 people out of DC. But when I saw the result happen so quickly, and so many people are so thankful, and people that—you pass them every day, and they're fine. All of a sudden, they're thanking me so profusely.

It was so exciting what's happened—and continues to be—what happened in DC. And so that's what makes this, I think, even more exciting, because we know what's going to happen. We know—we have the people. Look, we're sending in a lot of help. These cities have been taken over for years. And the last 4 years under Biden, what's happened is just a disgrace.

So it really has what—the success we've had here has made it, to me, much more exciting, because I think we're going to have—proportionally, I mean, you have cases where it's even worse.

I have some people—we have some people quoted today that we took out of papers. "We're so grateful for the National Guard coming," said an owner of a Memphis tax service. "It's so dangerous here. It's so darn dangerous that you can't get out of your car." If you get out of your car, he says you get robbed, you get mugged, you get hit. "You can't go to the market or a service station. So, yes, I want to see crime stopped, but I want to see the National Guard come in right away if that's what's necessary."

"There's a need"—here's another one from a director of a Memphis-based crime prevention organization—"There's a need for more boots on the ground. You have to get them done fast before we totally lose it." They're going to lose it all. "I got two guns put in my face," said another, "within five minutes at two different locations." He said, "I got a gun put in my face. Then I went someplace else and I had another gun put in my face. I was scared. It never happened to me. I've never seen anything like it."

Here's another one. "I honestly thought he was going to kill me," said a 60-year-old Memphis carjacking victim. A man walked up, "Give me your car. You got 5 seconds to get out or you're dead."

This is what we have. And it's page after page of the same kind of thing.

Kash, would you say a few words, please?

Federal Bureau of Investigation Director Kashyap P. "Kash" Patel. Thank you, Mr. President. Thanks to your brilliant foresight—you had asked us to go in quietly into these cities to help set the landscape, to work with the interagency and to make America safe again, and we've done that under the FBI's banner program of Operation Summer Heat.

The President. Right.

Director Patel. And the results are only as good as the prosecutions. And because the Attorney General and the Deputy Attorney General have mobilized DOJ to successfully prosecute so many violent criminals, we have set the landscape for the interagency to come into Memphis and really make it safe permanently. As the Governor and the Senators and the other Directors were saying, it's not a short-term mission.

But thanks to you launching us early, launching us quietly, not looking for the credit, Mr. President, we greatly appreciate your support and the advanced foresight you had to do on that.

The President. It's so exciting, and somebody had to do this. A President should have stepped up long ago and saved these cities. So it's not that I wanted to do it. Believe me. Somebody had to do it, and we're doing it in a big way.

Senator Marsha W. Blackburn. Absolutely.

The President. Pete, could you say a few words, please?

Secretary of War Peter B. Hegseth. Yes, Mr. President.

You know, from day one, the DOD—excuse me, DOW—[laughter]—the Department of War——

The President. I'm glad you made that correction.

Secretary Hegseth. You corrected it for me, sir—has been proud to stand with our partners across the interagency, whether it's the southwest border; whether it was Los Angeles, getting

ahead of that; whether it's right here in Washington, DC, where Secretary Driscoll and the Army and the National Guard have taken the lead in helping across all of these great folks to secure the city. We are very proud to be here to stand strong alongside law enforcement.

We're glad that Memphis is the place to go. The Volunteer State. They're—we're not going to have any problems with the Tennessee National Guard being willing to go in—

Sen. Blackburn. That's right. *[Laughter]*

The President. No, not at all.

Secretary Hegseth. —and stand strong in Memphis, sir.

The President. Not at all. And get ready, because you'll be doing a lot of other places that are almost as troubled.

Secretary Hegseth. You've got it, sir.

The President. Some of them are equal. If you look at what's going on in Baltimore, where the Governor is telling me how wonderful it is, and you can't walk across the street without being shot.

Could I ask our two great Senators to say a few words, please?

Sen. Blackburn. Of course.

The President. Please, Marsha.

Sen. Blackburn. Mr. President, thank you so much. I want to say a thank you to Director Patel, because he had promised that he would come into Memphis. We've had Operation Viper there this summer. There have been over 500 arrests, there are over 100 indictments, and Memphis had the best stats they have had in years this past August—last month. It was the best August they have had, and it's because of the work that's been done.

And now to have a new phase of this enforcement for Memphis, where we are going to have all of these agencies working as a team, as the Governor said, making certain that this is a long-term effort to make Memphis safe again.

Mr. President, we are so grateful, and we thank you.

The President. Thank you very much.

Senator William F. Hagerty IV. Yes, thanks, Mr. President. And this is an issue that's plagued Memphis since I was a boy, Mr. President, and it's time that we addressed it. And I appreciate your leadership allowing us to do that.

And the team that you've assembled here is going to help us deliver the most fundamental responsibility of our government, and that's public safety. This shouldn't be a partisan issue. This should be something that is our primary goal. And certainly, I hope to see Memphis become the safest city in America.

And thanks for the effort of all of your team here to make us make certain that happens. Thank you, Governor Lee, and I want to say thanks to the Memphis Police Department and the Sheriff's Department there too, who have all worked closely to bring this together. I look forward to tremendous results.

The President. And I want to thank the FBI for the last 4 or 5 months—

Sen. Blackburn. Yes.

The President. —because they have brought down the numbers quite a bit. Chicago, here, and a couple of other places that we can talk about later, if anybody wants to.

Could I ask you two guys, Terry and Gady, to say a couple of words also? You've led—you really did lead the charge here, and you've done such a great job. Please.

Administrator of the Drug Enforcement Administration Terrance C. Cole. Mr. President, thank you for always supporting law enforcement. I think the major difference here in Washington, DC, has been your support for law enforcement, has been empowering the men and women that are on the street working every single day. And I look forward to not only going to Memphis, but other places in Tennessee as well. And I think you'll hear from us real soon, Mr. President.

Thank you for your support, sir.

The President. Good work. We have plenty of places for you.

Administrator Cole. Yes, sir, we do.

The President. You know the country very well.

Administrator Cole. Yes, sir.

The President. That's great. Thank you, Terry.

Please, Gady.

Director Serralta. Thank you, Mr. President. I just want to say that we're honored once again to lead the charge with the United States Marshals Service, leading and joining 22 other Federal agencies. I can say that today we spoke with over 30 of the local agencies, letting them know what to expect, giving them the template that we've done here in DC so they know what to expect.

They're extremely excited. I think everyone is going to be well receiving the law enforcement surge that we're about to take to Memphis.

The President. Thank you. Great job.

Director Serralta. Thank you.

The President. And I'm going to ask one of the best lawyers in the country—he is one of the best. Todd, say a few words, please. *[Laughter]* He is a great lawyer.

Deputy Attorney General Todd Blanche. Thank you, Mr. President. Yes, look, I think it's been said for the past 15 minutes: The President ran on making this country safe again, and we do not make this country safe again unless we go into our cities where there's the most violent among us and go street by street and block by block, and arrest the men and women in this country that are destroying cities and communities for the rest of us.

And so what we plan on doing—as the Governor said and the Senator just said, this has been a problem in Memphis for a long time—we plan on delivering Memphis back to the citizens that are there to raise their families, to go to church, to be in their communities. That's our goal, and that's what we plan on doing. Whether it takes 2 weeks or 2 years, that's what we're going to do.

The President. Thanks, Todd.

The great Stephen Miller, please say a few words.

White House Deputy Chief of Staff for Policy Stephen Miller. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Show the same emotion you do on television. *[Laughter]* That's hard to do.

Deputy Chief of Staff Miller. Yes.

The President. I think that's going to be hard to do.

Deputy Chief of Staff Miller. Let's see if I can do it.

President Trump's initiative here in Washington, DC, it's important to understand, is the most successful anticrime initiative in American history. I mean, just think about it for a second. In—in 30 days, President Trump put together a team that saw the largest-ever violent crime reduction in any city in American history, something that people had not been able to do in 40 years. That is a momentous achievement.

And now the President is going to take that same model to Memphis and, as he said, more cities after that. The team the President has put together has no equal today or anywhere in American history.

I think what's happening here is that what the president has done is made clear the power of federal law enforcement that was used for the last four years to harass and attack conservatives, to harass and attack Christians, to go after law-abiding families—the power of law enforcement under President Trump is going to be used to get all the criminals, all the violent offenders, all the murderers, all the cartels, and all the domestic terrorists off our streets.

So, whether you're antifa, whether you're a domestic terrorist, whether you are a violent gang member, a drug trafficker, a Tren de Aragua killer, or anyone else that's hurting our people, President Trump is saying he's going to use his FBI, his DOD, his ATF, his DEA to wipe you out, to put you in bar—behind bars, to take you off the street, or to apply whatever legal consequences necessary.

Mr. President, I'm honored beyond words to be a part of this team under your leadership, as you've saved thousands of lives.

The President. Thank you very much. Come on over. Let's sign that bill.

Sen. Blackburn. Yes.

Staff Secretary William O. Scharf. Yes, sir.

The President. Do you want say anything about our great military real fast? He's—what a job he's doing, this guy.

Secretary of the Army and Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives Acting Director Daniel P. Driscoll. Mr. President, so, our Army National Guard is honored to be part of this mission. This is their community. A lot of them are from DC. They're from Tennessee. When you talk to them, when you talk to the actual population out there who interact with them every day, they say it's a blessing to have them as a part of their lives.

And then, for the National Guard getting to have this where they get to improve their communities, where their kids are growing up and they're going to church, and this is where their families are, many of them, sir, have said this is the honor of their lifetime.

So thank you.

The President. Look at that nice face, and yet he's a killer. *[Laughter]* Nice, beautiful face, and he's a total killer. I don't know how you do it, huh?

Acting Director Driscoll. Lotion, sir. *[Laughter]*

The President. You're doing—everybody here is doing a fantastic job. *[Laughter]* That's—All right, here we go.

[*At this point, the President signed the memorandum.*]

Sen. Blackburn. How wonderful. It's perfect. Wonderful.

The President. Okay.

Senator Hagerty. There we go.

The President. Here you go. Hold this up. Hold it up.

Okay. Do you have any——

Sen. Blackburn. Thank you, sir.

The President. Thank you very much, Marsha.

Sen. Blackburn. Thank you very much.

Senator Hagerty. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Bill, thank you very much. Great job.

Any questions, please?

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

Yes, Brian [Brian Glenn, Real America's Voice].

Protest Activity Outside the White House/Public Safety in U.S. Cities/Border Security

Q. Mr. President, thank you. First of all, you've got a——

The President. Did they take down the blue tent?

Q. Yes, sir, they did. [*Laughter*] Thank you very much. I appreciate that.

The President. Last time he hit me with a blue tent. And nobody knew what he was talking about. We found out, right?

Q. We found out. Right.

The President. And it was gone the next day, and they had a lot of——

Q. Oh.

The President. ——that was not so easy. They had——that's a violent, radical-left group.

Okay, go ahead.

Q. They are. And I got peppered with a lot of comments for doing that, but they still have their First Amendment right though. They're still——

The President. Yes, I don't know. Well, I'm not so sure.

Q. ——out there protesting.

But you've got an amazing team behind you. You've done an awesome job for DC.

The President. Thank you.

Q. I want to get ahead of a story that I think might come out.

You pushed out an e-mail earlier today, really showing dozens and dozens of local media in Memphis highlighting all of the violent crime in that city. So they have no problem reporting the crime, but when you show up to solve it, they're going to run around town looking for that one

person that says, "We don't want Donald Trump in our city." What can you say to the media there in Memphis, Tennessee, to help let them know the people want you there in their city?

The President. Well, I'm not sure they found that person, you know, because I saw them doing some interviews, and I—it looked like they were looking but they were very—[*laughter*]—in fact, that producer, that person, I think they lost their jobs, because everybody was saying, "We want Trump to be there." They want the people right here to be there.

Look, it's very simple. In Chicago, they're getting beat to hell. They're being shot. If you lose—six or seven people die over a weekend, they consider that a successful weekend. And when you consider that a successful weekend, that's pretty bad.

I had the President of Poland here a few days ago, and we had a news conference. Many of you were here. And I made this statement—I said, you know, "We're very happy to announce that it's been over two weeks since anybody has been killed in DC." And he looked at me like, "Is that supposed to be good?" You know, he's looking like, "What kind of a place is this?"

And now it's been a long time, but—and as I was saying it, I said, you know, I'm not sure if that sounds good to somebody. It sounded great to you, but it doesn't sound good to somebody from a country where they don't have violent crime like we have. But now it's a long time since that's happened.

We went for years where at least one person was killed. Now you're not seeing it all.

It's like the border. Millions of people—a year ago, millions of people poured into our country. In the last 3 months, there have been zero, as reported by, largely, Democrats, actually.

The border is secure. The country is secure. We've got the hottest country anywhere in the world. And I'll tell you, a year ago, we were a country in tremendous trouble, probably a dead country, if it continued. So we're very happy about it.

And so just, you know, in terms of your question, people have never seen anything like what we're doing, and I think they're very happy, and they want us to be there. They don't want to be mugged. Who would say, "Gee, I don't want the National Guard"? And you need that in terms of numbers. And also, you look at those guys—I looked at them; they're rough guys.

They're—you know, the Supreme Court voted recently on merit. We're a merit-based country again. I said they had tremendous courage to do that. We're a merit-based country again. When I looked at the people that were patrolling the streets for the National Guard and for others, I could see we're merit-based. They were rough looking, they were tough looking, and they love our country.

So that's where we are, Brian. Thank you.

Q. Thank you.

The President. Thank you very much.

[*Several reporters spoke at once.*]

Yes, please.

Investigations Into Political Organizations/Use-of-Force Guidance for Federal Law Enforcement Officers

Q. Yes, given with all the—that's going on with Charlie Kirk's assassination——

The President. Yes.

Q. —and it's a left wing—a lot of left-wing violence going on, do you have plans—and actually, this is a great—great opportunity with all these people here—do you plan on designating antifa, finally, a domestic terror organization?

The President. Well, it's something I would do, yes. If I have support from the people back here—I think it would start with Pam, I think. But I would—if you give me—I would do that 100 percent. And others also, by the way.

Q. What—

The President. But antifa is terrible. You know, it's—

Q. Are there are other groups that you can think of that—right now?

The President. There are other groups, yes. There are other groups. We have some pretty radical groups, and they got away with murder. And also, I've been speaking to the Attorney General about bringing RICO against some of the people that you've been reading about that have been putting up millions and millions of dollars for agitation.

This—these aren't protests. These are crimes what they're doing, where they're throwing bricks at cars of the—of ICE and Border Patrol. And they come in a beautiful new car. They're so proud. It's Border Patrol, ICE—you know, it's got whatever it is—and they're throwing rocks at it. And after 50 yards, it looks like an old, beat-up vehicle. It was just brandnew. It was just bought for the purposes—and they don't have to take that anymore. I let it be known. We'll take responsibility. They don't have to take it anymore. And they don't want to take it. They were told by a past administration—it became almost a culture—if somebody throws a rock at you, do nothing. If somebody spits in your face, do nothing.

And I say when they spit, you hit. Do whatever you want. You do whatever the hell you want.

I watched it where—I watched it. So sick it made me. For 4 years, I had to sit home and watch people screaming at policemen and spitting in their face, and they weren't able to do anything. They just had to grin and bear. They're standing up like a piece of steel. And a woman, in many cases—women—you could see they're professional agitators.

I had one the other night. I had four the other night, all in one group—total phonies—started to scream when I got into a restaurant, oh, you know, something with Palestine, they said. Well, I'm doing a great job for peace in the Middle East. I should get lots of awards for that, right? With the Abraham Accords and everything else.

But a woman just stood up and started screaming, and she got booed out of the place too. The people—there were a lot of people in the restaurant. I went there to show how safe, and it was safe. I mean, the woman is just a mouthpiece. All she was a paid—she was a paid agitator. And you have a lot of them. And I've asked Pam to look into that in terms of RICO—bringing RICO cases against—a criminal RICO, because they should be put in jail. What they're doing to this country is really subversive.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Crime in U.S. Cities

Q. Mr. President, can I ask you one on crime? Mr. President, can I ask you one on crime and—

The President. Yes, sure.

Q. —and one on Charlie Kirk?

The President. Go ahead.

Q. You've floated potentially going into St. Louis. You mentioned you want to go into Chicago next. Could St. Louis be after Chicago?

The President. It's going to be around there someplace, yes. We've got to save St. Louis. We've got to save these cities. These—this isn't like, you know, we're going to do something. We have to save St. Louis. We have to save Chicago.

I know all about Chicago. I have a great, beautiful building. I'm so proud of it. But, you know, you get less proud when you see all the crime.

When they announced, 2 weeks ago, 11 people killed—this is over a weekend—I think they said 38 people shot and 11 people dead. And then you watch Pritzker get up and say, "We've got crime under control." And I will say that Kash and the FBI did a good job. With a very light force, they went in and for the—about 4 months, Kash, or so——

Director Patel. Yes, sir.

The President. ——they've been working on keeping crime down, and they have brought the numbers down a little bit.

But those are the easy numbers. You know, the first 20, 25 percent are the easy numbers. That's where it gets—and then you have to bring in the big forces—right?——

Director Patel. Yes, sir.

The President. ——which is what we always intended to do.

But I think the FBI has done a very good job and, in particular, in Memphis and Chicago. They brought it down a little bit, like 20 percent and 25 percent. Well, I guess it's not so little, but we have a long way to go.

We think Chicago is going to be next, and we'll get to St. Louis also.

Assassination of Turning Point U.S.A. Founder and Executive Director Charles J. Kirk

Q. And on Charlie Kirk's assassination——

The President. And New Orleans we want to get to too.

Q. ——your FBI is investigating the potential role of left-wing organizations in the assassination. I'm wondering if you think if Charlie Kirk's assassin worked alone or if he worked with a—[inaudible].

The President. I don't know. I mean, I can tell you he didn't work alone on the Internet because it seems that he became radicalized on the internet. That's just by watching what—the same things that you're watching and hearing. It looks like he became radicalized over the internet.

And it seems like his wonderful parents brought in a wonderful neighborhood, a smart guy—great boards, great marks, great student—and then he—something happened to him over a fairly short period of time. It looks like he was radicalized over the internet, and it's radicalized on the left. He's a left. A lot of problems with the left, and they get protected, and they shouldn't be protected. But as you understand, I think, very well from the tone of your question.

Thank you very much.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

U.S. Airstrikes on Tren de Aragua Vessels in the Caribbean Sea

Q. On Venezuela, sir, and then on Israel—and on Israel. First on Venezuela, what can you tell us about this Venezuelan boat that was taken out? And do you plan to provide proof that these were narcoterrorists who were on their——

The President. Sure. Yes.

Q. ——way to the U.S.?

The President. Well, we have proof. All you have to do is look at the cargo that was—like, it spattered all over the ocean, big bags of cocaine and fentanyl all over the place. And it was. Plus we have recorded evidence that they were leaving. We've recorded them. It was very careful, because we know you people would be after us. We're very careful.

The military has been amazing. And General Caine showed me a little while ago the clip, but you could actually see it. But you don't have to see it, because we have recorded proof and evidence. We know what time they were leaving, when they were leaving, what they had, and all of the other things that you'd like to have.

But we have noticed that there are no ships in the ocean anymore. We're seeing that there's, like, no ships, no—you know, when the first—when we went, there were hundreds of boats. Now there are no boats. I wonder why? Meaning, no drugs are coming across. Probably stopping some fishermen too. I mean, to be honest, if I were a fisherman, I wouldn't want to go fishing either. Just a nice "let's take a little trip," because I'd say: "Man, if they—maybe they think I have drugs downstairs. I don't want that." I think the fishing business has probably been hurt.

But no drugs—there are literally no boats. This was a boat, and we were surprised to see it.

Now, what does that mean? That means there's no drugs coming by sea, but they do come by land. And you know what? We're telling the cartels right now, we're going to be stopping them too. When they come by land, we're going to be stopping them the same way we stopped the boats.

And you'll see that, but maybe by talking about it a little bit, it won't happen. If it doesn't happen, that's good. But what—they killed 300,000 people in our country last year, and we're not letting it happen anymore.

Israeli Airstrikes on Hamas Headquarters in Doha, Qatar

Q. And then on Israel. Did Bibi Netanyahu speak to you directly to alert you that Israel was going to be striking——

The President. No.

Q. ——Hamas sites in Qatar?

The President. No. No, he didn't. No, he didn't.

Yes, go ahead, please.

Q. How did you——

Q. A follow-up on——

The President. Go——

Q. How did you learn of it?

The President. Same way you did.

Go ahead, please.

Role of Social Media in Political Radicalization

Q. Mr. President, you mentioned that the shooter was radicalized online. Do you believe that——

The President. I think so.

Q. ——social media companies——

The President. But you know, by the way, when I say that, that's my opinion. I think he was radicalized online, based on what they're saying.

Q. Do social media companies bear any responsibility for that? And how does that factor into the conversations about TikTok?

The President. I'm going to have to ask—I don't know. I'd ask Pam that question. I don't know if you or Todd could give an answer to that. Somebody has to bear some responsibility.

Attorney General Bondi. You know, and, President Trump, I've always told parents: You've got to watch what your kids are doing on the internet, what they're doing online, who—what they're listening to, what they're reading. They're all online. They're all on their phones all the time. Parents have got to monitor that, because this starts when you're young. This starts when you're young, when you listen to these groups, when you watch these shows, and parents have got to just be vigilant.

So, sure, that's part of it. And they're meeting kids online who they think are kids, and they can be anywhere in the world, and talking to them and—and, yes, there are being radicalized.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

The President. But you know, he went bad. And he just went bad very quickly, in a sense, because he sort of led a very normal life, a——

Attorney General Bondi. Yes.

The President. ——a life of, you know, great education—schools, everything else. But somewhere along the line, something happened.

Yes, please.

Potential Deployment of National Guard Troops to Chicago, Illinois/District of Columbia/Memphis, Tennessee

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. How will you send the National Guard into Chicago without the cooperation of the Governor and the mayor?

The President. Well, if they do cooperate, that's good. If they don't, it's not going to matter to us at all. You know, who wants to help us? Police department. They have no respect for the Governor. They have no respect for the mayor. They respect us.

And we found that in Washington. You know, we haven't had total support in Washington from government, as you know—from everybody. I don't want to say the Mayor, because she was better than most, but we haven't had great, great—but we have had great support from the Metropolitan Police. They're like brothers of these people. They're really like brothers. You see that. They work together.

And so the—if the Governor wants to support, as I said to Bill, it's going to be his proudest moment, what it's going to do—the Governor of Tennessee, what's going to happen with Memphis. In 3 or 4 weeks, we'll stand together, and we'll say: "Look at this. The crime has almost disappeared, maybe completely disappeared."

I mean, Washington, they don't even know how to record it, because it's down so much. You know, they've never heard—I heard 87 percent is down. I said: "Really? Who are the 13 percent," because it's more than that. It's actually more. Hard to believe, right?

You're going to have the same results in Chicago, and we hope we have the Governor's help, but if we don't, we're doing it without him.

TikTok/2024 Presidential Election

Q. And, on social media, Mr. President. You had the framework that's been agreed to with TikTok, for example. Will China continue to have a stake in the company, or will it go to someone like Oracle?

The President. Well, we haven't decided that, but it looks to me—and I'm speaking to President Xi on Friday for confirmation of that. And you know, frankly, more importantly, a big deal. And we've had very good meetings

As you know, we were in Europe, our people—Scott Bessent and Jamieson were—Jamieson Greer and others. And it was a very big meeting with China. And you know, they're treating us with respect. We treat them with respect too. But it was very successful.

And on top of it, we have what could be a very good deal. Don't forget, I have had more people say, "Could you try and keep TikTok alive?" I used TikTok—I mean, I have to admit it—in the election, and look how I did with youth. No Republican has come close. I blew everyone away.

You know, if you—if you look back not so long ago, Romney, he got like 7 percent of the youth. I got like eight times that amount. I got tremendous numbers of youth.

By the way, I want to say, Charlie helped me. And Charlie was the one, "Get on TikTok." He used to say to me, "Get on TikTok." Charlie was unbelievable.

So, probably—and I did. I had somebody named "TikTok Jack," and he put that camera—he said, "Just a real quick statement, sir, like 10 seconds or less." They didn't like anything over 10 seconds, but it worked. But Charlie is the one that really—and my son Barron also. And I have to say, Don, Eric, the whole group, it's important.

And it can maybe even bring us closer to China. We had a very good meeting with China. I was surprised. I didn't expect it to that extent. And I'm going to speak again with President Xi on Friday, and you know, I think that'll confirm things up.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Memorial Service for Turning Point U.S.A. Founder and Executive Director Charles J. Kirk

Q. Mr. President, can I ask you a question on Charlie Kirk and crime? On Charlie Kirk, do you plan to speak at the funeral, and what would your message be if you do?

The President. Well, I'm going on Sunday. We're taking a whole planeload, and they're having—I was invited on Saturday, but I said I'd rather save it for Sunday. You know, we're going to have a stadium, and I'll bet that stadium is going to be pretty packed—maybe completely packed. It's going to be big.

But I'm going to be at the stadium, and I guess I'll say a few words. I don't know, but I guess I will. But I knew him very well. He was an amazing guy. He was an amazing guy.

He was all about young people, getting them started right. And he was like a magnet for young people. They just attracted to him. He loved them, and they attracted to him.

His wife is a tremendous person, by the way. He had—he always had great respect for his wife. He got married. I was sure—I didn't know he was getting married. I heard he got married, and it's—he loved her. I'll tell you, he really loved her. She loved him.

And I think she'll have something to do with keeping the—that whole thing going. You know, Turning Point is—it became a very big deal. And I heard they had like 38,000—so, he wanted to get it up to 20,000 chapters. That's a lot. That would have been a lifetime's work. I heard that over the last four days, they have 38,000 people want to—38,000 chapters at colleges, schools, other places. Numbers that—you know, nobody has ever heard of numbers like that.

So I think Turning Point could be—you know, through what happened, this horrible act, it could be maybe bigger than it could have ever been had he been there.

And I will say this: He'd be very happy if he saw what was going on. And there's some very good people, because I speak at Turning Point quite a bit.

And Charlie would call me up—so the last time I spoke to him, he said, "Sir"—and I think it was Phoenix—"Sir, could you get to Phoenix?" This was, like, in a day. I said: "Charlie, I'm the president of the United States. You call me asking me if I could speak tomorrow in Phoenix. You can't do that to me, Charlie." [*Laughter*] But usually, I ended up going. [*Laughter*]

He was great. He was a great guy, and he didn't deserve this. He didn't deserve this, believe me.

[*Several reporters spoke at once.*]

Representative Ilhan A. Omar

Q. Mr. President, Ilhan Omar, after his assassination, called Charlie Kirk a "reprehensible human being." Should she be stripped of her committee assignments?

The President. I would. I would say—I think she's a disgraceful person. You know, I think she's a disgraceful person, a loser. It's amazing the way people vote—I know it's people from her area, maybe, of the world. I don't know, they got here, and they vote her in. I—it's hard to believe, but I think she's a disgusting person.

Progress Pride Flag/Flag Burning

Q. And one more question, if I could. A lot of these—in recent of these, kind of, trans shooters that we've seen over the last——

The President. Yes.

Q. ——couple of incidents, this sign—this banner—this flag right here is up and down 14th Street.

[*A reporter showed the President a photo of a Progress Pride Flag on his cellular phone.*]

This is a—what would be the—a trans flag. A lot of people are very threatened by this flag. It means a lot of different negative things to people—violence. Would you be opposed to taking this flag down up and down the streets of DC?

The President. Well, I wouldn't be. Then they'll sue, and they'll get freedom of speech stuff. You know? So that will happen. But I would—I would have no problem with it.

I will say—and Steve might just mention this. Todd, you might mention it too, because we're putting out an order. You know, freedom of speech means you can burn the American flag, which I think is horrible. But I noticed something over the last little while. You know, as you do this,

you start noticing things that you wouldn't normally think. It really causes unrest and violence when they burn American flag.

So the American flag, I wanted—anybody who burns the American flag, go to jail, based on freedom of speech—goes to jail immediately, but the freedom of speech protected them, right? And so—and that argued—that's been argued a couple of times, and, you know, it's one of those things.

But you know what hasn't been argued, and we're going to be arguing it, I think, very soon—
Deputy Chief of Staff Miller. That's right, sir.

The President. —and that's the violence. They incite violence.

So, when they—I saw it just yesterday: They burned the American flag, and people that were there were fine, and all of a sudden, they're going crazy, and there's fistfights. It wasn't in Memphis either. [*Laughter*] But I will say, the—it incites violence.

And I think you go—you just do the exact same thing. Don't use freedom of speech. Use the incitement of violence.

Deputy Chief of Staff Miller. That's right, sir.

Deputy Attorney General Blanche. Yes.

Attorney General Bondi. That's right.

The President. I mean, it's really—you had to see. These people were going at it.

Deputy Attorney General Blanche. Yes.

The President. And you know, you could burn other things, and people would just stand there. They fall asleep. You burn the American flag—and they're on both sides—but the level of violence I saw this flag burning caused was incredible—it was an incitement. So——

Deputy Chief of Staff Miller. That's right, sir.

The President. —I hope you guys are going to be able to do that, Pam, right?

Attorney General Bondi. We're looking at that, President.

"Transtifa" Organization

Q. Well, there's also groups called "transtifa." So, perhaps if you can label them a domestic terrorist group, then you'd—in all reality, you could take that flag down because it would represent the transtifa. Just——

The President. Well, I think you probably could. You—again, you'll be sued, and it's okay. I've been sued before a couple of times. You may have seen. [*Laughter*]

Anyway.

[*Several reporters spoke at once.*]

Qatar/Hostages Held in Gaza, Palestinian Territories

Q. Mr. President, Netanyahu said that he doesn't rule out targeting Hamas anywhere they are. You said that you don't want to see Qatar hit again. Do you—are there any guarantees that Qatar is not——

The President. Well, he won't be hitting in Qatar, as I say. I call it Qa-tar. You call it Qatar. You're actually more right. But actually, you're allowed to call—the Amir said you can say it any way you want, but I've always thought of it as Qa-tar. I think it's a beautiful sound.

And actually, they've been a very good ally, and a lot of people don't know that.

But he won't be hitting Qatar, but he will be maybe going after—now, there was an article that I read in a newspaper, just about an hour ago, where Hamas said they're going to use the 20 hostages as human shields. They're going to bring them up from the dark tunnels, and they're going to put them in the line of fire so that if Israel goes forward, they're going to die. And I thought that was very terrible, and I put out a statement on that. You saw that. But——

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Political Assassinations

Q. Mr. President, on Charlie Kirk. In retrospect, given all of the moving ways that this White House has paid tribute to Charlie Kirk——

The President. Right.

Q. ——do you think it would have been fitting to lower the flags to half-staff when Melissa Hortman, the Minnesota House speaker, was gunned down by an assassin as well?

The President. I'm not familiar—oh, the—who?

Q. The Minnesota House speaker, a Democrat——

The President. Oh.

Q. ——who was assassinated this summer and——

The President. Well, if the Governor had asked me to do that, I would have done that, but the Governor of Minnesota didn't ask me. I didn't—I wouldn't have thought of that, but I would have if somebody had asked me.

People make requests for the lowering of flag, and oftentimes you have to say no because it would be a lot of lowering; the flag would never be up. Had the Governor of Minnesota asked me to do that, I would have done that gladly.

Political Violence

Q. And given the killing of Melissa Hortman, the attack on Paul Pelosi, the attack on Gabby Giffords, the attack on the Pennsylvania Governor's mansion, why make the case that violence is only on one side? It seems to be taking place across the spectrum.

The President. I didn't say it's on one side, but I say the radical left causes tremendous violence, and they seem to do it in a bigger way. But the radical left really is—causes a lot of problems for this country. I really think they hate our country.

Okay, yes, please.

Investigations Into Political Organizations/Acts of Political Violence

Q. You were talking—this may be related to the RICO work that you're doing——

The President. Right.

Q. ——and I'd like to confirm.

The President. And we are really looking at that seriously.

Q. Vice President Vance was speaking with Stephen Miller earlier today about targeting NGOs that they were saying foment violence.

The President. Right.

Q. Is that—can you speak more to that?

And what NGOs specifically are you looking to target, sir?

The President. A number of them.

Steve? Please.

Deputy Chief of Staff Miller. Yes. So I believe what you're referring to is: There are these nonprofit entities that organize, as the President mentioned, attacks on ICE officers, attacks on Border Patrol agents; organized doxing campaigns, which are a violation of Federal law. They break off cement, and they bring it into riots. They have organized drop points for weapons, organized drop points for gas masks, organized drop points for all the materials necessary to launch a riot. Of course, you saw that during the Black Lives Matter riots as well, too.

So there's this whole network of organizations. And I think the key point the President has been making is somebody is paying for all of this. This is not happening for free.

And so, under the President's direction, the Attorney General is going to find out who is paying for it, and they will now be criminally liable for paying for violence.

The President. And, you know, a new thing that I've been seeing a lot of lately, but never saw before is: They're walking in with bricks and rocks and everything, and the FBI or the Border Patrol or ICE and—or the police are grabbing them and taking them away, and that's great. And then they whip out——

Q. But can you name some——

The President. ——and then they whip out a hammer, and it's a beautiful hammer. Really, a—it's nice. You know, this is not a hammer somebody happens to have. These are serious hammers—beautiful, brandnew hammers. And they start breaking up the concrete sidewalks and the granite curbs, in many cases. Granite is hard to cut. You know, it's very hard stone. And they're banging away and handing out pieces of stone.

So, instead of having it in bags, they're banging the sidewalk, knocking the—you have to see what some of these sidewalks look like when they finish, and especially the curbs, because the granite curbs are very, very expensive. And they're great—you know, very hard, very—they are almost indestructible, but not when it gets pounded on for 20 minutes by some pretty strong guy.

And then he—they hand out big chunks of stone so that people can throw them at the police and people can drop them off bridges into car windows.

No, we have a long way to go, and we're going to make it all good. We're going to make it really safe. This country is going to be safe. We've got almost 3½ years. Think of that, three and a half years. It's a long time. It goes quickly. But at the end of that time, I hope one of the many things we can say is that we made our cities safe again.

Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you.

Q. Thanks, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:49 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Jim Vena, chief executive officer, Union Pacific, in his former capacity as a member of the board of directors of FedEx; U.S. Attorney D. Michael Dunavant for the Western District of Tennessee; Memphis, TN, resident Regina Seymour, who was carjacked at a gas station on August 16 in Memphis, TN; Gov. Westley W.O. "Wes" Moore of Maryland; President Karol Nawrocki of Poland; Olivia DiNucci, an organizer for Code Pink, who heckled the President with

pro-Palestinian slogans and was escorted out of Joe's Seafood, Prime Steak, and Stone Crab restaurant in Washington, DC, on September 9; Gov. Jay R. "J.B." Pritzker of Illinois; Tyler Robinson, suspected gunman in the assassination of Turning Point U.S.A. Founder and Executive Director Charles J. Kirk on the campus of Utah Valley University in Orem, UT, on September 10, and his parents Matthew C. and Amber D. Robinson; Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. J. Daniel Caine, USAF; Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel; Mayor Brandon Johnson of Chicago, IL; Mayor Muriel E. Bowser of Washington, DC; former Sen. W. Mitt Romney, in his capacity as the 2012 Republican Presidential nominee; Jack Advent, former social media manager, 2024 Donald J. Trump Presidential campaign; Erika Kirk, wife of Mr. Kirk; Amir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani of Qatar; and Gov. Timothy J. Walz of Minnesota. A reporter referred to Paul F. Pelosi, Sr., husband of Rep. Nancy Pelosi; former Rep. Gabrielle D. Giffords; and Gov. Joshua D. Shapiro of Pennsylvania. The transcript was released by the Office of Communications on September 16.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Memphis, TN, efforts to restore law and order, signing the memorandum.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Advent, Jack; Bessent, Scott K.H.; Biden, Joseph R., Jr.; Blackburn, Marsha W.; Blanche, Todd; Bondi, Pamela J.; Bowser, Muriel E.; Caine, J. Daniel; Cole, Terrance C.; DiNucci, Olivia; Driscoll, Daniel P.; Dunavant, D. Michael; Greer, Jamieson L.; Hagerty, William F., IV; Hegseth, Peter B.; Johnson, Brandon; Kirk, Charles .; Lee, William B.; Miller, Stephen; Moore, Westley W.O. "Wes"; Nawrocki, Karol; Netanyahu, Benjamin; Noem, Kristi L.; Omar, Ilhan A.; Patel, Kashyap P. "Kash"; Pritzker, Jay R. "J.B."; Robinson, Amber D.; Robinson, Matthew C.; Robinson, Tyler; Romney, W. Mitt; Scharf, William O.; Serralta, Gadyaces S.; Seymour, Regina; Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Amir; Trump, Barron W.; Trump, Erika; Vena, Jim; Walz, Timothy J.; Xi Jinping.

Subjects: 2024 Presidential election; Attorney General; Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives; China, President; China, trade with U.S.; Deputy Attorney General; District of Columbia, law enforcement improvement efforts; District of Columbia, Mayor; Drug Enforcement Administration; Federal Bureau of Investigation; Flag burning, efforts to prosecute; Freedom of speech; Gaza, hostages held by Hamas; Illegal drugs, interdiction efforts; Illinois, crime in Chicago; Illinois, Governor; Israel, airstrikes on Hamas headquarters in Doha, Qatar; Israel, Prime Minister; Joint Chiefs of Staff; Maryland, Governor; Minnesota, Governor; Minnesota, shooting of legislators in Minneapolis; National Guard; Poland, President; Qatar, Amir; Qatar, Israeli airstrikes on Hamas headquarters in Doha; Secretary of Homeland Security; Secretary of the Army; Secretary of the Treasury; Secretary of War; Social media outlets, role in radicalization; State and local law enforcement, Federal support; Suspected drug-trafficking vessels, U.S. airstrikes in Caribbean Sea and Eastern Pacific; Tennessee, Governor; Tennessee, law enforcement improvement efforts in Memphis; TikTok; U.S. Border Patrol; U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement; U.S. Marshals Service; U.S. Trade Representative; Utah, assassination of Charles J. Kirk in Orem; White House Deputy Chief of Staff for Policy; White House Staff Secretary.

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