

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2025

Remarks in an Exchange With Reporters Prior to Departure for Marine Corps Base Quantico, Virginia

September 30, 2025

Potential Lapse in Federal Government Appropriations/Illegal Immigration

Q. Mr. President, if there is a shutdown, how many Federal workers do you plan to lay off?

The President. Well, we may do a lot, and that's only because of the Democrats. And, as you know, they want to be able to take care of people that have come into our country illegally, and no system can handle that. And so we're totally opposed on that.

But we can't take—we just can't do it. I'd love to do everybody. I'd love to do the whole world, but our country can't handle people that come into our country illegally. And they want to give them full health care benefits.

They want to open the wall again. Can you believe it? I can't even believe it. They want to open the wall. They haven't taken away boys playing in women's sports. They haven't done that. Men playing in women's sports. It's like they—they don't change. They lost an election in a landslide, and they don't change.

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

U.S. Cease-Fire Proposal Between Hamas and Israel

Q. Mr. President, how long do you plan to give—how long do you plan to give Hamas to respond to the cease-fire proposal you've laid out?

The President. Well, we're going to do about 3 or 4 days. We'll see how it is. All of the Arab countries are signed up. The Muslim countries all signed up. Israel is all signed up. We're just waiting for Hamas. And Hamas is either going to be doing it or not. And if it's not, it's going to be a very sad end.

Q. And do you have a deadline?

U.S. Diplomatic Efforts/Gaza, Palestinian Territories

Q. Is there room to negotiate, Mr. President?

The President. What?

Q. Is there room to negotiate, or is this a take-it-or-leave-it deal? Is there room to negotiate with Hamas, or is this a take-it-or-leave-it deal?

The President. There's not much. You know, with Hamas, we want—very simple: We want the hostages back immediately, and we want some good behavior. And you know, it's pretty—pretty simple. You don't get simpler. Think of it. We've signed every country in the Middle East. This is, like, an impossible thing. It's never been done before. This is more than Gaza. Gaza was big stuff. But this is—Gaza is a piece of it.

Israel/Hamas Attacks of October 7, 2023, on Israel

Q. And if they reject the deal, you said that Israel has your backing to do whatever they need to do. What do you envision that looks like?

The President. I will let them go and do what they have to do.

Q. What does that mean to you?

The President. They can do it pretty easily. I would let them go and do what they have to do. You know, we've killed about 25,000 Hamas. So, certainly, they paid a big price for October 7.

And this is a whole new group. You know, they come in and they come in and they keep coming. But this is a whole different group. And their leadership has been killed three different times, so they paid a big price.

We hope that they're going to have a nice, calm life. Maybe it won't happen. But if it does, it will be one of the greatest things ever to happen. We'll have actual peace in the Middle East.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Venezuela/U.S. Airstrikes on Suspected Tren de Aragua Vessels in the Caribbean Sea/U.S. Drug Interdiction Efforts

Q. Are you preparing to take strikes against drug gangs in Venezuela, sir?

The President. We'll see what happens with Venezuela. Venezuela has been very dangerous with drugs and with other things. And they've been very, very dangerous. So we'll see what happens with Venezuela. We had a lot of drugs coming in through water. We call it "water drugs"—just a simple term.

We don't have any boats on the water. There are no boats. There are no fishing boats. There are no anything. So we hit a number of boats—you probably saw that—and since we did that, we have absolutely no drugs coming into our country via water, because it was lethal.

And now we'll look at cartels. We're going to look very seriously at cartels coming by land.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Meeting of Military Leaders and Combatant Commanders in Quantico, Virginia

Q. What do you plan to tell the Department of War in this address? Why gather all the generals in one place for a speech?

The President. Well, this is only an esprit de corps. Do you know what esprit de corps is? This is only a spirit. We're going to be talking to them. Pete Hegseth is talking right now. I'm going to have to leave because I have to talk to them.

But these are our generals, our admirals, our leaders, and it's a good thing. A thing like this has never been done before, because they came from all over the world. And there's a little bit of expense—not much, but there's a little expense to that. We don't like to waste it. We'd rather spend it on bullets and rockets, frankly. But this was the one time we had to do a great spiritizing.

It's going to be great. I've seen it already. We have every general, every admiral. We have great people. We have our real warriors over there.

And when they're not good, when we don't think they're our warriors, you know what happens? We say: "You're fired. Get out."

We had some real bad ones last term. You know, I rebuilt the military—the entire military. But I had a couple—and I had unbelievable people. To do that, you have to. But I had unbelievable people in there, but I also had some bad ones at the top, like Milley and Mattis and that Yesper [Esper; White House correction]. I called him, too, "always too late" Yesper [Esper; White House correction]. He was horrible.

So—but I learned, because, you know, that was—I was just in there, and I put these people in. They were recommended by RINOs and others, and they're not good. What we have now is the best. But even despite that, I rebuilt the military in my first term.

We had a great first term. We had the greatest economy ever, and it's being beaten by a lot this time.

So I'm going over—I'm going to be meeting——

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

I'm going to be meeting with generals and with admirals and with leaders. And if I don't like somebody, I'm going to fire them right on the spot.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:30 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House prior to boarding Marine One. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of War Peter B. Hegseth; former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark A. Milley, USA (Ret.); and former Secretaries of Defense James N. Mattis and Mark T. Esper.

Categories: Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters, White House.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Esper, Mark T.; Hegseth, Peter B.; Mattis, James N.; Milley, Mark A.

Subjects: Federal workforce, reduction efforts; Foreign narcotics traffickers; Gaza, conflict with Israel; Hamas political-paramilitary organization; Illegal immigration; Israel, attacks by Hamas of October 7, 2023; Israel, military operations in Gaza; News media, Presidential interviews; Secretary of War; Suspected drug-trafficking vessels, U.S. airstrikes in Caribbean Sea and Eastern Pacific; U.S. military readiness, improvement efforts; Venezuela, crime and narcotrafficking.

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