

Remarks in a Roundtable Discussion With the Homeland Security Task Force and an Exchange With Reporters

October 23, 2025

The President. Thank you very much. Thank you. Please.

It's a great honor to have all my friends here. It's like Old Home Week. What a job you're doing, and thank you very much for that.

We want to begin by thanking the people that have done such a great job at the White House. They have been doing really incredible work during a shutdown. I don't even know if they're supposed to be working, but they wouldn't miss a day. So I just want to thank everybody for that very much.

And we're here today to discuss a sweeping, unprecedented, and historically successful operation that my administration has carried out in recent weeks to arrest, prosecute, and permanently remove members of foreign drug cartels from American soil. And the people gathered around this table are the ones that are doing it—and in this room. Some of them sitting a little behind. It's like some of them I'm surprised are not actually at the table. You people should be very insulted by that. *[Laughter]* But you've done a great job back there.

On my first day in office earlier this year, I signed an Executive order to officially designate the drug cartels and savage transnational gangs as foreign terrorist organizations. It was my honor to do so.

And on that same day, I also signed an order directing the creation of the Homeland Security Task Force to bring together all Federal, State, and local partners to achieve the national policy goal of eliminating the cartel presence in America once and for all. And the results are—and it's early, and the results are spectacular.

Led by ICE and the FBI, this Task Force includes the Department of Justice, the Department of War, DHS, the intelligence community, ATF, the DEA, the U.S. Marshals, and the state and local agencies in every part of our country. Other than that, we don't include too many people. That's a hell of a group— isn't it, huh?—when you think of it. That's not a group you want against you, certainly not at one time.

In addition to the task force members, we're pleased to be joined by representatives of law enforcement at every level—the highest level, actually, but every level—including national president of the Fraternal Order of Police, Patrick Yoes. Where's Patrick? Patrick—thank you, Patrick. Thank you for the endorsement too. That really hit it off. I would have gotten 98 percent anyway, but it was still good to have your endorsement. *[Laughter]* Thank you, Patrick. I don't forget those things.

President of the National Sheriffs Association, Chris West. Chris? Thank you, Chris, very much. Great. Good job. Major Cities Chief Association executive director, Laura Cooper. Laura? Thank you, Laura, very much. Major County Sheriffs of America executive director, Megan Noland. Megan, thank you. Thank you very much.

And president of the National Border Patrol Council, my friend and a very good speaker, by the way. Whenever he gets up and speaks, I say, "That guy can really speak." I don't know, I don't want him to run for office. I want him to stay where he is. Paul Perez. Paul—thank you, Paul. Where is Paul? Hi, Paul. What are you doing over there, Paul? *[Laughter]* Good job. Good speaker you are, though, Paul. I mean it, too.

National Border Patrol Council President Paul A. Perez. Thank you.

The President. You've made some incredible speeches, some—and all from the heart too. Right? Some great ones.

Today you'll hear details from my national security and homeland security teams about the extraordinary, historic achievements of this new Homeland Security Task Force since it became fully operational last month in all 50 States. The job they're doing. What we inherited from this past administration is, like, disgraceful.

In a matter of weeks, the Task Force has made the largest number of arrests of cartel leaders, operatives, and gang members in American history, more than 3,000 and counting. That includes members of the ultraviolent New Generation Cartel; the Sinaloa Cartel; the LNFM Cartel; MS-13 cartel—and you know MS-13, the gang; and Tren de Aragua, another beauty. That's a group of real garbage we have to deal with that we shouldn't have to deal with.

These are in addition to the massive numbers of dangerous criminals my administration arrested nationwide since January 20, numbering over 120,000. It's a record. And 120,000 criminal arrests. Thank you very much.

Unfortunately, for 4 long years before I took office, the last administration allowed the cartels and their operatives to, frankly, take over our country, to freely infiltrate America and all the communities nationwide.

Along with transnational gangs, these groups have unleashed more bloodshed and killing on American soil than all other terrorist groups combined. These are the worst of the worst. It should now be clear to the entire world that the cartels are the ISIS of the Western Hemisphere.

In addition to their monstrous violence such as cutting off heads, burning their enemies alive, and burning innocent people alive too, by the way, the cartels control large swaths of territory. They maintain vast arsenals of weapons and soldiers, and they use extortion, murder, kidnapping to exercise political and economic control. Thank you very much, Joe Biden, for allowing that to happen.

Biden surrendered the—I mean, he just surrendered our country to the cartels. Don't worry, we're taking—it gets better. We're taking it back. It's really fast, at levels that nobody has ever seen before. But what we had to put up with, what we inherited was just a disgrace.

And while Biden was President—if he was President; I think the autopen was President, not Biden—nearly 100 percent of those who infiltrated our southern border did so because they were personally approved. They admitted they were—they were—just what happened, assisted by the most dangerous and violent criminal organizations anywhere on the planet. The worst people on the planet they allowed into our beautiful country.

Under the Trump administration, we're finally treating the cartels as the core national security threat that they really are. The cartels are waging war on America, and just as I promised in the campaign, we're waging war on them like they've never seen before. All you have to do is turn on your television and you'll see what's happening to them.

Past administrations have tried to mitigate this threat, and our objective is to eliminate it. We're not mitigating; we're eliminating. We're getting them out. The bad ones we're putting in prison. We hate to do that, because that means we're stuck with them for 50 years or more.

In recent weeks, our Homeland Security Task Force has seized more than 70 tons of deadly narcotics along with more than 1,000 illegal guns, and that's just recently. This is already the most successful anti-cartel and anti-gang operation in American history, and it's just getting started.

We have incredible people. A lot of them are in this room with us today, and it's an honor to have them. But we're going to not stop until the threat has been fully and completely eradicated.

I want to thank Task Force members with us today, including a person who's doing a fantastic job, Attorney General Pam Bondi. Thank you. Pam, thank you.

Attorney General Pamela J. Bondi. Thank you, President.

The President. Secretary of War Pete Hegseth. Sounds so much better than Secretary of Defense. I don't know. Do you guys agree with that? I don't know. It sounds—you know, we won the First World War, the Second World War. I always say, "Everything before and everything in between." And then we got woke, and we said, "Well, let's call it Defense." I don't think—I think we like it this way better.

You know, it's funny. That's something I thought it would be maybe controversial, and it's only controversial that we changed the name in the first place. It's not controversial at all. It's been unbelievably well accepted, Pete. Hasn't it? Right?

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

The President. It's been pretty amazing. I thought it would be controversial.

People want to have our country back. People want to do exactly what we're doing right now. We're getting a lot of credit for it, and we should. I want to thank though—Pete, you're doing a great job. Pete Hegseth.

Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem. Kristi, thank you very much. Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard. Tulsi, good job.

And the heads of all of the law enforcement agencies all throughout the room, you're really amazing—the job you've done.

To provide additional details on our mission, I would like also to ask General Bondi to say a few words, followed by Secretary Noem, Secretary Hegseth, Director Gabbard, Homeland Security Adviser Stephen Miller.

Stephen—you're such a superstar, Stephen. *[Laughter]* They called Stephen the other day a very bad name. And I said, "You should sue them, Stephen." I think he will. I hope he does.

FBI Director Kash Patel and Deputy Attorney General Todd Blanche.

And I just want to say it's an honor the job we're doing and these people are doing. Absolutely incredible.

I'll just add a couple of things. In Memphis, as you know, where the numbers are down in half already, and it's only been about 2 weeks, you're doing a fantastic job there. Thank you. Incredible. Nobody thought it was possible. It was really a—it was a very sick city. It was horrible what happened there. People would go from—if you're on the board of FedEx, they would ride you one block to the hotel. They said you couldn't walk it because it was too dangerous. And they're already feeling better about it.

But the best example right now is Washington, DC. We have—we went from one of the most unsafe places in the planet—I hate to say—but in this country, to a totally safe city. It's a—nothing is crime free, I guess, but this is about as close to crime-free as you're going to get. And you guys have done an incredible job with that. Every one of you that have worked so hard on—on this one. And it's our Nation's Capital.

And people would go to the Nation—they'd go from—I always say Iowa, Indiana. They'd go from Florida. They'd come up. They want to see the monument. "I want to see the Lincoln

Memorial." "I want to see one of the monuments, any one of them." And they'd go home in a coffin.

But not anymore. It's not happening anymore. We haven't had that happen in a long time. It was averaging more than one a week, one person a week. Who would think that's possible? And it hasn't happened anymore.

And we have a safe city. We have a city where the restaurants are booming. People are going out. Nobody is being mugged, hit over the head with a baseball bat. None of the—stuff is gone. We took out 1,700 criminals, many of them career criminals, many of them given to us by Joe Biden and his ridiculous open-borders policy. They came in from jails from all over the world—not just South America, from all over the world. Jails. They came in from mental institutions and insane asylums all over the world. Drug dealers. And we got them the hell out of here. They're either that, or if they're so bad, as I said before, we put them in jail, because we can't take a chance that they come back.

But I want to just say that Washington, DC, is such an example of what could be done, and now the same thing is happening in Memphis. We're just halfway through the process, and already the numbers are far superior, far better than what we would have thought at this time.

And Chicago—I just saw the number. Last week—it was last weekend—4 were murdered, 11 were shot. And then I have this guy, Pritzker, who's a very weak Governor. Let me be nice. I'm going to be very nice. He's extremely weak. He's pathetic. I have Pritzker get up and say how great they're doing in Chicago. They're doing very poorly. So four were murdered—four. Eleven were shot. I would say—and that was not a bad week for him, okay? That was not a bad week. He's had some where 18 or 19 were murdered. And you know what his excuse was? "Yes, but that was a long weekend." Okay? Can you believe it? He said that was a long weekend. He's bad.

And then the mayor is worse. I mean, that mayor is worse. Low IQ. Very low IQ. And we don't need low-IQ people. We need people that are going to take care.

And I love Chicago, and I love those beautiful women—Black women, beautiful women wearing MAGA hats. And they're all over the place in Chicago. They want protection. They don't care if it's the National Guard, if it's the Army, Navy, Coast Guard, Marines. They'll take Space Force. Okay? Space Force. Send them in. They couldn't—they just don't want to be mugged, killed, raped, shot in the head. And we stop it. So we're going to be giving a very special—we're going to give Chicago very special care.

As you probably know, maybe you heard, we were going to do a big surge in San Francisco, but I call—got a great call from some incredible people, some friends of mine, very successful people. Marc, who's—everybody knows him—and Jensen—everybody knows Jensen, Nvidia—and others called me from San Francisco, and they said, "We're working really, really hard with the mayor, and we're making progress. Would it be possible for you hold off—for you to hold off the surge?"

And I had four or five calls, and I think they're making progress of their own. That would be the greatest. I mean, if they could do that, that would be great. And they have great confidence in those people. I mean, incredible competence. Some of the smartest business leaders. And they're working very well with the police department. They're doing a good job.

So we are holding off that surge, everybody, and we're going to let them see if they can do it. I said I think we can do it much faster—I know we can do it faster. I think we can do it better than anybody. We can take criminals out that they're not going to know about, and probably they don't have the legal authority, maybe, to do what we can, but I'm okay with it.

And we're going to let—San Francisco has the potential to be—it was a great, great city. It has the potential, very quickly, to be a great city again. And these are the companies that are there that are all working, and those are the people that asked me: "Could you do away with the surge? And let's see how it works." And we'll do that. If we need to, we'll do it, but it's possible that we won't need to.

And we will be focusing on other places like Chicago, and we'll have Chicago taken care of very quickly. But just remember, 11 people shot, 4 people murdered. Okay? And that was this weekend, and that was Chicago. And then you'll see Pritzker get up and talk about, "Well, we have it under control." They don't have it under control. Just the opposite: It's getting worse.

So we'll take care of—as soon as we give the go-ahead, which is—all I have to do is give the go-ahead.

We won the big court case the other day on the National Guard. That was a good case. Same thing with Portland—speaking of that—because that's where we won it. But, I mean, I looked at—I looked the other night, Saturday night. Portland is, like, burning to the ground, and these people are saying it's just friendly stuff. The whole place is burning to the ground. So we'll take care of that one. That's like an insurrection more than it is anything else. That's—that's crazy. Portland is crazy.

And then you listen to these radical-left people talking about: "It's really okay. You're seeing things. You're really seeing things."

So we're going to take care of Chicago. We're going to take care of Portland. We're going to take care of Memphis.

We're proud of DC. There's nothing to take care of anymore, but we're not going to let it ever go bad. It's never going to happen again. Our Nation's Capital.

And with that, I'm just going to tell you that Pam Bondi has done a fantastic job. And, Pam, would you say a few words, please?

Attorney General Bondi. Sure. Thank you, President Trump, and thank you for your leadership.

And this is all about collaboration. Around this table—I'm looking around this table—we all work so well together. I don't think another administration in our nation's history has worked so well together.

We talk constantly—Secretary Noem, Tulsi, Pete—constantly, but also all of our agencies working hand in hand, and that's why this is so successful. And these people around this table are working seven days a week, 24 hours a day, even though the Democrats have tried to shut down the government.

[At this point, Attorney General Bondi continued her remarks, concluding as follows.]

We are going to supercharge this work. This is not a pilot program; this is permanent. We are here to stay.

And, Secretary Hegseth, we couldn't do this without you and the Department of War.

Thank you all so much for everything you're doing around this table working tirelessly.

And, President Trump, thank you——

The President. Thank you.

Attorney General Bondi. ——for giving them the ability to do it.

The President. Thank you, Pam, very much. Thank you.

Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi L. Noem. Mr. President, since the year 2000, we have lost over 1 million Americans to drugs, to overdoses, to these cartels that have proliferated that kind of a disease on our people and have gone to war with our next generation of Americans.

When you signed the Executive order that was protecting the American people from invasion, what you did is that you took these cartels and gangs that we've known for decades, and you declared them to be what they really are, and that's terrorists.

You declared war on them, and you didn't say we were just going to fight them. You said we were going to destroy them. And everybody around this table is so honored to be here to work with you to destroy these terrorists that have been killing Americans for years and getting rich off of it.

I'm so proud of the work that was done just in the September surge. You referenced that earlier. We had over 400 operations that went down in those first 43 days of the Homeland Security Task Force, in operations that brought, as Pam referenced, 3,200 terrorists to justice, got them off the streets.

Sir, we also have had over—precursors and chemicals that were brought in. We've had the work at the southern border. We've got Border Patrol here at the table with you. Fentanyl has been cut down by 50 percent coming into this country over our borders.

The President. That's great. Great.

Secretary Noem. We've continued to work not just nationally, but internationally, and on our maritime borders as well.

The ICE agents that have so much violence against them and threats against them, sir, they get up every day ready to work with this Task Force to be able to keep people safe.

And then we've got Coast Guard, who's been doing just a ton of our incredible interdictions out on the seas and the waters in cooperation with operations that you've targeted in the Caribbean with the Department of War.

And, sir, I just want to thank you for the leadership you put at this table, for your Cabinet members, for Stephen Miller, for putting this in place to make sure that what you did—when you consolidated the Homeland Security Task Force, you took a thousand other Task Forces that were already established in the Federal Government and you streamlined them into this room, into this group right here, so that we can look at each other in the face every day and say: "What's our problem? How do we address it? How do we fix it?" And then we go to work together with our arms linked to do exactly what you told us to do. And that's not just protect the American people from invasion, but to kill these terrorists. You gave us the task to eliminate them, destroy them so that they can't destroy the next generation of Americans.

So thank you, sir. Thank you for the people you put around this table.

The President. Thank you very much. That's a great job. Thank you.

Pete.

Secretary Hegseth. Yes, sir. Well, thank you, Mr. President, for your leadership. Chief, likewise. Tulsi and Todd and Dan and Pam and Kristi and Stephen and Kash. I mean, I could go around the table.

From the Department of War, we are thankful and grateful for the incredible effort that your agencies put in. And we could not be more proud to stand shoulder to shoulder with you—not superficially, not kind of over here, but front and center on the Homeland Security Task Force,

right there with you—because our department has spent over two decades defending other homelands, and we're very proud to be defending our own. And if you talk to the troops down, say, on the southwest border, Mr. President, morale is sky high——

The President. Yes.

Secretary Hegseth. ——and continues to be, because they're proud to be defending their own communities, their own State, and their own country.

So, when that Executive order was signed, the mission was clear: protecting the American people against invasion. And so, the Department of War went straight to the southwest border. We still have 10,000 troops there. We have national defense areas. We're standing alongside the Border Patrol, and we've locked that border down—100-percent control of the southwest border. We stopped the invasion.

[Secretary Hegseth continued his remarks, concluding as follows.]

So the Department of War is not going to degrade or just simply arrest. We're going to defeat and destroy these terrorist organizations to defend the homeland on behalf of the American people, making the jobs of law enforcement safer in the process, making the communities of Americans safer in the process. We think it's a very core mission of the Department of War, and we're proud to be here, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you. Thank you very much, Pete. Thank you.

Tulsi, please.

Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard. Yes, thank you, Mr. President. The key reason that you are hearing about these incredible effects is, number one, the team that you've assembled here and the leadership and the tone that you have set. First and foremost, it's about keeping the American people safe. The intelligence community plays a critical role in being able to support our law enforcement at the Federal, State, and local level to make sure that they are armed with actionable intelligence to be able to actually go after those who threaten the safety and security of the American people.

Mr. President, under your leadership, for the first time there is a newly created National Intelligence Fusion Cell at the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, National Counterterrorism that has a very simple purpose: to make sure that we have two-way intelligence-sharing of actionable information between the intelligence community and law enforcement.

[Director Gabbard continued her remarks, concluding as follows.]

Mr. President, it's your leadership that has made all of this possible. I can tell you in the midst of this Government shutdown, our folks, like everyone around this table, are working 24/7 without pay and eager to get after this because they believe in your leadership and the mission that you have presented to them.

The President. Thank you very much.

Director Gabbard. Thank you, Mr. President. I'll hand this off to Homeland Security Adviser Stephen Miller——

The President. Right.

Director Gabbard. ——the leader of this task force.

White House Deputy Chief of Staff for Policy Stephen Miller. Let me just say, Mr. President, that this country was going to die without you. This country was going to actually die without you. That's what we were facing in 2024. We've been invaded for four years. Our communities

were sinking. Our public safety had gone to zero. Cartels were running entire communities. Sex trafficking, child trafficking, labor trafficking was out of control. Overdoses were out of control. The cartels were claiming more and more territory. City services were buckling. This was a country on the verge of dying, and you alone saved it.

And when you stepped forward, originally in 2016, you started the movement to make America great again, and that means make America great again in every way. And that means safety and prosperity and peace and freedom from cartels and crime and gangs.

[Deputy Chief of Staff Miller continued his remarks, concluding as follows.]

And I will say one last thing, which is that his courage has been an inspiration to everyone else in this room. You know, there—there are people in this room—you know, I'm looking at, for example, at Todd Lyons—who have been relentlessly doxed and harassed and threatened. But when they see President Trump's courage, what he's been through for 10 years to save America—when they came after his family, his businesses, his safety, his freedom—everyone at this table knows we can give whatever it takes to get the mission done.

So, President Trump, thank you for your leadership, your boldness, your courage, and your vision. We're honored to serve underneath you.

The President. Well, I want to thank you, Stephen. And I have to say that, you know, I've been making the rounds. I'm leaving tomorrow for some very big meetings, including with the president of China, where I think we're going to come out very well and everyone is going to be very happy.

But everybody said the same thing: A year ago, we had a dead country. We were a dead country. We really were in a lot of ways, not just this. We were dead as doornails on this. But we were a country that was in serious trouble and beyond that. And we have the hottest country anywhere in the world right now. The whole world is talking about it. We have the hottest country anywhere in the world.

We're going to clear up this crime in our cities. We can do it quickly too. They showed how quickly we could do it in DC. It was a real bad place. It was a real mess. Dirty, filthy, disgusting graffiti all over the place. Tents on every ounce of parks that we had. Just disgusting.

And I rode around last weekend. I rode around the city. I felt very safe in that car. *[Laughter]* But you know, I would have done it without it. I wouldn't need that car so much anymore—I will tell you. But the place was clean. We've started that also—not only law and order, but we—you know, the cleanliness is important. I think cleanliness is almost a part of law and order.

If you see dirty, disgusting streets and potholes all over the place, and railings falling down and graffiti all over the marble—beautiful, statuary marble columns—those gorgeous columns where they had graffiti—it's all gone. And I think it's a part of it. I really do. I think it's a big part of it. But we have a city that we can be proud of. It's going to—we're going to be that way with every city we have.

That's why with San Francisco, I wish them luck, but we could do it so much faster. I told the mayor, "I love what you're doing." I respect it. And I respect the people that are doing it. They're the biggest people in the country. They're the biggest people in the world. A lot of the high tech. Some people like them, some people don't, but they're smart, and they want to do it. And I said, "I am so honored to let you do it. And if it doesn't work out, we'll do it for you very quickly."

But I just want to thank—the people around this table are amazing.

Kash, please go ahead.

Federal Bureau of Investigation Director Kashyap P. "Kash" Patel. Mr. President, I'll just keep it short, but I think what the media should realize is the amount of courage it takes to do this. And you led that mission. You led it during your campaign, and you brought it to the American people.

I think the media should focus on some of these numbers the Attorney General just rattled off. Those aren't numbers. Those are lives. Lives saved by the millions—the millions. Enough—excuse me—enough fentanyl to kill over 200 million Americans, gone, evaporated off our streets permanently.

[Director Patel continued his remarks, concluding as follows.]

And as Stephen said, we're inspired by your leadership. And this country is thankful for these eight months. And I can't wait to see what the next 4 years looks like.

The President. Thank you very much. Thanks, Kash. Great job.

Todd, please.

Deputy Attorney General Todd Blanche. Thank you, Mr. President. The number that I think matters, the three—over 3,000—3,266 terrorists have been taken off the streets in 2 months. And for each of those arrests, there's any—anywhere from between 4 to 20 law enforcement agents—Federal, State, and local—executing those arrests. And that means every one of them are putting their lives on the line to make these arrests to make our community safer.

And so, what I will say to them is thank you. But also, what I will say to them is that to the extent that there are politicians, as recently as today, suggesting they are doing something wrong—we have Governors, district attorneys, mayors, and even Congresswomen suggesting that our Federal law enforcement and the state and local law enforcement that are helping them are doing something wrong—that is disgusting and something that we will not tolerate. That every day Attorney General Bondi and I talk with all of our partners making sure that they know that if any one of our Federal agents, our State or local agents working under the HSTF banner, are even touched by any of these terrorists or rioters, they will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

When politicians aid these terrorists by trying to give them comfort or protection or suggesting that somehow our men and women are doing the wrong thing, same problem. We will not tolerate it, Mr. President.

So thank you to all of our State and local men and women that are helping us, and our Federal law enforcement officers that are literally putting their lives on the line every single day. We will always protect you.

Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you very much, Todd. A really good job you're doing too. Thank you.

Any questions, maybe pertaining——

[Several reporters began asking questions at once.]

How about pertaining to this for a little while? And we——

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Whoa, whoa, whoa. Would you have any questions of these incredible people?

Q. Yes. Mr. President? Mr. President?

The President. Yes, go ahead, please.

Go ahead.

Venezuela/Border Security

Q. Mr. President, thank you. Mr. President, thank you. Good to see you. If I could just ask both of you, including Secretary Hegseth. There's reporting that the U.S. just sent B-1 bombers near Venezuela to ramp up some military pressure there. Is that accurate? And can you tell us more about that mission?

The President. No, it's not accurate. No. It's false. But we're not happy with Venezuela for a lot of reasons, drugs being one of them. But also, they've been sending their prisoners into our country for years under the Biden administration. Not anymore. We have a closed border. We had actually nobody for the last 4 months—I guess, 5 months. They say—they report nothing. They report zero. I don't know if that can be possible, but that's—we'll accept it. Right, fellas?

But we have closed borders. We have people coming into our country, but they only come in legally. We have the strongest borders we've ever had. We might have the strongest borders of almost any nation right now. And that's a big difference from what it was 2 years ago when everybody was pouring in.

But we're very unhappy with Venezuela because of what they've done. They've emptied their prisons into our country. Nobody can do that. Only a stupid person would have accepted it. And that's what we had running our country: very stupid people. So we're not happy with Venezuela, I will tell you.

Yes.

Q. Mr. President? Thank you, President Trump.

The President. Yes, please. Go ahead.

Q. On—on——

The President. Are you okay?

Fentanyl/China/U.S. Drug Interdiction Efforts

Q. Yes. [Laughter] On fentanyl, President Trump.

The President. I'm saying, we're going to lose you.

Q. I'm sorry about that. On fentanyl, President Trump.

The President. We have some good medical help right over there. That's all right.

Q. On fentanyl. According to CDC data, nearly 330,000 Americans died over the past 5 years from fentanyl. That's 1 in every 1,000 Americans who died.

The President. It's more than that, but that's all right. It's more.

Q. Yes, I know—you think it's even more.

The President. I'll be discussing that with President Xi.

Q. Yes. So that's actually my question.

The President. I figured it was.

Q. I was wondering: Since it mostly comes from China and has caused such carnage in the U.S.,——

The President. Yes.

Q. —what are you going to say to convey the seriousness?

And also, a second question for you or Secretary Hegseth. Is there any evidence that China is now smuggling fentanyl through Venezuela to bypass U.S. and Mexican port controls?

The President. They are doing that, yes. But they are paying right now a 20-percent tariff because of fentanyl. That's billions and billions of dollars that they're paying. We're actually—on November 1, the tariff on China goes to 157 percent, which is record-setting territory. And we don't want that because that's not sustainable for them. They can't sustain that. We don't want them to have to go through that.

So I'm meeting with President Xi, and I would say the first—we have some big issues, like with the farmers and various other things. But the first question I'm going to be asking him about is fentanyl. And if you think about it, they make \$100 million. Think of this: They make \$100 million selling fentanyl into our country. A hundred million. They lose \$100 billion with the 20-percent tariff. So it's not a good business proposition. It's \$100 billion approximately that they have to pay. It's a big penalty to make \$100 million.

So I think they want to do something. They want to put it on the list. It's on the list. It's one of the things we're talking about, and I'm putting it right at the front of the list. So they pay a very big penalty for doing that. And I don't think they want to be doing it, and we'll see what happens at the end of next week, because I'll be meeting next week, as you know, along with—we're stopping in Malaysia, we're stopping in South Korea, we're stopping in Japan.

I'm meeting with President Xi, actually, in South Korea. So it will be the first thing on the list.

Yes, please.

U.S. Airstrikes on Suspected Drug-Trafficking Vessels in the Caribbean Sea and Eastern Pacific

Q. Mr. President, on the drug boats—on the drug boats, sir, has there been any discussion about capturing one so that you can show the amount of narcotics?

The President. Well, we know everything about them. Yeah. Yeah. Jennifer [Jennifer Jacobs, CBS News], we know everything about them. We know where they're coming from, who they're coming with, generally who's in the boat. I'll let Pete discuss it a little bit. But they have incredible intelligence. And you know, usually when you see five engines—I've never even seen that before—but when you see five engines on a boat going about 65 miles an hour, loaded up with white powder in silver cases, generally speaking, that's not a good sign. They're not going fishing, right? And you don't see any fishing rods, right?

So, Pete, I'll let you discuss that a little bit, please.

Secretary Hegseth. Well, yes, sir. Likewise, generally you don't see fishing in submarines either, sir. [Laughter] So this—the U.S. military, as I mentioned, nobody better in the world at mapping networks, identifying who's connected to who inside terrorist organizations. It's just the media is used to hearing that when it pertains to Afghanistan and Iraq and ISIS and Al Qaida.

But if you reframe how you understand the world and our own hemisphere, that's exactly what these foreign terrorist organizations are. And so, we will track them, we will map them, we will network them, and we will hunt them and kill them because they're trying to—and they are—killing and poisoning the American people.

And inside that, we have all the license necessary, all the authorities necessary to take these kinetic strikes, and we'll continue to take them.

The President. And we've been—you know, just to add, because I think it's important—we've been capturing them for years. You know, it's not like, "Gee, let's capture one." We've been doing that for years. For 25 years, we've been doing it—not at a level like we're doing it now, I mean just with the hits we're hitting, but we have much more intensity than any administration has ever had.

But we've been capturing these boats for years, and they get back into the system, and they do it again and again and again. And they don't fear that. They have no fear.

The thing I can tell you right now: It's very hard to find any floating vessel right now on the Pacific or on the—in the Gulf. And I would like to call it by its official name: the Gulf of America. Another little triumph of the Trump administration.

I said for years—I said why aren't we calling—why do we call it the Gulf of Mexico? It's 93 percent—the shoreline is 93 percent ours. So I never understood that. So I made that change. I never realized how easy that was going to be, other than I guess AP—AP fought us in court, and the judge said, "But that's the name." And actually, they were sort of semi prohibited from even covering us after that. It was pretty amazing.

But we have the Gulf of America. And there are very few boats. Very, very few boats. Not even fishing boats, to be honest. I don't want to do that to the fishing industry. But it's been so effective. And our sea drugs, as they call them—they use the term "sea drugs," the drugs coming in by sea—are like 5 percent of what they were a year ago. Less than 5 percent.

So now they're coming in by land. And even the land is concerned because I told them that's going to be next. You know, the land is going to be next. And we may go to the Senate, we may go to the, you know, Congress and tell them about it, but I can't imagine they'd have any problem with it.

I think, in fact, while we're here, I think it's a good idea, Pete. You go to Congress; you tell them about it. What are they going to do? Say, "Gee, we don't want to stop drugs pouring in"? They're killing 300,000 people a year. I think that's the real number—300,000 people a year.

So, between that and my discussion with President Xi, I think we're—we have never made progress like we've made.

The sea drugs are almost dead, and they can't come in that fast from the land. And the land drugs are much more dangerous for them. It's going to be much more dangerous. You'll be seeing that soon. So that's the way it is.

Yes. Go ahead, please.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Yes, go ahead, please. With the glasses. Go ahead.

Representative Daniel Goldman/Democratic Party

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. I wanted to ask: What's your reaction to Representative Dan Goldman calling on NYPD to arrest ICE agents who he says are acting illegally? He says they are illegally assaulting people and illegally detaining people at immigration courts in New York.

The President. Well, you know, I know Dan, and Dan is a loser. You understand. [Laughter] He's a guy that doesn't have what it takes. He's been trying so hard. And they're exhausted. I mean, they're—it's so ridiculous, right? A suggestion like that. So you know.

They're just trying so hard, and it's not working. They've even now started imitating me, of all people. They want to imitate me. And they started using foul language, but they use too much of it. You know, you can't use the F-word seven times in one sentence. It doesn't work. It might

work once every seven news conferences, but you can't do it seven times in one sentence. So I don't know. They're really—they're in big trouble, that party.

Go ahead.

U.S. Airstrikes on Suspected Drug-Trafficking Vessels in the Caribbean Sea and Eastern Pacific

Q. Mr. President, on these boat strikes, some alleged smugglers have survived some of these recent strikes and been sent back to their home country.

The President. Two.

Q. If they're terrorists, why not just arrest and detain them?

Secretary Hegseth. Can I?

The President. Go ahead.

Secretary Hegseth. Two points on that. First, when I served in Iraq in 2005 and 2006, we used to, in sort of a gallows humor way, talk about the Iraqi catch-and-release program—the reality that we would catch a lot of people, hand them over, and then they would be recycled back through, and we'd have to recapture them or attack them again.

And that's why changing the dynamic and actually taking kinetic strikes on these boats ought change the psychology of these foreign terrorist organizations.

To those two that were—that survived a shot on the semisubmersible, it's—I think, again, compared to Iraq and Afghanistan, the vast majority of people that we captured on the battlefield we handed over to the home country. Did we always like how it shaped out? Sometimes we did. Sometimes we did not. But 99 percent would go to the Afghan authorities or the Iraqi authorities.

So, in this case, those two—they were treated by American medics and handed immediately over to their countries where they came from, hopefully, to face prosecution, which is a very standard way of handling something like this.

Q. And you'll do that with future survivors, anyone else who survives?

Secretary Hegseth. We've got protocol of how we'll handle it.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

The President. Not that guy. He's so hopeless.

Go ahead. Go ahead.

West Bank, Palestinian Territories

Q. Mr. President, yesterday there was a vote at the Knesset on annexing the West Bank. Do you see it as a challenge to your peace efforts?

The President. Could you say that louder, please?

Q. Yes. Yesterday, there was a vote at the Knesset in Israel on annexing the West Bank. Do you see it as a challenge to your peace efforts?

The President. Will you answer that, please? Because I cannot understand a word she's saying.

Where are you from? Where are you from?

Q. I'm from France.

The President. You're from France? Beautiful accent, but we can't understand what you're saying.

Attorney General Bondi. [Inaudible]

The President. Huh?

Attorney General Bondi. She said a vote at the Knesset on the West Bank.

Q. I have another question.

The President. The West Bank?

Q. Yes.

The President. Is—don't worry about the West Bank. Israel is not going to do anything with the West Bank. Okay? Don't worry about it. Is that your question? They're not going to do anything with the West Bank. Don't worry about it. Israel is doing very well. They're not going to do anything with it.

Yes, please. Go ahead.

Border Security/Illegal Immigration

Q. Thank you, President Trump. Are there any safeguards in place to protect Americans from fentanyl and cartels when you leave office in 2028? Any protocols that could be put in place in case a future administration comes in that wants open borders?

And I also have a question for the Secretary of War as well after your answer, if that's okay.

The President. Well, the biggest thing we can do is make sure they don't come in, because open borders, it's—they would destroy. It's amazing that our country is even surviving with what we went through, coming in by the millions and coming in from the wrong places.

You know, I know all these people that run these countries. And they're smart. They're very street smart. And they're not sending their best. You know, they're not sending—they're taking them out of their prisons and their mental institutions, as I say, over and over again. They're the drug dealers. They're the drug addicts. They're people that don't work.

I mean, the best of them are people that don't work. They don't work. They're on welfare, their form of welfare, which is tiny. Do you know what their form of welfare is? They give you a piece of paper. They give you give you nothing. But they want people that work. They don't let those people come out because they want those people. You know, they cherish those people. Those are the people that make their country run.

They give us all of the people that don't work and are murderers—11,843 murderers came in. Eleven thousand eight hundred—many of them committed—more than 50 percent committed more than one murder. Now, why do we want them? Why would Biden and that group of thugs that he had working for him—why would they accept these people? Why would he accept?

Nobody understands it. You know, they say maybe they wanted the vote, but I did great with the Hispanic vote. But these are people from all over the world. Why would they do it? It's the one question—no matter what I do, I can't—you always like to know the opponent. You have an opponent. What are they getting at? And usually, you can.

Why would they allow 20 million, maybe 25 million people into this country—almost all of which but most of which should not have been allowed into our country? It's one of the great enigmas. What they've done to this country should never be forgotten in history. Should never, ever be forgotten.

And now it looks like we're going to have a communist mayor in New York. That'll be a lot of fun. But remember this: They have to go through the White House.

Yes, please. Go ahead.

Binance Holdings Ltd. Founder Changpeng Zhao/Crypto Currency and Digital Finance

Q. Thank you, President Trump. Today you pardoned the founder of Binance. Can you explain why you chose to pardon him? And did it have anything to do with his involvement in your family's——

The President. Which one? Who's that?

Q. The founder of Binance. He has an involvement in your own family's crypto business.

The President. Oh, the recent one, yes. The—I believe we're talking about the same person because I do pardon a lot of people. I don't know. He was recommended by a lot of people. A lot of people say that—are you talking about the crypto person?

Q. Yes.

The President. A lot of people say that he wasn't guilty of anything. He served 4 months in jail, and they say that he was not guilty of anything, that what he did——

Q. He admitted——

The President. Well, you don't know much about crypto. You know nothing about—you know nothing about nothing. You're fake news.

But let me just tell you that he was somebody that, as I was told—I don't know him. I don't believe I've ever met him. But I've been told by—a lot of support; he had a lot of support. And they said that what he did is not even a crime. It wasn't a crime. That he was persecuted by the Biden administration. And so I gave him a pardon at the request of a lot of very good people.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

The President. Yes, please. Yes, Daniel [Daniel Baldwin, One America News Network].

Homeland Security Task Force/Use of Military Personnel in U.S. Cities/"No Kings" Political Demonstrations

Q. Mr. President, thank you so much. The number——

The President. This is the kind of question I like, right here.

Q. The numbers from this Task Force are jaw-dropping. I wanted to know—this is question for you and both Stephen, since it was said this is your brainchild. What are the lessons to be learned from the success of the Task Force? And what are your continued goals with this task force now that you have about three years left?

The President. Well, the best thing we have going is we have such talent around this table. I could go over every one of these men and women, and we have unbelievable talent. They've got—they're naturals. You know, like somebody that hits a baseball or a golf ball or a—you know, that you see more—it's more evident. It's beautiful. Because it's sports. You can tell somebody right away—are they good or are they not?

These people are the most talented people at what they do. And when we started talking about this, Stephen and all of us, it was—it seemed so easy. What is surprising to me is how quickly we can straighten out a large city, a big city, a mean city, a city that's sick, that got very

sick with guns all over the place, with bullets shooting all over, where you—I mean, you take your life in your hands if you go out and buy a loaf of bread.

That's not America. That's not our country. And those people don't care how you do it. They just want it done. They really do. You know, when you go to the people on the street, they're not—they don't know. Is it National Guard? They just want it done. They want to be safe.

And we've gained a great following of Americans—real Americans, people that want to be safe. But I think the biggest thing we say is we have tremendous talent. We were able to recognize—like a football team, like a baseball team—we were able to recognize the talent.

And the talent is largely in this room. For the whole country, it's largely in this room. There's really nothing like it. And that's why in—I think we had DC done not perfectly, but pretty much done—at least normalized—in 12 days. Wouldn't you say 12—would you say 12 days? On the 12th day, it felt different. And then—and, you know, we took a lot of bad people out, never to—never to come back again than—most of them never to come back again.

But there's great talent. And there's also great courage. It's—you know, it's—I've been watching what goes on. And then you have the radical-left lunatics. And what's that all about? I mean, they're fighting us because we want to stop crime. Where do these people come from? They're paid money. I guess they're paid a lot of money. But—like I saw that ridiculous march the other day. I say, "These people are not representative of our country." And not all of them, of course, but many of them are total lowlifes. These are lowlifes. These are people that are paid agitators. And they're not representative of our country.

So I don't know. I can just tell you that our country has tremendous spirit right now. You know that better than anybody because you cover it well. But we have a lot of people that are very happy right now with the direction.

They did a poll the other day. The direction of our country is better than it's been in 37 years. And I'm upset because I think it's because—it should be better than that, you know? *[Laughter]* I actually said we should be better than that. So you know.

Thank you very much for your question.

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

Missing Children Recovered/Former President Barack Obama/Border Security

Q. Mr. President, yes. Thank you, Mr. President. You guys have done an amazing job in Memphis.

The President. Thank you.

Q. Some of those numbers are staggering. And we've gotten message on social media wanting to thank you for that. But I think—can you talk about the number of missing children—

The President. Yes.

Q. —you guys have discovered in Memphis? That's amazing.

The President. Well, it's hundreds of thousands were lost through Biden and the Biden administration. And we are getting a lot of them back, but they're either dead, they're slaves, they're captured in some form.

But think of it: Hundreds of thousands we're talking about. Not even believable. And they came in through the border. They were sold. They were bargained for. And this was all Biden,

meaning Biden and Obama. The same—you know, the same mentality, frankly. I think it's the same mentality.

Let me tell you, Barack Hussein Obama was a lousy President. A lot of bad things happened. Remember when they used to talk about Trump with the jail cells? Well, he built the jail cells for the children. He built those jail cells.

Remember that came out? "But, sir, they were built in 2014." Do you remember when that came out, after me going through that stuff for about 2 weeks? And then they found out it was Barack Obama that built those jail cells. No, these people are—they were bad leaders.

I hope we don't have it again. I hope we don't have it again, because, you know, our country has come back a long way, but it can only withstand so much, and we don't want to ever go through that again. We never want to have open borders again. We don't want to have—we don't want to have men playing in women's sports. We don't want to have transgender for everybody. We don't want that. We want to have a great country with low interest rates, nice housing, great education, a strong military. The basics.

Yes, please.

Prison Facilities/Border Security/Tren de Aragua Criminal Organization

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. In last night's New York City mayoral debate, Zohran Mamdani said he would close Rikers Island if elected. What kind of impact would that have on public safety?

The President. Well, it's not good. I guess it's not a very nice place, but you need it. You know, you need—you need something. You have a lot of additional people in New York City that should not have been here. They came here through the open border, through Biden's—you know, I don't know how they even do it. New York City has always been tight for money, and then they spend, you know, \$8 billion—and nobody complains about it—on people that just showed up and they just came out of nowhere. Where did they get the money? All of a sudden, they have money.

I'll tell you what, we have to keep our prisons very fair and very safe. But you got a lot of criminals. We have a lot of additional criminals. I used to talk about it. They used to say, "Well, only good people come in from foreign countries." I said, "That's not right." I didn't know that for a fact, but it had just started—right?—the open borders and people flowing in by the millions. They make our criminals look like the nicest people on Earth. That's the only good thing. They make our criminals look like nice people.

They are the meanest, the most vicious. Tren de Aragua, you don't get any sicker. They cut people's fingers off because they called the cop. "Did you call the cop?" "Yes." They cut off his finger so he can't call the cop anymore. And then they say, "Next time we're going to cut off your hand if you call." Because they took over his apartment in Colorado. You know, Colorado, they took over a town, then they took over another town. And you have a weak Governor over there. He doesn't know what the hell he's doing, so he lets it go on.

But we're getting them out of here. We're getting them all out. They're going back to lots of—not just Venezuela. They're going back to lots of countries. Venezuela would be one, however.

Yes, please.

Q. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Yes.

U.S. Airstrikes on Suspected Drug-Trafficking Vessels in the Caribbean Sea and Eastern Pacific

Q. A moment ago, you said that if Secretary Hegseth went to Congress and briefed them on the operations against these——

The President. No, we will go, I said.

Q. You will go.

The President. We will go.

Q. And it would be difficult for them to object.

The President. We're going to go. I don't see any loss in going. No reason not to. You know, they'll always complain, "Oh, we should have gone." So we're going to definitely—I'd like to just say tell you, let's go. We'll go. We're going to tell them——

Q. And, Mr. President——

The President. ——what we're going to do, and I think they're going to probably like it except for the radical-left lunatics.

Q. And, Mr. President, if you are declaring war against these cartels, and Congress is likely to approve of that process, why not just ask for a declaration of war?

The President. Well, I don't think we're going to necessarily ask for a declaration of war. I think we're just going to kill people that are bringing drugs into our country, okay? We're going to kill them. You know, they're going to be, like, dead. Okay.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Yes.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Yes, red hair.

Q. Thank you.

The President. Beautiful red hair.

Q. Thank you. I'll tell my hairdresser that. She'll love it.

This is a question for both you and the Secretary of War, Mr. Hegseth.

The President. Who are you with?

U.S. Armed Forces Recruitment Efforts

Q. I'm with the Center Square. We're a newswire service. With everything that's going on with——between the narcoterrorists in the Caribbean and then also with the——with more Chinese, Iranian, Russian ships also taking part in Venezuela, do you——do you have any plans of expanding operations out of Roosevelt Roads, in fact, placing some——homeporting some ships there?

The President. Yes, go ahead, Pete.

Secretary Hegseth. We're familiar with the location that you're referring to, and we'll make sure that we're properly displaced in order to deal with the contingency we're dealing with there and also any ways in which other countries would attempt to be involved also.

So we can walk and chew gum. We're definitely keeping our eyes on near-peer adversaries at the same time. But we think sending a message on these cartels, these narco-terrorists is an important—important inside our hemisphere, which—for far too long, other presidents, as the president pointed out, they've ignored our own backyard and allowed other countries to increase their influence here, which only threatens the American people. We're changing that.

Q. [Inaudible]—shut down——

The President. One big thing that has happened though, because you mentioned expansion and expand our efforts. So, when I was running for office, second term, everybody was talking about the fact that nobody wanted to join the military, nobody wanted to join the great police force. You know, they didn't want to join New York's Finest or any of our police forces. They didn't want to join anything having to do almost, like, with the country, with the uniform.

We are setting records with the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Space Force, Coast Guard. We're setting records. We've never had anything like it. And I'll tell you when it started: November 5. We didn't even have to wait until January 20. They saw spirit. And now we have people coming in that are—it's unbelievable.

And if we wanted to increase our military force, if we wanted to increase any one of these, including police forces, they can now get men. People didn't want to be policemen and women. They didn't want to be firemen and women. They didn't want to go into the military. We were having tremendous recruiting problems, and now we're setting records.

We literally—last year at this time, you were doing stories that the recruitment was a disaster. We couldn't get men and women to go into the military. Now we have such an overabundance. We've never had—I mean, it's—as I understand it, it's like record-setting recruitment. This is in less than a year. It's been amazing. So this is a good time to expand if we want to do it, and I think we should. I think we should, and we probably will.

Yes, please.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Yes. Blue. Blue.

Federal Law Enforcement Support in U.S. Cities/U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. A couple questions for you. First for you and Secretary Hegseth. Is the administration supportive of sending National Guardsmen to cities for the express purpose of aiding deportation and immigration enforcement efforts?

Secretary Hegseth. To expand deportation efforts?

Q. Sending National Guardsmen to U.S. cities for the express purpose of aiding deportation and immigration enforcement.

Secretary Hegseth. What we've done so far is stand alongside Federal law enforcement in every way, facilities and personnel. But also, we have a great deal of lift inside the military. We're able to move assets in a way that no other aspect of the U.S. Government can. And so, where we can rapidly assist with mass deportations, we have been happy to do that.

Q. And then, one more question, if I may. Is the administration at all supportive of potential measures to crack down or regulate or even ban apps that track ICE agents' locations?

The President. What do you mean by that?

Q. Like specific apps that are used to track the location of ICE agents.

The President. I guess we'll do that. I'm not a big app guy. I'm not into that too much. I think Pam might be. Let's go. Good answer there.

Attorney General Bondi. Yes. Yes. These organizations, President Trump, are coming in, and there are apps to track our Federal law enforcement officers, and it jeopardizes their lives—where they're going to be, their location. And we've actually been working really well with the tech companies who have been cooperating, because they don't want our law enforcement officers to get injured. So yes.

The President. Well, I mean, I see it with ICE where they're having—you know, where they define where they live, who they are. And you know, I wasn't—I didn't take—I didn't have a big view on the masks, but I now understand why they should wear masks. I think it's very dangerous for them not to wear masks. They can do whatever they want. I noticed some do it and some don't. But it's pretty dangerous.

But when you look at—you know, you talk about that question, I think it's very dangerous, and I think you're coming down on that very hard, right?

Attorney General Bondi. We are.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Yes, please. Go ahead.

Anticorruption Enforcement/"No Kings" Political Demonstrations

Q. Thank you, sir. When you were running for reelection in 2024, you released a video statement where you did this—you made this exact promise to show no mercy on the cartels and employ every military asset necessary to combat them.

The President. Yes.

Q. In that same video, you also said that you planned to expose all the bribes and corruptions with politicians and the cartels.

The President. We're doing that. Yes, we're trying to do that.

Q. Has your Task Force been looking into that in American politicians?

The President. Yes, where the money is coming from. Because you see it. Like even that garbage deal they had this weekend, which was embarrassing to them, and the crowds were much smaller. The crowds were not big. Those crowds were not big at all. But when you look at signs, and they're all made beautifully, the yellow signs—I saw the yellows, the blues—but they're all made professionally in a printing shop, looks like on Madison Avenue someplace. Some guy is paying for all that stuff.

And we don't mind protests. Protests is a good thing. I protest. I'm always protesting, right? But when you see some of these people, these people are going crazy. They're going crazy because they're getting paid, because there's no reason for them to be going crazy.

But you watch some of them and they're professional agitators, and we are finding out who's paying them, yes. We have a lot of information about who they are. You're going to be very surprised when you find out.

Q. And I have a question for Secretary Hegseth. Sir, a memo circulating on social media details the establishment of a National Guard response force that's going to be trained in crowd control and civil unrest and deployed in all 50 states by April of 2026. Can you verify the authenticity of that memo? And do you have any more information on the operations?

Secretary Hegseth. I'm not going to answer particulars on something that may be in the planning process, but we definitely do have multiple layers of National Guard response forces, whether it's in each State, whether it's regionally, whether it's title 10 Active Duty, whether it's Washington, DC. We've got a lot of different ways that constitutionally and legally we can employ title 10 and title 32 forces, and we will do so when necessary.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Go ahead.

Russia

Q. Thank you. President Putin basically said today that Russia is immune from U.S. sanctions. He said that it would not impact the Russian economy in any serious way. Is he wrong?

The President. Good. I'm glad he feels that way. That's good. I'll let you know about it in 6 months from now. Okay? Let's see. Let's see how it all works out.

Yes. Go ahead, please. Blue.

Pardons and Commutations/Virginia Democratic Attorney General Candidate Jerrauld C.C. "Jay" Jones/Past Investigations and Prosecutions of the President/Democratic Party

Q. One question about the Task Force, one about the shutdown. I'm Taylor Popielarz with Spectrum News. The same day you established this Task Force back on January 20 was the same day you pardoned the January 6 defendants.

The President. Yes, very proud of that. Yes.

Q. Just last weekend, one of them was charged with allegedly threatening to kill House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries. And a big theme of this Task Force has been allowing law enforcement to do their job and holding accountable people who go after law enforcement. Do you worry that your actions back on day one undermine what this Task Force is trying to accomplish?

The President. No. You have thousands of people that we're dealing with. And you know, if one goes haywire—look at what this guy in Virginia said where he wanted to kill his opponent. He's going to kill his opponent. He's going to kill his opponent's children and, I think, wife. And he continues to run, and the Democrats continue. He's running for what—attorney general in Virginia? Look what he said.

So now do you think all Democrats should be prohibited from living anymore? I mean, think of what he said: He's going to kill his opponent and he's going to kill the children of his opponent and, I think, the wife. I said this guy is sick. That is a sick guy and how do you vote for somebody like that?

But I don't view that every Democrat would say that because not every Democrat would say that. So you can't—you know, you could have one person, but I don't—I don't know of the incident.

I can say we're very proud of what we did. We had the courage to do something that should have been done. The problem: Sometimes the Republicans are too nice. They're a very nice party. The Democrats play a much dirtier fight. You know, it's amazing, you go after dirty cops like Comey, and you go after—these are dirty cops. Letitia James is a dirty cop.

You go after these people, and they say how horrible—horrible you are. And yet, I got indicted five times and impeached twice. Nobody says anything about that. You know, they say, oh—they actually said the other day, "Oh, he's trying to indict somebody." I got indicted four or

five times—huh, Todd? Maybe more than that. *[Laughter]* Yes. I think you could—you could say 87 times if you really think about it, right? With the 80—with the charges. A bunch of phony guys. But nobody says anything about that. But they mention it the other way.

No, the Democrats play a very dirty game. It's all they're good at. They're good at a couple of things: cheating on elections and playing very dirty.

And they have one good trait: They stick together. They stick together. They stick together through the worst policies that anybody has ever seen. It's unbelievable how they stick together. And I respect them for sticking together. But it's a dead party because their policies are no good.

Okay.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Brian. We'll do a few more and we'll go home.

Senator Adam B. Schiff

Q. Wonderful. Speaking of——

The President. Everybody is going to go home. I'm going back to the Oval Office, however.

Q. Speaking of Democrats, there's a report that there's a grand jury on Adam Schiff for apparent mortgage fraud. If he is indicted——

The President. Wow.

Q. ——should he step down as a U.S. Senator?

The President. Well, you know, I'm not going to comment on that. I would just say Adam Schiff is one of the lowest forms of scum I've ever dealt with in politics. He's a horrible human being. A very dishonest person. I have no idea what's going on. You tell me that he's going to be indicted. I don't know. You could ask Pam. I don't know if she's—she could say it. Probably, you are allowed to say it, but I wouldn't know about that.

I can only tell you he's a bad—I think he's actually a sick person.

Q. But if he's indicted, should he step down?

The President. Do you want to talk about that?

Attorney General Bondi. We're not going to comment on any grand jury that's open. We can't, legally.

Q. I understand.

The President. I don't know.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

By the way, I hope it's true, but I don't know anything about it. *[Laughter]*

Yes, please.

White House Ballroom Construction Project/White House Renovations

Q. Mr. President, are you planning to donate to the ballroom?

The President. Oh, millions of dollars. Yes.

Q. Can you give——

The President. Well, I also give—you know, I give a lot of money to the White House. The White House is—as you know, I give my salary. And I usually like to steer it to the White House, because this house was a little bit abandoned. First of all, for 4 years you had a guy walking around that didn't know where the hell he was. And this—this house was not taken care of the way it was supposed to be.

I take very good care of property. I was very good at that. And you'll notice the floors downstairs, I paid for them. Marble. The most beautiful marble you've ever seen. The white floors down in the Palm Room, which were—they looked like they came out of—I don't want to lose, because they're big supporters of mine—Home Depot. So I'm not going to say bad, but they did come out of a box from Home Depot about 30 years ago. They were all broken. But now they have the most beautiful floors, the most beautiful lights and chandeliers.

I think most of you—Brian, you've seen that, right?

Q. Yes, sir.

The President. How beautiful is that? And I take care of it. So I spend millions of dollars on this building, taking care of it. It was not properly maintained, and now it's starting to gleam like it should. It should really gleam.

And you should go down and visit the "Presidential Walk of Fame." Have you seen it? It's quite—quite good. I'm sure that a lot of people coming to the White House—it's hot. It's very hot. But it's really a tribute to the Presidents, past Presidents of our country.

Yeah, please.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

The President. Yes, behind you, please. Yes, go ahead.

Q. Me? Thank you.

The President. Go ahead.

Immigration Enforcement Actions

Q. So, on Monday—a question for you, as well as Secretary Noem. On Monday, Mayor Karen Bass of L.A. and Representative Robert Garcia—they held a press conference and they called for an investigation into DHS, accusing them of unlawfully arresting U.S. citizens and racially profiling and only arresting people because, in Robert Garcia's words, "they look like me." He's a Hispanic individual. Do you have a response to that?

The President. Are you asking me that question?

Q. You, as well as Secretary Noem.

The President. They are arresting bad criminals. And they're really good at it too. I look at the numbers. You know, they always like to say that, "Oh, you're arresting this or that." Then when you check it, you find out—yeesh, almost every single time. And you know, obviously, every once in a while, they may get one wrong, but they always correct it. They're able to correct it.

But they are arresting really bad people. They're arresting people that kill, people that would cut your throat and not even care about it.

These are brave people. And it's very dangerous. And if they go even a little bit too far, they get into trouble, you know, which is a shame. I protect them, but they get into trouble. But they're arresting very serious criminals, and they're getting them out of here.

Okay, one or two more.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

The President. Doug [Doug Mills, New York Times]—Doug, do you have a question?

Q. I'm good, sir.

The President. I'd love to have Doug have a question, our great photographer—*[laughter]*—because he's such a great guy. And he might be the most talented person over there. I don't know. Huh?

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Go ahead. Let's hear your question. This is—this guy is a real beauty.

Transnational Criminal Organizations/Illegal Immigration/Tariffs

Q. Mr. President, on the cartel strategy, hearing you talk about it as a war, hearing Secretary Hegseth talk about defeating and destroying and the comparisons to ISIS and Al Qaida—

The President. Right.

Q. —those efforts took American troops being engaged in foreign countries. Do you think that's ultimately where this is headed with the cartels, having American troops in countries like Venezuela?

The President. No, the cartels are very bad. They had a lot of bad people coming in. They were interviewed recently, and they were asking people what their problem was. And one guy said, "Yes, I was—I'm up for murder." Didn't know what he was saying, obviously. You know, I'm sure his lawyer was not thrilled with his statement.

But no, they're rough people coming into those cartels. Those cartels are rough. You look at what happens—the trip up. The trip up is horrible, especially for women. They're being killed. They're being raped at levels that nobody thought even possible. In my opening speech, I mentioned that, but in a very light way. I mentioned the word rape. Then I found out that—you take a look at what happens in those cartels. It's horrible what's going on.

And we're doing the world a big service by just telling them—you know, they're not—you don't have too many cartels now because they know when they get up here, they're going to be stopped.

Under Biden, they were just flowing into the country. It didn't matter what you were, where you came from, what you looked like, what your record. They didn't check records. Millions of people came into this country that should not be in our country right now. We've gotten a lot of them out. It's the single biggest problem that we were given.

Inflation, I've already taken care of. Economically, the country is the strongest it's ever been. Thank God for tariffs. If we didn't have tariffs, we'd be a third-world nation. But thank God for tariffs. We're the richest nation in the world now because of tariffs. And we're able to economically protect ourself. And we're able to really protect ourself from a national security, you know, situation.

But we have cartels that—you know, I—somebody came up with the word cartel. I won't tell you who that person was, but you got a lot of bad people in the cartels.

And you could look at a country like Mexico. And I really respect the President. I really respect a lot of the people over there, but—a lot of the leadership. But they are in fear in their own country because those cartels are running those countries, okay?

And that includes Colombia. Colombia is a drug den. It's a drug den, and it has been for a long time. You got a lousy leader over there right now, bad guy, a thug. But they make cocaine at levels that we've never seen before. And they sell it back into this—and they're not going to get away with it much longer. We're not going to put up with it much longer.

Colombia is very bad. Mexico is run by the cartels. I have great respect for the President, a woman that I think is a tremendous woman. She's a very brave woman. But Mexico is run by the cartels, and we have to defend ourselves from that.

Q. Mr. President——

Q. Mr. President——

The President. Go ahead. Let's go with you. Go ahead. Let's listen to this beauty.

Lapse in Federal Government Appropriations/Democratic Party

Q. Do you expect a resolution on the Government shutdown by the time you return from your trip to Asia?

The President. Do I expect to have it resolved by the time I return? I don't know. I said long ago, we shouldn't have been in this problem. This was September 28. It came due in Biden's regime, and—before the election, September 28. And they pushed it off into the future. And I was running when they did that.

And when you're running, you know—but I did say, "What the hell are they doing?" That and debt ceiling. You know, they also pushed the debt ceiling past the election date. So, that would mean the next President has it. But I did say that—I think the Democrats have gone totally crazy. And you don't know what they're going to do, because they don't care about the people. They don't—I really think they have no leadership. They have a lot of very low-IQ people. Jasmine Crockett is a low-IQ person. A lot of them are. I don't want to insult too many of them, but a lot of them are. They have no rudder. I don't think they know what they're doing right now. You know, they've never done this before.

They always agreed to go and, you know, called an extension. "Let's do an extension and talk." Even today—look at what happened today. They wouldn't even—they don't want to pay the people that have worked. And you know, this was supposed to be sort of—this was a test. And they wouldn't pay the people that have been working.

They said, "No, no, we don't want to pay them." This is all the Democrats. Now, all we need is five Democrats, and I know a lot of Democrats that are saying—they're more than five—probably not that many more than five, but they're more than five. And all we need is, like, five Democrat votes and we open our country again.

Sad, though. We have the greatest economy in our history, we have the highest stock market, all these things are rocking. We have—we will have, by the end of my first year, more than \$20 trillion of investment. The alltime record is \$3 trillion. I think it's China. We're going to have \$20- or \$21 trillion—we've never had anything like it—coming in because of tariffs, the money pouring into our country, the plants that are opening. AI, automobiles, everything.

And the Democrats want to close our country. They're really—you know, they say deranged. They are—they suffer—I guess it's Trump derangement syndrome, which I think is going down now as an official condition by the doctors.

I think they get paid extra money if they handle it because it's more difficult to handle than a normal mental disease.

Q. [Inaudible]

The President. But you know what? They really should approve an extension, get the country back to work, get the people paid. And you know, it's very simple. You can't—you just don't know what's going on. There's something wrong with them. You know, it's sad, actually.

White House Ballroom Construction Project

Q. Mr. President, have you raised the full \$300 million needed to fund your—have you raised the full \$300 million needed to fund your ballroom?

The President. Yes.

Q. And how much specifically are you donating to this construction project?

The President. Actually, we've raised, I think, \$350 million. All donor money and money that we put up. We've raised—it's going to be—it's going to cost right in the neighborhood of \$300 million. It's been expanded and made absolutely—it will be the most beautiful ballroom anywhere in the world, I think.

Q. And how much specifically are you donating to it, personally?

The President. How much am I donating?

Q. Yes.

The President. I won't be able to tell you until I finish, but I'll donate whatever is needed. I'll tell you that.

Q. Do you have a name for the ballroom?

The President. Do I have a name for the——

Q. For the ballroom.

The President. I won't get into that now. *[Laughter]*

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Yes. Go ahead, please.

Lapse in Federal Government Appropriations/Payroll Support for U.S. Servicemembers

Q. A follow-up on the shutdown. In the next couple of days, a lot of Americans are going to go without their first full paychecks. Federal workers have already——

The President. Yes. By the way, a man—a friend of mine—talking about donors—a friend of mine, a man that's great—I'm not going to use his name unless he lets me do it. Susie can tell you about this.

But he was—he called us the other day, and he said, "I'd like to contribute any shortfall you have because of the Democrat shutdown. I'd like to contribute—personally contribute any shortfall you have with the military because I love the military, and I love the country. And any shortfall, if there's a shortfall, I'll contribute it." And today he sent us a check for \$130 million.

Q. Can you share who that is?

The President. I would love to tell you. He deserves—he doesn't really want the recognition, if you want to know the truth. But he gave us a check for \$130 million——

Q. And that's going to go to the——

The President. ——which was sort of a shortfall. Yes. No, it's going to go to the military, yeah.

Q. And what's your message to——

The President. Is that the correct number? \$130 million. That's what I call a patriot.

Okay. Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you. Thank you. Another day in paradise.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:25 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Brandon Johnson of Chicago, IL; Marc R. Benioff, chair, chief executive officer, and cofounder, Salesforce; Jensen Huang, founder, president, and chief executive officer, NVIDIA Corp.; Gregory G. Katsas and Neomi Rao, judges, U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia; Ecuadoran national Andrés Fernando Tufiño and Colombian national Jeison Obando Pérez, who survived a U.S. airstrike on a suspected drug-trafficking vessel in the Caribbean Sea en route between Venezuela and Trinidad and Tobago on October 17; Gov. Jared S. Polis of Colorado; Christopher Moynihan, who was arrested for text messages indicating that he planned to "eliminate" House Minority Leader Hakeem S. Jeffries during a speech at the Economic Club of New York in New York City on October 20; former Speaker of the Virginia House of Delegates Christopher T. Gilbert and his sons Grant and Jack and wife Jennifer Wishon Gilbert; former Federal Bureau of Investigation Director James B. Comey; New York State Attorney General Letitia James; President Claudia Sheinbaum Pardo of Mexico; President Gustavo Petro Urrego of Colombia; Rep. Jasmine F. Crockett; and White House Chief of Staff Susan Wiles. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist organization. Secretary Hegseth referred to Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives Acting Director and Secretary of the Army Daniel P. Driscoll. Deputy Chief of Staff Miller referred to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Acting Director Todd M. Lyons. The transcript was released by the Office of Communications on November 20.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Homeland Security Task Force, roundtable discussion; Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters, White House.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Benioff, Marc R.; Biden, Joseph R., Jr.; Blanche, Todd; Bondi, Pamela J.; Comey, James B.; Cooper, Laura; Crockett, Jasmine F.; Gabbard, Tulsi; Gilbert, Christopher T.; Gilbert, Grant; Gilbert, Jack; Gilbert, Jennifer Wishon; Goldman, Daniel; Hegseth, Peter B.; Huang, Jensen; James, Letitia; Johnson, Brandon; Jones, Jerrauld C.C. "Jay"; Katsas, Gregory G.; Miller, Stephen; Moynihan, Christopher; Noem, Kristi L.; Noland, Megan; Obama, Barack; Patel, Kashyap P. "Kash"; Pérez, Jeison Obando; Perez, Paul A.; Petro Urrego, Gustavo; Polis, Jared S.; Pritzker, Jay R. "J.B."; Putin, Vladimir Vladimirovich; Rao, Neomi; Schiff, Adam B.; Sheinbaum Pardo, Claudia; Tufiño, Andrés Fernando; West, Christopher; Wiles, Susan; Xi Jinping; Yoes, Patrick; Zhao, Changpeng.

Subjects: 2021 civil unrest and violence at U.S. Capitol; 2024 Presidential election; Armed Forces, U.S., recruitment efforts; Artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies; Attorney General; Border security; China, President; China, synthetic opioid supply chain; China, trade with U.S.; Colombia, drug trafficking; Colombia, President; Colorado, Governor; Crypto currency and digital finance; Deputy Attorney General; Director of National Intelligence; District of Columbia, beautification efforts; District of Columbia, law enforcement improvement efforts; Federal Bureau of Investigation; Federal Government appropriations, lapse; Foreign narcotics traffickers; Fraternal Order of Police; Geographic names, efforts to restore American greatness; Homeland Security Task Force; Illegal drugs, interdiction efforts; Illegal immigration; Illinois, crime in Chicago; Illinois, Governor; Immigration enforcement actions; Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist organization; Major City Chiefs Association; Major County Sheriffs of America; Manufacturing industry, domestic investment; Mexico, President; National Border

Patrol Council; National Guard; National Sheriffs Association; Opioid epidemic, efforts to combat; Pardons and commutations; Russia, President; Russia, U.S. sanctions; Secretary of Homeland Security; Secretary of War; Suspected drug-trafficking vessels, U.S. airstrikes in Caribbean Sea and Eastern Pacific; Tariffs; Tennessee, law enforcement improvement efforts in Memphis; Transnational criminal organizations; U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement; Venezuela, drug trafficking; Venezuela, Tren de Aragua criminal organization; West Bank, Palestinian Territories, political status; White House Ballroom construction project; White House Chief of Staff; White House Deputy Chief of Staff for Policy.

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