

*Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2025*

## **Remarks on Presenting the Mexican Border Defense Medal and an Exchange With Reporters**

*December 15, 2025*

*The President.* Thank you very much. Appreciate it.

### *Ukraine/Russia*

We had a very good conversation 1 hour ago with the European leaders, many of them, involving the war with Russia and Ukraine. We were—we had a long discussion. And things are seemingly going well, but we've been saying that for a long time, and it's a difficult one.

### *Thailand/Cambodia*

We had, as you know, settled eight wars, and one was having a little problem yesterday: Thailand and Cambodia. We were able to straighten that out. There was some killing going on that shouldn't have happened, and we appreciate them working to get it straightened out, and they have.

The security protocols yesterday were amazing, and they have been amazing—having to do with Russia and Ukraine.

And I had a long talk with President Zelenskyy. Also, I spoke with the heads of Germany, Italy, NATO, Finland, France, United Kingdom, Poland, Norway, Denmark, and the Netherlands. We had very long and very good talks. And, again, I think things are going along pretty well.

Twenty-seven thousand soldiers were killed last month. It shouldn't happen. It should have never happened. Should have never started. That war should have never ever started, but it did, and we're trying to get it solved. That was Biden's situation. We're trying to get it done. And I think we're closer now, and they—they will tell you that they're closer now.

We had numerous conversations with President Putin of Russia, and I think we're closer now than we have been ever, and we'll see what we can do. We want to save a lot of lives.

We—you know, we sell equipment to NATO. We don't spend any money, but we do want to see if we can save a lot of lives. When you're losing 25,000 to 30,000 soldiers—mostly soldiers, or other people too from towns—in, like, places like Kyiv and various other places throughout Ukraine, it's pretty bad. Nobody's seen anything like it, actually, since World War II. But we're getting closer. We're having tremendous support from European leaders. They want to get it ended also.

And at this moment, Russia wants to get it ended. The problem is, they'll want to get it ended, and then all of a sudden, they won't, and Ukraine will want to get it ended, and all of a sudden, they won't. So we have to get them on the same page. But I think that's working along—very good talk.

### *Mexican Border Defense Medal*

On day one of my administration, I signed an Executive order making it the core mission of the United States military to protect and defend the homeland, and today we're here to honor our military men and women for their central role in the protection of our border, something that I campaigned very, very strongly on.

And they made me look really good. They were unbelievable. They made us all look good. I mean, we went from having millions of people pouring over our border to having none in the last eight months. None.

In a few moments, we'll officially recognize their service by awarding them the Mexican Border Defense Medal, which is a big deal.

We're joined for this occasion by Secretary of War Pete Hegseth; Attorney General Pam Bondi; Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Dan Caine; commander of U.S. Northern Command, General Gregory Guillot; commander of the Southern Border Task Force, Major General Scott Naumann; Command Sergeant Major Brett Johnson of the U.S. Army's 10th Mountain Division; Administrator of the Drug Enforcement Agency, Terry Cole; and many other members of our administration who have done an incredible job on the border.

You know, people forget, now that the border has been secure for, actually, 7 months—think of it—more—and they don't mention the border anymore. Nobody talks about the border.

They talk about affordability, and we're the ones that are bringing the prices down. We were given the worst inflation in our country's history, and we're bringing the prices down, but the affordability is on the Democrats, because they have made it unaffordable to be in this country. But we're bringing those prices down, and they're coming down quickly.

Energy is coming way down. And if you look, gasoline prices are hitting, in many locations, \$1.99 a gallon. Nobody thought they'd see that. They were \$4, \$5, and \$6 a gallon under Biden.

In the 4 years before I took office, our southern border was surrendered to criminals, drug cartels, human traffickers, and child smugglers. Our entire Southwest border on the Mexican side is under the physical control of cartels that are among the most violent entities. Nobody's ever—think—anywhere on the planet—the most violent people on the planet.

Remember when the Democrats and others—the radical left—used to say that the people they're allowing into our country, immigrants, are nice people? "They're not violent like our people." Well, they make our people look like babies. These are some of the worst—most violent criminals anywhere on Earth—from many countries, not just Venezuela. Venezuela emptied their jails into our country, but others have also. The Congo has. So many other countries have, and we don't put up with it.

I have to say, the drugs coming in by sea are down 94 percent, and we're trying to figure out who the other 6 percent are. But they're down 94 percent, and we're going to start hitting them on land, which is a lot easier to do, frankly.

But these are a direct military threat to the United States of America. They're trying to drug out our country.

And you can look throughout history—look at China, when they were loaded up with drugs. They were suffering greatly, and others were able to take them over. And other countries also. They're trying to drug out our country, and we're reversing it rapidly, actually.

But with the help of our great servicemembers, we've stopped the invasion in its tracks, and we're dismantling the cartels very rapidly. And they are being declared enemies of the United States of America. They have been so declared—legally declared.

More than 25,000 warriors have served in this historic operation. It is indeed an incredible and historic operation, and we've never done anything so effectively, and we've had a lot of victories. They've spent night and day enduring scorching hot and bitter cold, and they've given up their holidays and their weekends.

Working with the offices of Customs and Border Protection, our Armed Forces have already conducted nearly 13,000 patrols along the border, and today we give these great warriors the recognition that they have earned, and they have really earned it.

The military component of our border security efforts is just the beginning. We're also designating the drug cartels as foreign terrorist organizations, a big deal from a legal standpoint and military standpoint. We've ended catch-and-release, and we endured—and ensured that anyone who sets foot across our border illegally is intercepted, arrested, and immediately deported. Or if they're really bad, they're put into prison, because we don't want to ever take a chance that they come back.

As a result, illegal border crossings have plummeted to the lowest level ever recorded in the history of our country—think of that—in the history of our country—you can all be very proud.

For the past 7 months, zero illegal aliens have been admitted to the United States of America.

We inherited the worst border in the history of our country, one of the worst borders, I would say, in the world. I can't imagine any border in the world being worse when they allowed 25 million people to come in—and, again, many of these people are gang members and from prisons and jails, from mental institutions and insane asylums. And some of the worst people on Earth, they allowed to come into our country, and we're getting a lot of them out. We're getting—we've made a big dent.

And the self-deportation is something nobody talks about, but literally, millions of people are self-deporting because they don't want to be captured. Once they're captured, they don't have the chance to self-deport. They never have the chance to come back into our country.

We inherited their—that border from an incompetent administration and turned it into the strongest border in the history of our country.

So we took the worst border in the history of our country, and in a period of 2 months, we turned it into the strongest border in the history of our country.

During this time, we've also achieved a 50-percent drop in the amount of fentanyl coming across the border, and China is working with us very closely on bringing down the number and the amount of fentanyl that's being shipped.

You know, fentanyl is very bad when you mix it with certain ingredients, but it also is very important for medicine, for anesthetics, various other things. I want people to understand that: It's not made necessarily for bad. When it's mixed with certain things, it becomes bad. And that's what's taking place in Mexico. And we've got it down to a much lower number—not satisfactory, but it will be satisfactory soon.

In May, we executed the largest fentanyl bust in the history of the U.S., seizing 3 million fentanyl pills all at one time. Think of that: 3 million pills. It's amounted to billions of dollars' worth of drugs.

And last month, we seized another 1.7 million fentanyl pills in the State of Colorado—the poorly run State of Colorado with a Governor who is incompetent and, frankly, with a Governor that won't allow our wonderful Tina to come out of a jail—in a high-intensity jail—because she caught people cheating on an election, and they said she was cheating. She wasn't cheating. She went over, she looked at one of the election scams going on, and because she did that, they put her in jail for nine years.

The Governor of Colorado is a weak and a pathetic man who was run by Tren de Aragua. The criminals from Venezuela took over sections of Colorado, and he was afraid to do anything,

but he puts Tina in jail for 9 years because she caught people cheating. And when she walked over and got involved in it, they said she was cheating. She wasn't cheating. She caught people cheating on the election—2020—along with a lot of other people that cheated on that election. You'll see that coming out more and more.

But there's no doubt that America's adversaries are trafficking fentanyl into the United States, in part, because they want to kill Americans. If this were a war, that would be one of the worst wars. I believe they killed, over the last 5 or 6 years, per year, 200- to 300,000 people. You hear about 100,000, which is a lot of people, but the number is much higher than that. That's been proven. And they've destroyed a lot of families, because when they lose a child, or even if their child is heavily addicted, you lose that family. The family will never be the same.

That's why today I'm taking one more step to protect Americans from the scourge of deadly fentanyl flooding into our country.

With this historic Executive order I will sign today, we're formally classifying fentanyl as a weapon of mass destruction, which is what it is. No bomb does what this is doing. Two hundred to three hundred thousand people die every year that we know of. So we're formally classifying fentanyl as a weapon of mass destruction.

But before I sign the fentanyl order, we will pin these great servicemembers with their medals. And here today are the first 13 warriors who will receive the Mexican Border Defense Medal, which is a big deal.

First, I'd like to ask Secretary Hegseth and Chairman Caine to say a few words. I'd like to have Tom Homan come up, please, if you would. Say a few words.

And I want to thank all of the people, Pam and everybody, Stephen Miller—the great Stephen Miller, what a job he's doing—for being here. Thank you both. Appreciate it very much.

We have so many great people here, but I do want to ask Tom to say a few words also.

So, Pete, why don't you start it off? Please. Thank you.

*Secretary of War Peter B. Hegseth.* Thank you, sir.

Mr. President, thank you. I would—I would echo what you said. This has been a team effort from the beginning. Tom Homan, Terry Cole, Stephen Miller, Pam Bondi, Kristi Noem, Customs and Border Patrol—Protection. It has been one team, one mission to get 100 percent operational control of the southern border.

You want to talk about America first, peace through strength, and common sense? It all manifests in—in one basic phrase down there: Border security is national security.

And we had the task of 100-percent control, and because of these men and women back here, we've achieved that. Nobody is crossing the southern border.

And I want to give a big shout-out to our Northern Command, General Guillot. From day one, he—this—our department didn't look at the border this way before—before you. Joe Biden allowed an invasion of this country—tens of millions of people, drugs, gangs, violence—and the military jumped to it on day one with our partners.

But ultimately, it was incredible Americans. There's 13 up here with us today. They all represent about 2,000 people who have served at the border so far. So 25,000 Americans qualify for this Mexican National Defense Border Medal that we're announcing today.

And what's cool about this medal, it's—was actually first given out in 1918. So we're reviving an old medal that existed—was given to men and women who defended the southern border. We found out about it, we used the exact same foundry with the exact same imagery,

same color, same metal, same everything. So our men and women will be wearing that very same medal as Americans a hundred years before who were asked to defend the sovereignty of our country.

President Trump was elected to do that. You have done that, Mr. President. We're proud of this mission. We're proud to defend the American people, and pinning these medals on is an example of how important it is to us. So thank you, Mr. President. Appreciate it.

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

*Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General J. Daniel Caine, USAF.* Well, Mr. President, Mr. Secretary, I want to echo your thanks and gratitude for the Joint Force. I also want to highlight General Guillot, General Naumann, and Command Sergeant Major Johnson, but also leaders at every level that came together, not just in our joint force but in the interagency.

And I want to specifically highlight our Border Patrol teammates and our Office of Air and Marine teammates who, when I went down to the southern border and visited, were right there next to the Joint Force.

I also want to thank not just these 13 individuals but the Joint Force that was also down there and your families who poured in to make this deployment possible on the southern border.

And of course, this time of the year, I'm always thinking about our currently deployed forces who are out there around the world doing our Nation's business and, of course, our fallen and their families who show us what courage and tenacity really are as they move forward after the loss of a servicemember.

So thank you, Mr. President. Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

*The President.* Thank you.

Tom, please.

*White House Border Czar Thomas D. Homan.* You know, it's always an honor for me to be in the Oval Office with the greatest President of my lifetime. Yes, I said it, and I meant it.

You know, I was just—I just got home last night. I toured the border in California, Arizona, and Texas. I did it in a four-wheel drive. I did it on the river. I did it from the air. Hundreds upon hundreds of miles of border. I didn't see one illegal alien. Not a single one.

I've done this since 1984. I worked for six different Presidents. No one has done more than President Trump. What he has done is gave us the most secure border in the history of this Nation. Hard stop.

I went to hundreds of miles of border and didn't see one illegal alien. Incredible. Considering the Biden administration, we had 10-, 12,000 a day—most released in the United States.

I'm proud to be with these patriots behind me. I'm already proud to be in the Oval Office with the president, but being with these heroes—I met some of these soldiers down on the border.

And, actually, a shout-out to Fort Drum, New York. We've got some 10th Mountain Division here. So Elise Stefanik, Claudia Tenney, we all love Fort Drum and the 10th Mountain.

So look, this is a game changer. I want to make something perfectly clear, because we get attacked all the time being "inhumane." "The Biden administration is much more humane." It just—it's a bunch of crap. Because there's been studies done that 31 percent of women that make that journey through the cartels get sexually assaulted. They get raped. And not just the women, children too. I've done numerous investigations in that.

Sex trafficking all—was historic highs with an open border. Fentanyl, historic highs that killed a quarter million Americans. Known and suspected terrorists that came across the border—record, historic.

What happened under Biden administration was the most inhumane thing I've seen in my lifetime. Now that the border is 96 percent decline—96-percent less people are coming, how many women aren't being raped? How many children aren't dying making that journey? How many women and children aren't being sex trafficked into this country every day? How many known or suspected terrorists aren't just walking across that border?

President Trump and this administration is saving thousands of lives every month, hard stop. That's just a stone-cold fact.

I'm just proud to be a part of this. I work with Steve Miller every day. Steve Miller is one of the most brilliant people I met in my entire life. President Trump brought together one hell of a team here, and the success proves. We are working together, one team, one fight. We're not done yet. We're going to keep going, and I guarantee you we can continue saving thousands and thousands of lives.

Secured border means stronger national security. Secured border saves lives. Thank you.

*The President.* Thank you, Tom.

Okay, let's do the medals, and I'll be signing this. Maybe you'll do the medals first, and then I'll sign. Okay? Please.

[*At this point, Secretary Hegseth and Chairman Caine presented the Mexican Border Defense Medals.*]

Nice medal. That's not bad.

Great job. Great job, fellas.

*Participant.* Thank you, Mr. President.

[*The President signed an Executive order titled "Designating Fentanyl as a Weapon of Mass Destruction."*]

*The President.* No autopen. [*Laughter*] None, ever. We don't like autopens, right? We don't like autopens.

[*The President held up the signed Executive order.*]

How about gathering around me, and we'll hold this up? Congratulations. It's an amazing job. Come on around. Come on around. Let's take a good picture.

Fantastic job, you guys. Fantastic job. Thank you very much. Great job.

*Participant.* Thank you, Mr. President.

*The President.* What you've done is unprecedented.

How about holding that up? You guys hold it up nice and high. [*Laughter*]

[*The President handed the Executive order to some medal recipients to hold for a photograph.*]

Hold it up high. You deserve it more than me.

So I'm going to give you another medal, though, that may be more beautiful. I'm not sure it means as much, but it's really good. Okay? This is gunmetal. This is the one the military loves.

So we're going to start, okay?

[*The President handed out challenge coins to the medal recipients.*]

*Participant.* Thank you, Mr. President.

*The President.* Thank you.

Here you go.

*Participant.* Thank you, Mr. President.

*Participant.* Thank you, Mr. President.

*The President.* It's pretty nice. Want to compare it? Let me see. Compare it. Let me see how that looks. I don't know. That looks pretty good.

*Participant.* Thank you, Mr. President.

*The President.* That means something very special.

*Participant.* Thank you, Mr. President.

*The President.* Thank you.

*Participant.* Thanks, Mr. President.

*Participant.* Thank you very much.

*Participant.* Thank you, Mr. President.

*Participant.* Thank you, Mr. President.

*The President.* Think of what you can do. Tie it around your neck. Get a nice ribbon. [*Laughter*] I think you'll like it. It's special. We don't give them to many people.

*Participant.* Thank you, Mr. President.

*Participant.* Thank you, Mr. President.

*Participant.* Thank you, Mr. President.

*Participant.* Thank you, Mr. President.

*The President.* Come on over here. Come here. Look at this guy.

*Secretary Hegseth.* He's the man that made it happen, sir.

*The President.* That's four—that's a big—that means a lot, up there.

*Commander of U.S. Northern Command and North American Aerospace Defense Command Gregory M. Guillot, USAF.* Thank you, Mr. President.

*The President.* Thank you very much.

And, General, come on over here, even though you have one. I gave him one. No, this general right here—General "Razin" Caine. [*Laughter*] He's a great general.

*Chairman Caine.* Thank you, Mr. President.

*The President.* Thank you very much. Great job.

*Chairman Caine.* Thank you.

*The President.* Well, thank you very much everybody. It's an honor. This is a fantastic moment. I haven't done this before. And the job they've done on the border is unthinkable. What

they left us with—that they would have open borders with millions of people—25 million people, probably more than that—pouring into our border, totally unchecked and unvetted. Now we have the opposite. And we allow—we want people in our country, but they have to come in legally. And they know that, and they know they're not getting through. So now they don't even try.

So all of the death that Tom Homan talked about—the rape and the death and all the problem doesn't have—really happen, because the caravans—a name I think I came up with—maybe, maybe not—but the caravans are very small. In fact, for the most part, they don't even exist anymore, because they know they're not going to get through.

In a little while, you'll be seeing I'm suing the BBC for putting words in my mouth, literally. They put words in my mouth. They had me saying things that I never said coming out. I guess they used AI or something. So we'll be bringing that lawsuit. A lot of people are asking, "When are you bringing that lawsuit?"

Even the media can't believe that one. They would—they actually put terrible words in my mouth, having to do with January 6, that I didn't say. And the beautiful words that I said—right?—the beautiful words talking about patriotism and all of the good things that I said, they didn't say that. But they put terrible words. They actually have me speaking with words that I never said.

And they got caught because I believe somebody at BBC said, "This is so bad, it has to be reported." That's called "fake news." So we'll be filing that suit probably this afternoon or tomorrow morning.

I want to thank all of you for being here. If you have any questions, I guess you could ask. But this is really a day of celebration for these people. The job they've done is really unprecedented.

So go ahead.

### *Shooting at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island*

*Q.* On Brown University, Mr. President. Do you know what the motive of the shooter was? Is it—was it a targeted attack?

*The President.* No, we don't. No, it's—that's moving along now. And we don't. And we'll—we're going to see what happens. Hopefully, they're going to capture this animal. Hopefully, they're going to capture him.

### *Federal Bureau of Investigation*

*Q.* Has Kash Patel told you why it's been so difficult for the FBI to identify who the shooter is?

*The President.* Well, it's always difficult. So far, we've done a very good job of doing it. With Charlie, with, you know, the various times this has happened, they've done it in pretty much record-time.

But you'd really have to ask the school a little bit more about that, because, you know, this was a school problem. They had their own guards, they had their own police, they had their own everything. But you'd have to ask that question, really, to the school, not to the FBI. We came in after the fact. And the FBI will do a good job, but they came in after the fact.

### *Shooting at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island*

*Q.* Do you know if it was targeted, Mr. President? The shooting—

*The President.* No, they don't know that yet. No.

*Federal Classification of Marijuana*

*Q.* Sir, on the issue of drugs. Is it accurate that you are considering an Executive order to reclassify marijuana as a controlled substance?

*The President.* We are considering that, yes.

*Q.* Okay. Are you planning—

*The President.* Because a lot of people want to see it, the reclassification, because it leads to tremendous amounts of research that can't be done unless you reclassify. So we are looking at that very strongly.

*Q.* Mr. President.

*Q.* Mr. President.

*The President.* Katie [Katie Pavlich, NewsNation].

*Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel*

*Q.* Is it true that—the reports that you rebuked the Israeli Prime Minister—

*The President.* Up, please.

*Q.* Are the reports that you rebuked the Israeli Prime Minister for the hit on the Hamas general true? And is Israel undermining your efforts to be a peacemaker?

*The President.* No, Israel and I have gotten along very well. My relationship with Bibi Netanyahu has been, obviously, a very good one. Look, we took out Iran. We wiped out—with that plane right there, we wiped out—the B-2 bomber—we wiped out the Iran nuclear threat, and because of that, we were able to make peace in the Middle East.

No, we've had a very good relationship with Israel. We actually have a very good relationship with just about everybody in the Middle East.

*U.S. Cease-Fire Agreement Between Hamas and Israel*

*Q.* But was that a violation of the cease-fire, the strike on the Hamas general?

*The President.* We're going to have to see. We're looking into that. Yes. We'll look into it.

*Q.* Mr. President—

*President Ahmad Husayn al-Shara' of Syria/Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) Terrorist Organization*

*Q.* Mr. President, on the Syria ambush of U.S. forces.

*The President.* Yes.

*Q.* Do you still have confidence in the Syrian President?

*The President.* I do. I mean, this had nothing to do with him. This is a part of Syria that they really don't have much control over, and it was a surprise. He feels very badly about it. He's working on it. He's a strong man.

And no, this had nothing to do with the Syrian Government. This had to do—

*Q.* What will be—

*The President.* —this had to do with ISIS.

*Q.* What will the U.S. response be?

*The President.* As a response, they'll be hit hard.

Yes.

### *Honduras/Chile*

*Q.* Javier Negre, Real America's Voice in Español. First of all, thanks for honoring these—

*The President.* Thank you.

*Q.* —heroes. The Communists have lost Chile, and the pro-Trump candidate, José Antonio Kast, won the elections.

*The President.* Ah.

*Q.* Do you think this right-wing wave in the Hispanic world is due to your influence?

*The President.* Well, I just—we just had a good one in Honduras, as you know. Had a great election there. I endorsed somebody that was not leading, and he won the election. And we had a good one just a little—couple of hours ago, I found out, in Chile. The person I endorsed, who was not leading, ended up winning quite easily.

So I look forward to paying my respects to him. I hear he's a very good person.

Yes.

### *Federal Commissions and Boards*

*Q.* Mr. President—thank you, Mr. President. This year, you fired Democrats from a number of Federal agencies, and now, going into 2026, there are some key regulators, like the SEC, the CFTC, that are going to have zero Democrats. Do you plan to appoint Democrats to fill those empty spots? Or do you think that federal agencies shouldn't have Democrat commissioners?

*The President.* Well, do you think they would be appointing Republicans if it were up to them? So, you know, we'll look at it. Look, we want to be fair. But typically, they're not appointing Republicans, so you're asking me the question whether or not I'd appoint Democrats. But there are certain areas that we do look at, and there are certain areas that we do share and share power, and I'm open to that.

Please. Yes, please.

### *Deceased Film Director Rob Reiner*

*Q.* Mr. President, a number of Republicans have denounced your statement on Truth Social after the murder of Rob Reiner. Do you stand by that post?

*The President.* Well, I wasn't a fan of his at all. He was a deranged person, as far as Trump is concerned. He said—he liked—he knew it was false; in fact, it's the exact opposite—that I was a friend of Russia, controlled by Russia. You know, it was the Russia hoax. He was one of the people behind it. I think he hurt himself in—career wise. He became, like, a deranged person—Trump derangement syndrome.

So I was not a fan of Rob Reiner at all in any way, shape, or form. I thought he was very bad for our country.

Yes.

### *Senate Confirmation Process*

*Q.* On blue slips, Mr. President. Leader Thune doesn't seem like he wants to get rid of blue slips. Will there be consequences for the Senate if they don't get rid of them?

*The President.* Well, I think they should get rid of blue slips, because, as a Republican president, I am unable to put anybody in office having to do with U.S. attorneys or having to do with judges. In other words, if you have one—not two. You don't need two. Just one. If you have one Democrat Senator, where we have a lot of them—you have one Democrat Senator in a state, it is not possible to appoint—because of blue slips—a judge. It's not possible to appoint a U.S. attorney. You see that happening.

And I think it's a disgrace. I think blue slips are a disgrace. They've long since—I mean, they're not—they should not be relevant anymore.

This is a different world than it was 15, 20 years ago. You know, that was a gentleman and gentlewoman world. This is a little bit different, unfortunately.

Yes, please.

### *Health Insurance Reforms*

*Q.* Mr. President, what do you want to see Congress do this week as it relates to health care and the expiring ACA subsidies?

*The President.* Yes, I'd—that's a good question. I'd like to see the people get the money. I'd like to see all of the money that's going to the Democrat insurance companies—you know, the insurance companies are making a fortune. They're up 1,700 percent and more, and they're taking in hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of billions of dollars, even trillions of dollars. And Obamacare gives you terrible health care.

Just so you understand, Obamacare was set up—and I said it right from the beginning—for the benefit of the health insurance—insurance companies—of the insurance companies. They're making billions and billions of dollars. Their stock is through the roof. I don't want to give them anything.

I want all money going to the people, and let the people buy their own health care. It will be unbelievable. They'll do a great job. They'll get much better health care at a much lower cost.

*Q.* Sir, Mr. President, a follow-up?

*The President.* Go ahead, please.

### *Senate Filibuster Use/Election Reform/Budget Appropriations*

*Q.* Would you like Republicans next year to just use recon—

[*The reporter cleared his throat.*]

Excuse me—to use reconciliation to do with health care exactly what you laid out, and they wouldn't have to worry about Democratic votes?

*The President.* Well, that or knock out the filibuster. If you knocked out the filibuster, it would all go away. But we have a few people that wouldn't do that. It's crazy.

Look, we should knock out the filibuster, and if you did that, we'd get voter ID, you'd have no mail-in voting—all things that make our elections dishonest. And you'd get a lot of other things having not even to do with voting.

But Republicans should knock out the filibuster, and we should approve a lot of things. You wouldn't have January 30 looming, because, you know, you have—you have the 30th of January

looming. You know that, right? And if we knocked out the filibuster, it would be just a simple approval.

But you have some Republicans that—no, they're unable to explain why. You know, they—if you ask them why, they're unable to explain it. They cannot win the debate.

But they should knock out the filibuster, and, frankly, they should get rid of the blue slips too.

Yes.

### *2024 Presidential Election*

*Q.* Mr. President, the Democrats won Miami, where you won the election one year ago. Do you think it's because of Hispanic media, like Telemundo, that are publishing fake news about the ICE operations? How do you plan to win back those votes for midterms?

*The President.* Yes, well, I won that whole election. And you know, it's interesting: When I'm not running, we don't do as well, and I'm going to try and get that changed for the midterms. But we did have a big win in Tennessee, as you know: Matt Van Epps. Van Epps had a big win in Tennessee against a very strong candidate, attractive candidate, who a lot of people thought would do very well, and Matt won by a lot. And I won Tennessee by a real lot. You know, we had a great—we had a great election. We won every single swing State. We won the popular vote. We won everything.

And there's a—there's a thing that they have now—districts—which is a big deal. I think, in a way, it's the most important stat from the standpoint of, you know, looking at numbers accurately. So, out of thousands of districts, I won 2,750 versus 525. Think of that: 2,750 versus 525. It was great. That's why the map—when you see a map of the election, it's all red, other than two little narrow lines on the other side.

Please.

### *Hong Kong Democracy Activist Jimmy Lai/China*

*Q.* Sir, Jimmy Lai was convicted today in Hong Kong. Do you have any reactions?

*The President.* Yes. I feel so badly. I spoke to President Xi about it, and I asked to consider his release. He's not well. He's an older man, and he's not well. So I did put that request out. We'll see what happens. Okay?

*Q.* Mr. President—

*Q.* On Syria.

*The President.* Yes, please, Katie.

### *Ukraine/Russia/Security Guarantees for Ukraine*

*Q.* A question about Ukraine. Now that the meetings in Berlin have wrapped up with Zelenskyy—

*The President.* Right.

*Q.* —is there a timetable for going to Moscow? Is a delegation going?

*The President.* Well, I think that the delegation is largely there right now, actually. They're in Europe, and they met with those people that I called out before, the various countries, plus some others. They want to see it end, Katie. They want to see it end. They all—I want to see it end. They want to see it end. I actually think that President Putin wants to see it end. You know, I've

had good talks—we've had good talks with Russia, and I think they'd like to get back to a more normal way of life.

*Q.* Mr. President—

*Thailand/Cambodia/Ukraine/Russia*

*Q.* And a follow-up there. An article 5–like deal seems to be emerging without NATO membership for Ukraine. If such a security guarantee is offered, what incentive is there for Ukraine to give up any sort of territory?

*The President.* Well, look, you have—well, they've already lost the territory, you know, to be honest. I mean, they've—the territory is lost.

*Q.* But to make those concessions permanent.

*The President.* But, in terms of security guarantee, we'll work on that. We're working with Europe on it. Europe would be a big part of that, and we're working on the security guarantees so the war doesn't start up again. We don't want to have a war start up again.

You know, as I said, with Thailand and Cambodia—two people I get along with great, and I dealt with them. And I called them and I said: "Look, fellas, you've got to relax. You've got to take it easy." They lost—you know, they started the war again, and I got it ended.

And things like that are going to happen—war. There's nothing—nothing pretty about war, nothing good, and there's nothing you can do to predict what's going to happen.

But I think we've made a lot of progress with respect to Russia and Ukraine. I hope. I hope.

You know, last month, it was close to 27,000 soldiers were killed—mostly soldiers, but 27,000 people—but mostly soldiers were killed last month in Russia versus Ukraine.

*U.S. Diplomatic Efforts/Russia/Ukraine*

*Q.* Is there a time limit on security guarantees?

*The President.* Well, there's no time limit. We're just—the time limit is whenever we get it done. I mean, we're going to try to get it done. We're making progress. It's more difficult than anybody could have thought. I would have said that half of the wars that I got settled—some were going for over 30 years—that half of them should have been more difficult, and they actually haven't been.

There's a lot of dislike between the two leaders. You know that. And so, it probably makes it a little bit tough.

*President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia*

*Q.* Have you recently spoken directly to Putin? Have you recently spoken directly to Putin?

*The President.* Yes, I have.

Yes.

*Syria/Middle East Peace Efforts/Hamas/U.S. Airstrikes on Iranian Nuclear Facilities*

*Q.* On Syria, Mr. President—on the U.S. troops killed in Syria over the weekend. Why do we have troops in Syria?

*The President.* Because we're trying to make sure that there's going to peace—and remain peace in the Middle East, and Syria is a big part of it.

The new leader is a strong person, and that's what you need. This is a rough part of the world, and we've—it's been amazing what's taken place in Syria. We got rid of Asad. We got rid of other people that were really bad people and that were in the way of peace in the Middle East.

You know, we have legitimate peace in the Middle East, first time in 3,000 years, and we have 59 countries backing it.

And we'll see what happens with Hamas. We'll see what happens with Hizballah. But regardless—I mean, we have countries that want to go in and clean that out if we want them to do it. But they said—in the case of Hamas, they said that they're going to disarm, and we're going to find out whether or not that's true.

Hizballah in Lebanon has been a problem. We'll see what happens there.

But there is legitimate, large-scale peace in the Middle East, and if there weren't, we wouldn't have been able to make all of those deals that we've made with the various countries. They would have never been able to do that if—for instance, if Iran—if we didn't—with that B-2 bomber, right there on the desk—if we didn't—of which we just ordered a lot more of the newer version. Totally stealth. They could not see it. They knew it was coming. They had no idea where it was. It was pretty amazing, actually.

Every bomb hit its mark perfectly, despite CNN trying to say differently. They didn't know. They just, you know, hoped. They hoped that we didn't, but it turned out that they did. Atomic Energy Commission confirmed it. So did—actually, so did Iran confirm it. They got knocked to hell.

But if we didn't knock out their nuclear capability, we would have never had peace in the Middle East, because you would have had a dark cloud hanging over Saudi Arabia, Qatar, U.A.E., and all the other countries, and they would have never ever been able to sign an agreement.

Yes, please.

### *Gaza, Palestinian Territories*

*Q.* How soon do you expect that international stabilization force to be up and running in Gaza?

*The President.* I think that it's—in a form, it's already running. In a very strong form, it's already—but it will get stronger and stronger, and more and more countries are coming into it. They're already in, but they'll send any number of troops that I ask them to send.

They want to see peace. We have more than 59 countries. We have many countries that aren't even in the Middle East, but they're fairly close to the Middle East, they—they want to be involved. So it's been pretty amazing.

*Q.* Mr. President, Friday—

### *Crypto Currency and Digital Finance*

*Q.* Mr. President, this week, a man named Keonne Rodriguez is going to Federal prison for creating crypto privacy software. The case was started under the Biden administration, but your DOG—DOJ kept it going and secured the conviction. A lot of people in crypto are saying that this man should be pardoned. Are you familiar with the case at all? Or would you be interested in looking at it?

*The President.* I've heard about it. I'll look at it.

Why? You think he should be pardoned?

*Q.* Many leaders——

*The President.* Sounds like it. It sounds like, based on your question.

*Q.* Many people in the industry are asking for that.

*The President.* Rodriguez. We'll look at that, Pam. Okay?

Let's take a look at it. You know, you'll have to tell me. I don't know anything about it, but we'll take a look.

*Q.* On Friday——

*The President.* Yes, please.

### *National Economy/Tariffs*

*Q.* Mr. President, market analysts are calling for a "Santa rally." Typically, it's five trading days going into Christmas and the last—and the first 2 trading days in January. That's a sign of market optimism. Do you anticipate, along with the historical-low gas prices, that continuing into the first quarter of next year?

*The President.* Well, we've had the greatest stock market in history, Brian [Brian Glenn, Real America's Voice]. We have a stock market that's gone up 52 times to new highs during a 10-month period—my 10 months. You know, my first 10 months, we set a record: 52 days we had the highest stock market in history, including a day ago. And—I didn't look today. Maybe it's up today. I don't know. But we had 52 all together, and there's never been anything like it.

And the reason are the tariffs have brought vast amounts of wealth into our country; that countries that have taken our car companies, those car companies are all coming back; the AI is coming at levels that nobody has ever seen before. That's going to be a massive industry. Without the tariffs, we wouldn't have that. Chips are coming in. The chip companies are coming in from Taiwan and other places, but mostly from Taiwan, which has almost 100 percent of the market, and we're now making chips. And I'm—we're not paying anything. It's not the CHIPS Act, where they give billions of dollars to companies and then they just take the money, and they run. That was under Biden.

The fact that I set tariffs up and that, if they don't make their chips here, they have to pay a big tariff in order to send them into the U.S. They have to be here. You know, tariffs really work, in my opinion, almost only in the United States. They've been used against us successfully because we had presidents that had no clue. But tariffs really work. We have taken in hundreds of billions of dollars with tariffs. And more importantly, we've taken in countries and companies where—and even countries have sent their car-making people into the United States in order to avoid paying tariffs. And they'll build a plant, and they'll hire our people to make the cars.

But we now have—as you know, Toyota just approved \$10 billion in manufacturing plants in the United States, using our people. Without tariffs, none of that would have happened. Tariffs have given us great national security. There is nothing like what's happened in the last 10 months. Tariffs have given us tremendous national security and tremendous wealth.

Thank you all very much. Thank you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:16 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Volodymyr Zelenskyy of Ukraine; Gov. Jared S. Polis of Colorado; Tina Peters, former clerk and recorder of Mesa County, CO; White House Deputy Chief of Staff for Policy and Homeland Security Adviser Stephen Miller; President-elect Nasry Asfura of Honduras; Tennessee Democratic congressional candidate State Rep. Aftyn A. Behn; President Xi Jinping of China; Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul of Thailand; Prime Minister Hun Manet

of Cambodia; former President Bashar al-Asad of Syria; and Keonne Rodriguez, chief executive officer of Samourai, who was sentenced to 5 years on Federal money laundering charges. Border Czar Homan referred to Reps. Elise M. Stefanik and Claudia Tenney. Reporters referred to Federal Bureau of Investigation Director Kashyap P. "Kash" Patel; and Raed Saad, a senior commander of Hamas, who was killed in an Israeli airstrike near Gaza City, Palestinian Territories, on December 13; and Iowa National Guard members Sgt. W. Nathaniel Howard, USA, Sgt. Edgar Torres-Tovar, USA, and civilian interpreter Ayad Mansoor Sakat, who were killed when their convoy of joint U.S. and Syrian forces was attacked in Palmyra, Syria, on December 13. The transcript was released by the Office of Communications on December 16.

*Categories:* Addresses and Remarks : Mexican Border Defense Medal, presentation; Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters, White House.

*Locations:* Washington, DC.

*Names:* Anutin Charnvirakul; Asad, Bashar al-; Asfura, Nasry; Behn, Aftyn A.; Biden, Joseph R., Jr.; Bondi, Pamela J.; Caine, J. Daniel; Cole, Terrance C.; Guillot, Gregory M.; Hegseth, Peter B.; Homan, Thomas D.; Hun Manet; Johnson, Brett W.; Kat, José Antonio; Lai, Jimmy; Miller, Stephen; Naumann, Scott M.; Netanyahu, Benjamin; Peters, Tina; Polis, Jared S.; Putin, Vladimir Vladimirovich; Reiner, Rob; Rodriguez, Keonne; Shara', Ahmad Husayn al-; Van Epps, Matt; Xi Jinping; Zelenskyy, Volodymyr.

*Subjects:* 2024 Presidential election; Attorney General; Automobile industry, strengthening efforts; Border security; Cambodia, Prime Minister; Cambodia, relations with Thailand; Chile, Presidential election; China, President; Colorado, Governor; Drug Enforcement Agency; Economic improvement; Election security and integrity, strengthening efforts; Federal Government, appropriations legislation; Gasoline costs; Hamas political-paramilitary organization; Health insurance exchanges; Honduras, Presidential election; Illegal immigration; Immigration reform; Inflation; Iran, U.S. airstrikes on nuclear facilities; Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist organization; Israel, Prime Minister; Israel-Hamas cease-fire agreement implementation; Joint Chiefs of Staff; Lebanon, Hizballah political-paramilitary organization; Marijuana, decriminalization efforts; Mexican Border Defense Medal; Mexico, border with U.S., infrastructure and security; North Atlantic Treaty Organization; Opioid epidemic, efforts to combat; Russia, conflict in Ukraine; Russia, President; Secretary of War; Semiconductor manufacturing; Senate confirmation process; Senate filibuster use; Syria, death of U.S. servicemembers in Palmyra; Syria, President; Tariffs; Thailand, Prime Minister; Thailand, relations with Cambodia; U.S. Customs and Border Protection; U.S. diplomatic efforts, expansion; U.S. servicemembers, service and dedication; Ukraine, international military aid; Ukraine, President; Ukraine, Russian invasion and airstrikes; Venezuela, Tren de Aragua criminal organization; White House Border Czar; White House Deputy Chief of Staff for Policy.

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