

*Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2026*

**Remarks in an Exchange With Reporters Aboard Air Force One En Route to West Palm Beach, Florida**

*January 31, 2026*

*The President.* Hello, everybody.

*Q.* How are you doing, Mr. President?

*The President.* I'm very good. We had a good time at the Alfalfa Dinner. We did well. I hope we did well. But it was very good. Tremendous people.

So what's up?

*Iran/Potential U.S. Military Involvement*

*Q.* Sir, could you give us an update on where your thinking is right now with Iran, if you are—have made a final decision on what you want to do?

*The President.* I mean, I certainly can't tell you that, but we do have very big, powerful ships in—heading in that direction, as you know. I can't tell you, you know.

*Q.* Okay.

*The President.* But I hope they negotiate something that's acceptable.

*Potential U.S. Military Involvement in Iran*

*Q.* Saudi Arabia's Defense Minister reportedly said that if the U.S. backs off a strike, that "will only embolden" Tehran. What's your reaction to that, sir?

*The President.* Well, some people think that, and some people don't. You know, if you could make a negotiated deal that would be satisfactory with no nuclear weapons, they should do that, but I don't know that they will. But they are talking to us. Seriously talking to us.

*Alfalfa Club Dinner*

*Q.* Mr. President, did you speak with President Bush at the Alfalfa Dinner?

*The President.* What about it?

*Q.* Did you speak with President Bush?

*The President.* I did.

*Q.* Yes. Can you share what you talked about?

*The President.* Well, I—with Jeb Bush.

*Q.* Jeb?

*The President.* I only saw Jeb. I think you mean Jeb.

*Q.* Okay, yes.

*The President.* Yes, no, I introduced him. Nice. He's a good fellow. And he's been very nice to me the last 6 months. I don't know what happened. But he was very nice. We had a good time.

*Federal Reserve System Board of Governors Chairman-Designate Kevin M.*

*Warsh/Senate Confirmation Process*

*Q.* Mr. President, on your Federal—on your Fed nominee, Mr. Kevin Warsh, why are you willing to wait for Senator Thom—Thom Tillis to leave the Senate, essentially, until—if you have to—if Senator Tillis won't back down?

*The President.* For Tillis? I didn't say I wouldn't wait. But, I mean, he's leaving the Senate for a reason, because what he asked for didn't get done. So it's what one of those things. I think he may get Democrat votes too. I think—he's so good that he'll probably get Democrat votes. He should. He's very good. My choice—my Fed choice should get Democrat votes.

#### *Interest Rates*

*Q.* Do you have a sense of who—what he's going to do as far as interest rates are concerned?

*The President.* I hope he's going to lower them. I mean, if you watch him on television—you know, because I watch interviews and statements—I hope he's going to lower, but you know, he's going to have to do what he wants to do.

*Q.* Did he tell you? Did he make any commitments?

*The President.* No. No commitments. I don't want to do that. I could do that, I guess, if I wanted. But I didn't do that. I based it on quality. I mean, he was—he's a very high-quality person. He should have no trouble getting through.

#### *Alfalfa Club Dinner*

*Q.* Mr. President, did you make a comment at the dinner about—saying that you would sue Warsh?

*The President.* About what?

*Q.* About suing Warsh if he does not lower interest rates?

*The President.* Yes. It's a roast. It's a roast. It's a comedy night.

*Q.* So it was a joke? You didn't mean it seriously?

*The President.* Of course it was. It was all comedy.

#### *Internal Revenue Service/The President's Settlement of Lawsuits Against the Federal Government*

*Q.* And then on a more serious note. You're suing the IRS. Can you talk a little bit about what it's like to be on both sides of a lawsuit?

*The President.* It's very interesting. I have another one where—you know, I've virtually won the Mar-a-Lago break-in suit. And you know, I have to work out some kind of a settlement. I'm supposed to work out a settlement with myself, because, you know, when the FBI broke in, we sued. When I was—before I was President, I sued. And obviously, it was a very good suit. And I have that one, and I have to work out a settlement.

*Q.* Have you instructed Pam Bondi on how to handle that at all?

*The President.* I think what we'll do is do something for charity. You know, we're thinking about doing something for charity, where I'll give money to charity. We can make it a substantial amount. Nobody would care, because it's going to go to numerous, very good charities.

#### *Crime Rates/Immigration Enforcement Actions*

*Q.* You made that tweet—the Truth today about Minneapolis and how you might not see Federal authorities intervene. You asked the——

*The President.* On what?

*Q.* —Secretary Noem not to send in DHS in Democratic cities when they were—  
[inaudible].

*The President.* No, I let them ask us. If they want help—you know, they're always complaining. If you go in, they complain. They complain no matter what.

You know, we brought crime to the lowest point in the history of our country—125 years. 1900. Think of it. Year—think of that—1900. Can you imagine?

We have the lowest crime in the history of our country, despite the fact that our country was riddled with a lot of bad people from the Biden open border. But we've taken a lot of them out. We're at the lowest point in history. We have the least number of murders in the recorded history of our country. That's incredible.

#### *Federal Law Enforcement Support in U.S. Cities*

*Q.* Mr. President, the escalation——

*The President.* We want—I want the—I mean, honestly, the crime-ridden cities are all Democrat-run cities. And if they want help, they have to ask for it, because if we go in, all they do is complain. But if they want help, they can ask for it. And they're going to need help.

Los Angeles, as an example: We went in, we solved it. The chief law enforcement officer in Los Angeles said they couldn't have done it without the Federal Government. A week later, he said they didn't need the Federal Government, you know? So we don't want that. If they want help, they'll ask, but they have to say "please."

#### *Immigration Enforcement Actions*

*Q.* On DHS funding, sir, the Democrats have made three demands. They say they want no roving patrols, they want to establish rules for use of force, and they want masks off and body cams on.

*The President.* Well, we'll talk about it. It's not appropriate yet. We have to let a little time go by. But we'll talk about it. But you know, we want—I got elected for law enforcement, for the border, for the economy—things I've done a great job with. When you have the lowest crime rate in the history of our country—recorded in 125 years, to be exact. So I've fulfilled so much.

We'll have to talk about that over the next 3 or 4 days.

#### *Department of Justice Files Concerning Deceased Convicted Sex Offender Jeffrey Epstein*

*Q.* Mr. President, what did you think of the latest release of Epstein files? And do you think your critics will be satisfied with this release?

*The President.* Well, they should be, because it looked like this guy, Wolff, who's a writer, was conspiring with Epstein to do harm to me. And I didn't see it myself, but I was told by some very important people that not only does it absolve me, it's the opposite of what people were hoping—you know, the radical left—that Wolff, who's a third-rate writer, was conspiring with Jeffrey Epstein to hurt me politically or otherwise. And that came through loud and clear. So we'll probably sue Wolff on that.

*Q.* Sir, did you speak—or did you have any knowledge——

*The President.* And maybe the Epstein estate, I guess. I don't know. But we're going to certainly sue Wolff.

*Q.* You're going to sue the Epstein estate?

*The President.* Well, you may. I guess so, because he was conspiring with Wolff to do harm to me politically. That's not a friend.

*Q.* On your plan for Venezuela oil, sir.

[*At this point, the President addressed a reporter seated on the floor.*]

*The President.* You okay down there? You okay? [*Laughter*] I don't want to—right on top of him.

### *Venezuela/Oil Supply and Refining*

*Q.* You said that the profits will be split, with the U.S. and Venezuela both benefiting. What's Venezuela's share of the oil profits going to be?

*The President.* Well, we haven't discussed that, but we're getting along very well with the leadership of Venezuela. They're doing a really good job. We're going to be selling a lot of oil. And we'll take some, and they'll take a lot. And they're going to do very well. They're going to make more money than they've ever made. And it's going to be beneficial to us too. We're going to really——

*Q.* [*Inaudible*]—Venezuela?

*The President.* I think we're—Venezuela is really going to turn around.

You know, I opened up the airspace over Venezuela so that now people from Venezuela—came from Venezuela here—they're going to be able to go back for the first time, go back to Venezuela and stay, perhaps, or go back and see their relatives, go for a short period of time.

### *China*

*Q.* Sir, is—do you think China is going to get their money back from all the money they lent to Venezuela for oil?

*The President.* I don't know. I don't know anything about that. But I'll tell you what: China is welcome to come in and—would make a great deal on oil. You know, we welcome China. We've already made a deal. India is coming in, and they're going to be buying Venezuelan oil, as opposed to buying it from Iran. So we've already made that deal—the concept of the deal. But China is welcome to come in and buy oil.

### *Venezuelan Opposition Leader María Corina Machado*

*Q.* On Venezuela, do you think that Machado should be able to return to Venezuela?

*The President.* I'd love to be able to do something with it, and maybe putting the sides together and doing something. I think she's a very fine person.

*Q.* Do you think she'll lead?

*The President.* And I—but I think—I have to say, at the same time, the current leadership is doing a very good job.

### *Independent Journalist Don R. Lemon*

*Q.* Did you happen—did you have any knowledge of the arrest of Don Lemon before it happened? Did you have any conversations with Attorney——

*The President.* No, I don't know anything about the Don Lemon thing. But he's a sleazebag. Everyone has known that. He's a washed-up—probably, from his standpoint, the best thing that

could happen to him. He's getting—you know, he had no viewers. He had—he was a failure. He was a failed host. And now he's in the news. I didn't know anything about it, no.

### *Cuba*

*Q.* Sir, what's your response to Claudia Sheinbaum's warning that the embargo—or the restriction on Cuban oil, oil to Cuba—could cause a humanitarian crisis there?

*The President.* Well, it doesn't have to be humanitarian crisis. I think they probably would come to us and want to make a deal.

So Cuba would be free again. They'll come to us; they'll make a deal. But Cuba, really—they've got a problem. You know, they have a problem. I know so many people from Cuba. But we have a lot of people in the United States, right now, that would love to go back to Cuba. And we'd like to work that out.

*Q.* What do you want to see from Cuba? I mean, what do you need to see to make that kind of a deal?

*The President.* Well, we'll work a deal. I think we're going to work a deal with Cuba. I think, you know, we'll be kind. We have a situation that's very bad for Cuba. They have no money. They have no oil. The—Venezuela—they lived off Venezuelan money and oil, and none of that's coming now. And then, the President of Mexico, President Sheinbaum, was very good. And I said, "Look, we don't want you sending oil there." And she's not sending oil.

*Q.* Sir——

### *Plans for a Triumphant Arch in the District of Columbia/White House Ballroom Construction Project*

*Q.* Mr. President, on your plans for Washington, DC, sir, the Washington Post reported that you're considering an arch that's 250 feet high. Can you talk a little bit about that and address critics who say that might be a little bit too large for the space?

*The President.* We're considering an arc. It's like the Arc de Triomphe in Paris.

So, for 200 years, they've wanted to build an arc. There are 57 cities around the world that have them. We're the only major city—Washington, DC—that doesn't. The circle prior to the bridge—you know, the Arlington bridge—has been waiting for hundreds of years to have this done. In fact, there are four eagles that got built, but it was interrupted by a thing called the Civil War. And so, it never got built. Then they almost built something in 1902, but it never happened. So we're—we have an unbelievable arc that I think will be the most beautiful in the world being built there and going to be built there.

*Q.* Is 250 feet the——

*The President.* I don't know what the height is. It's just appropriate for the site. We're setting up a Committee, and the Committee is going to be going over it. But it will be substantial. I'd like it to be the biggest one of all. We're the biggest, most powerful nation. I'd like it to be the biggest one of all.

*Q.* [Inaudible]—for the charity——

*The President.* A very exciting job, actually. They've been waiting for many years, just like the ballroom. For 150 years, they've wanted a ballroom. Now we're going to put up the most beautiful ballroom anywhere in the world, as far as I'm concerned.

And a real—and I could have built a much bigger one. I didn't want to do that. I wanted to be in keeping with—I didn't want it to be taller than the White House, et cetera. So I wanted it to be

in keeping. But it's a really beautiful building done by some of the best architects in the world, the ballroom.

Likewise, the arc, I think it's going to be great. We're just setting up a Committee now for the arc.

### *Settlement Money From the President's Lawsuits Against the Federal Government*

*Q.* Could the money from the lawsuit that you may settle with yourself go towards paying for that arch or for the ballroom?

*The President.* I hadn't thought of it, but we're going to probably—you know, I mean, it's sort of a strange position because I have a lawsuit, like the break-in of Mar-a-Lago, and I pay myself. That, somehow, will never look good.

So what I had—and other people, a lot of people—a lot of outside people said, "What a great idea." Because nobody cares how much if it goes to good charities.

So you settle by giving charities a lot of money. And I think we're going to do something like that. We're looking to do something like that.

*Q.* Would the charity be to pay for the ballroom and for the arch?

*The President.* No, I don't either of those two. I'm talking about American Cancer Society, a lot of very—I think they should be, probably, established charities.

*Q.* On Iran, sir. You had——

*The President.* I would say established and respected charities.

### *Iran*

*Q.* On Iran, sir, you had threatened those secondary tariffs on countries doing business with Iran. We haven't seen those yet. What are you holding off on? What are you waiting on?

*The President.* Well, we're going to see. Look, we have a lot of things happening right now with Iran. We have a tremendous fleet going in that direction, and they're talking to us. So a lot of things could happen.

### *Canada/China*

*Q.* And the Canada tariff, sir, that you talked about, are those coming?

*The President.* Well, that was on the airplanes. Are you talking about the airplanes?

*Q.* No, no, about the China deal that they did.

*The President.* Oh, well, if they do a deal with China, yes, we'll do something very substantial, because we can't—look, I have a great relationship with China, President Xi. But we don't want China to take over Canada.

And if they make the deal that he's looking to make, China will take over Canada. And the first thing they're going to do? End ice hockey.

### *China*

*Q.* Speaking of China, sir, there was a military purge in that country a week ago. What do you make of that?

*The President.* Well, as far as I'm concerned—you're talking about China?

*Q.* Yes, the

*The President.* As far as I'm concerned, there's one boss in China. That's President Xi. That's the person I'm dealing with.

*Q.* Are there any concerns about stability or with regard to Taiwan?

*The President.* No. I think—I think President Xi is the boss. I watch it very closely, and he's highly respected in China. He's the boss.

*Q.* Mr. President——

### *Cuba*

*Q.* Sir, can I go back to Cuba for 1 second? Who exactly are you negotiating with on the island? Who's the government representative there who you're speaking with?

*The President.* Where?

*Q.* In Cuba. Who are you speaking with on the Cuban side?

*The President.* We're starting to talk to Cuba, yes. We're starting to——

*Q.* Can you tell us who it is?

*The President.* Look, they need help on a humanitarian basis. And we're starting to talk to Cuba. I would—look, don't forget, a lot of people that live in our country were treated very badly by Cuba, and we want them to be—they all voted for me, and we want them to be treated well. We'd like to be able to have them go back to—home to their country, which they haven't seen their family, their country for many, many decades.

*Q.* Do you have any updates on what's happening——

*The President.* So we'll work that—I'll be able to work that out.

Yes.

### *Greenland*

*Q.* Do you have any updates on what's happening with Greenland negotiations? And have you been in contact with Presidents Macron, Starmer—some of those European leaders?

*The President.* You're talking about on Greenland?

*Q.* Yes.

*The President.* Yes, we're—we have started a negotiation, and I think it's pretty well agreed to. I mean, they want us to do it. I think it's going to be a good deal for everybody. A very important deal. Actually, from a national security point of view, a very, very important deal. I think we're going to make a deal there.

### *Political Demonstrations*

*Q.* Mr. President, back to your post on ICE protests. What did you mean when you said "people will suffer an equal or greater consequence?"

*The President.* If they do anything bad to our people, they will be—they will have to suffer. I'm sorry. If they start spitting in people's faces, punching our people—punching our soldiers, our patriots, they'll—they will get taken care of in at least an equal way. They're not going to do that. Like—you know, you see it, the way they treat our people.

And I said: "You're allowed—if somebody does that, you can do something back. You're not going to stand there and take it." If somebody spits in your face, that will not be a pleasant thing for the person that spits. We're not letting people spit in our soldiers' face as they stand at

attention and they're not allowed to do anything. If they throw bricks at a car—at, you know, one of our vehicles that are very expensive vehicles, they're going to be met with very, very serious force.

*Federal Law Enforcement Practices/Encounters With Protesters*

*Q.* Sir, do you think it's good having lots of cameras on these kinds of incidents between law enforcement and the people?

*The President.* I think it would help law enforcement, but I'd have to talk to them. I'm going to be talking to them tomorrow. Actually, I think it would help law enforcement. You know, that works both ways. But I think—overall, I think it's 80 percent in favor of law enforcement.

*Federal Law Enforcement Practices/Minnesota/Immigration Enforcement Actions*

*Q.* Who are you talking to tomorrow on law enforcement?

*The President.* A lot of people. Well, I'm speaking to Kristi, I'm speaking to Tom Homan, I'm—a lot of people. We have it in good shape.

And you know, Minnesota crime is way down because of what we've done. We've taken out thousands of criminals. What we want in Minnesota: We want them to open their jails and give us their criminals, and we're gone. That's all we want. And they're going to have to do it.

*Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi L. Noem/Crime Rates/White House Border Czar Thomas D. Homan*

*Q.* How are you feeling about Secretary Noem's handling of the matters in the last week or so?

*The President.* Well, she's doing great. I mean, we have a closed border. We've taken out thousands and thousands of killers and murderers and everything else. Removed them from our country by the tens of thousands. And we have the crime rate that's the lowest in history.

You know, I didn't do—the crime rate stats, they just came out yesterday that we have the lowest crime rate in the history of our country. So how's she doing? I think she's doing well, and she's a good person. She works hard.

Tom Homan is a star. You know, he's incredible. I mean, the guy is incredible. He's got an unbelievable—he's tough, and yet everybody likes him. Both sides. So he's been great. But he said to me just tonight—he said, "Look, they've got to open up their prisons and give us their criminals and their murderers and their drug lords and, you know—and we'll take care of them."

And that's why crime is down in Minnesota, not because of anything they did. It's because of what we did.

Same thing in Chicago. We have crime down in Chicago. And most people don't even know we're there, but we're there doing a good job. We have crime down all over the Nation.

Thank you very much, everybody.

[*The President addressed a photographer seated on the floor.*]

That's a very dangerous shot he's got. Look.

[*The President pointed underneath his chin.*]

*Q.* [Laughter] It's tight quarters.

*The President.* That's the worst—that's got to be the worst shot of——



*Q.* I don't know. It's——

*The President.* That's all right. Have a good time.

*Q.* Thank you, sir.

*The President.* Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:12 a.m. in the press cabin. In his remarks, he referred to former Gov. John E. "Jeb" Bush of Florida; Chief of Police James McDonnell of Los Angeles, CA; author and journalist Michael Wolff; and Prime Minister Mark Carney of Canada. Reporters referred to Minister of Defense Prince Khalid bin Salman bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia; former President George W. Bush; President Emmanuel Macron of France; and Prime Minister Keir Starmer of the United Kingdom. The transcript was released by the Office of Communications on February 2.

*Categories:* Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters, Air Force One.

*Locations:* Air Force One.

*Names:* Biden, Joseph R., Jr.; Bush, John E. "Jeb"; Carney, Mark; Homan, Thomas D.; Lemon, Don R.; Machado, María Corina; McDonnell, Jim; Noem, Kristi L.; Sheinbaum Pardo, Claudia; Tillis, Thomas R.; Warsh, Kevin M.; Wolff, Michael; Xi Jinping.

*Subjects:* Alfalfa Club Dinner; Border security; Canada, Prime Minister; China, President; China, relations with Venezuela; Crime rates; Cuba, political and economic stability; Department of Justice files concerning deceased convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein; District of Columbia, potential triumphal arch; Greenland, ownership and administration; Interest rates; Iran, diplomatic engagement with U.S.; Iran, political unrest and violence; Mexico, President; Minnesota, immigration enforcement actions; News media, Presidential interviews; Secretary of Homeland Security; Senate confirmation process; Undocumented immigrants, deportation of criminals; Venezuela, oil supply and refining; Venezuela, relations with U.S.; White House Ballroom construction project; White House Border Czar.

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