

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2026

Remarks and an Exchange With Reporters Aboard Air Force One En Route to Joint Base Andrews, Maryland

February 16, 2026

Q. Hello, sir.

The President. Hello, Steve [Steve A. Holland, Reuters].

Q. Happy Presidents Day.

Q. Mr. President.

The President. Hello, everybody.

So, great financial numbers you saw. Low inflation—very low inflation. Prices are down—way down. Gasoline is less than \$2 in many places—a gallon—which nobody expected to see, but I did, because we're going by the initial expression of "Drill, baby, drill," and prices are coming down very strongly. And as goes gasoline and oil and gas, so goes the rest of other products that were high because of Biden.

So we inherited a mess, and we've brought our country back very, very powerfully.

Crime numbers are way down, despite the fact that they let in 25 million people, many of whom should not have been allowed into our country, with their open-border policy. But it's—the country is doing very well.

Any questions?

Iran/U.S. Diplomatic Engagement

Q. What are you expecting from these Iran talks in Geneva tomorrow?

The President. So I'll be involved in those talks indirectly, and they'll be very important. And we'll see what can happen.

I mean, it's been—typically, Iran is a very tough negotiator. They're good negotiators—or bad—I would say they're bad negotiators, because we could have had a deal instead of sending the B-2s in to knock out their nuclear potential. And we had to send the B-2s.

I hope they're going to be more reasonable. They want to make a deal.

Q. And have you been told that a deal is next to impossible?

The President. No. No, I think they want to make a deal. I don't think they want the consequences of not making a deal. They want to make a deal.

Department of Homeland Security Appropriations/Immigration Enforcement Actions

Q. Are you going to sit down with Democrats this week on DHS funding, sir?

The President. I will. But, you know, we have to protect our law enforcement. They've done a great job. I just got finished saying that we have the best crime numbers we've had in many years, and on murders, 125 years. And that's despite a lot of people that shouldn't have been let into our country coming into our country, criminals—many, many criminals.

But we've taken out tens of thousands of people, brought them back to their countries. Many of the criminals that were brought in, allowed to come in, have been removed. So, you know, we're okay.

But to have the best crime numbers—which aren't made by me. These are made by people that do that—many left-leaning. We have the best murder numbers—horrible thing to say, but we have the best murder numbers since 1900. That's before my father was born: 125 years. Think of it. The best crime numbers since 1900 having to do with murder. And really good crime numbers, the best in years.

Federal Law Enforcement Practices/Public Safety District of Columbia

Q. Are there any—are there any demands that Democrats are making that you're okay with on to—the get——

The President. I don't like some of the things they're asking for. We're going to protect law enforcement. We're going to protect ICE. You know, they're a part of the whole system that is working.

And Washington, DC, now is considered a very safe city. When I took over, it was a city that you were losing two, three people a week. Over a hundred people a year were being murdered in Washington. Now it's considered a very safe city, and we did that. I did it over a fairly short period of time too.

Q. On DHS. Recent news reports have discussed the widespread belief that Kristi Noem and Corey Lewandowski are in a personal relationship. Is that a bad look?

The President. Up.

[At this point, the President gestured to the reporter to speak louder.]

Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi L. Noem

Q. Recent news reports have discussed the—possibility that Kristi Noem and Corey Lewandowski are in a close personal relationship. Is that a bad look? And do you think she'll be in the job much longer?

The President. I don't know about that. I mean, I haven't heard that, but I'll find out about it. But I have not heard about it.

State of the Union Address/Federal Government Appropriations/Election Reform/Democratic Party

Q. Mr. President, will you——

Q. Do you see her staying in the role of Secretary?

Q. —will you give your State of the Union speech if we're still in a shutdown next week?

The President. Well, I think I would, yes. Wouldn't bother me. I would give it, yes.

Q. How are the negotiations going, though?

The President. With what—which one? We have a lot of negotiations.

Q. No, with the Government shutdown.

The President. This is a Democrat shutdown. This has nothing to do with Republicans. This is a Democrat shutdown.

Q. What has the White House——

The President. They're upset that the crime numbers are so good. They're very unhappy that the crime numbers are so good.

They're very unhappy that there's a movement for getting voter ID. They want voter ID. The population, 98 percent, want voter ID. They don't want voter ID because they want to cheat in elections.

They also want other things. They don't want mail-in ballots. They want to end mail-in ballots, which is corrupt.

And one other thing that they're insisting on is proof of citizenship. And the Democrats don't want to give proof of citizenship. They don't want to give voter ID.

Think of it: Who wouldn't want proof of citizenship, I ask you, Steve? Who wouldn't want voter ID?

And why would you want mail-in ballots if you know it's corrupt? It's a corrupt system. We're the only country in the world that has this system of mail-in ballots. I mean, think of it: the only country in the world that has this system of mail-in ballots because they cheat. And the fact is, they could never get elected if they ever changed, and they know it.

If you had voter ID, if you had proof of citizenship, they could never win an election. And they know that, and they're fighting to the hilt.

And I put this down with men playing in women's sports, I put it down with transgender for everybody, I put it down with their horrible open-border policy as being ridiculous. They don't want voter ID. No voter ID. And I put that down to the same category with men playing in women's sports. I'm going to add a fourth category: They don't want voter ID.

Go ahead.

Department of Justice Files Concerning Deceased Convicted Sex Offender Jeffrey Epstein

Q. So Hillary Clinton said in an interview today that she and her husband are getting pulled into the Epstein matter to divert attention from you and that your administration has something to hide. What's your response to that?

The President. I have nothing to hide. I've been exonerated. I have nothing to do with Jeffrey Epstein. They went in hoping that they'd find it and found just the opposite. I've been totally exonerated. In fact, Jeffrey Epstein was fighting that I don't get elected with some author—a sleazebag, by the way—and I've been totally exonerated.

No, no. They're getting pulled in, and that's their problem. I don't know. They're going to have to see what happens.

But I watched her in Munich, and she seriously has Trump derangement syndrome.

Q. Mr. President——

Q. Do you think that she should publicly testify?

The President. You know, I've been totally exonerated on Epstein. And it's really interesting, because they've been pulled in.

Q. Do you——

The President. Think of it, they've been pulled in. Clinton and—many other Democrats have been pulled in.

Yes.

U.S. Naval Fleet

Q. The USS *Gerald Ford*, which is sprinting from the Caribbean to the Middle East, is about to hit its 8-month deployment mark. Usually, they're deployed for about 6 months or so. Is there any concern that U.S. carriers are being stretched too thin?

The President. It's—I'll answer the question later.

Cuba

Q. Mr. President, you're warning Cuba to make a deal. What does that deal look like? What do you want them to do?

The President. They should make a deal. Cuba is, right now, a failed nation. They don't even have jet fuel to get—for airplanes to take off. They're clogging up their runway. But we're talking to Cuba right now. I have Marco Rubio talking to Cuba right now, and they should absolutely make a deal because it's a humanitarian—it's really a humanitarian threat.

And we have a lot of great Cuban Americans, and they're going to be very happy when they're going to be able to go back and say hello to their relatives and do things that they should have been allowed to do for a long time.

I'm very interested in the people that are here, that were treated so badly by Castro and the Cuban authorities. They have been treated horribly.

So we'll see how it all turns out. But Cuba and us, we are talking.

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

In the meantime, there's an embargo. There's no oil. There's no money. There's no anything.

Cuba/Potential U.S. Military Involvement

Q. If a deal isn't made, would you consider an operation like the one in Venezuela?

The President. I don't want to answer that. Why would I answer that? If I was, it wouldn't be a very tough operation, as you can figure. But I don't think that will be necessary.

Secretary of State Marco A. Rubio

Q. Mr. President, Marco Rubio received really positive reviews in Munich. Is there——

The President. He's gotten very good reviews.

Q. Is there a scenario in which you would support him at the top of the ticket in '28?

The President. It's something I don't have to worry about now. I've got 3 years to go, so it's something I don't have to worry—J.D. is fantastic, and Marco is. They're both fantastic, I think, really. And I think Marco did a great job in Munich.

President Xi Jinping of China

Q. President Xi—President Xi, in your talk with him recently, warned about sending more weapons to Taiwan. What was your response to him? Are you going to send more weapons to Taiwan?

The President. Well, we have a response. I have a response. I'm talking to him about it. We had a good conversation, and we'll make a determination pretty soon.

Q. Tell us about your trip to——

The President. We have a very good relationship with President Xi.

Q. Tell us about——

The President. In fact, I'll be going, I guess, in April.

Georgia Congressional Election

Q. I'm sorry. Tell us about your trip to Rome, Georgia, on Thursday, your trip to Marjorie Taylor Greene's old district.

The President. Well, we have a lot of people that want to take Marjorie "Traitor" Greene's place, and many, many candidates, and I have to choose one. And they say whoever I endorse is going to win, but we have a lot of good candidates who want to take her place.

Board of Peace/United Nations

Q. So your Board of Peace meets for the first time this week. You said it could be the most consequential international organization ever. That's a high bar. What do you want for this first meeting?

The President. Well, I think it can be. We're going to have all world leaders. They're putting up tremendous amounts of money. And I think it's going to go far beyond Gaza. I think it will be peace all over the world. And we're working in conjunction with the United Nations.

Look, the United Nations is there. They haven't lived up to potential. United Nations has great potential. They haven't lived up to the potential, but I think they might aid us a little bit.

But we have the greatest leaders in the world joining the Board of Peace, and we'll be doing it in conjunction with, in some cases, the United Nations, and see if we can get the United Nations to get on the ball.

Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi of Japan

Q. Mr. President, you've been a kingmaker in a lot of Republican primaries. A lot of people——

The President. Including foreign nations.

Q. And——

The President. I was very honored to see that a very wonderful Prime Minister in Japan won by a landslide. I think she was going to win, but she won by just about the biggest vote ever in Japan, and she attributed my endorsement for that. And that's very good because we have a great relationship with her and Japan.

Texas Senatorial Election

Q. A lot of Republicans in DC are asking you to endorse John Cornyn, but you haven't yet. Is there a chance you would endorse Paxton? And why haven't you endorsed Cornyn?

The President. I just haven't made a decision on that race yet. It's got a ways to go and I haven't. He's a good man. John is a good—I like all three of them, actually. I like all three.

Those are the toughest races. They've all supported me, they're all good, and you're supposed to pick one. So we'll see what happens. But I support all three.

United Arab Emirates/Saudi Arabia

Q. Are you getting involved in the rift between U.A.E. and Saudi Arabia?

The President. No, I'm not. I would be.

Q. What do you think of that—settling that?

The President. I would be.

Well, I can settle it very easily, but they have a—they do indeed have a rift, and we can get it settled very easily.

I settle wars. I settle a lot of rifts between countries. You've been noticing, right? That's—that's an easy one to settle.

Acting President Delcy Rodriguez Gomez of Venezuela

Q. On Venezuela. Delcy Rodríguez, last week, said that Nicolás Maduro is still a legitimate President and is innocent. I know you said the relationship is a 10, but I'm curious, what's your thoughts on that?

The President. I think we have a great relationship. I think she probably has to say that. I think politically, maybe, she has to say that.

But the relationship with Venezuela—she's doing a very good job, and I fully understand that statement.

Q. In Gaza——

Ukraine/Russia

Q. So you're going to have Ukraine talks tomorrow as well in Geneva, with Witkoff and Jared Kushner.

The President. Yes.

Q. What are you expecting there? Is there going to——

The President. Well, they're big talks. It's going to be very easy. I mean, it's—look, so far, Ukraine better come to the table fast. That's all I'm telling you. We are in a position—we want them to come.

And by the way, I watched A.O.C. answering questions in Munich. This was not a good look for the United States. I watched Gavin Newsom answering questions for—in Geneva—in Munich, and this was a bad look for our country. This was a bad—these two people are incompetent, and at least Hillary is competent. She's just Trump deranged. She was so deranged. I didn't—she is an angry woman. But I watched the other two speaking and answering basic questions.

Look, Gavin has destroyed California, and A.O.C.—I never really got her to—I never heard her speak very much, and they started answering questions. She had no idea what was happening. She had no idea how to answer, you know, very important questions concerning the world, but she can't answer questions concerning New York City either, because New York City is—got some problems.

Gaza, Palestinian Territories

Q. Now that Gaza is entering phase two, should Israel lift its ban on foreign journalists being allowed into Gaza?

The President. Well, we'll be lifting a lot of bans pretty soon. I think you're going to see everything opening up. Gaza—look, we have peace in the Middle East. Now, you have some flames here and there, but we essentially have peace in the Middle East.

And that happened primarily when we did the B-2 attack on the nuclear—potential nuclear power. They would have had a nuclear weapon within 1 month. If that happened, it would have been a whole different deal.

Okay. Thank you very much, everybody.

Board of Peace

Q. One of the things on the—the \$5 billion that you announced yesterday for the Board of Peace, is that a down payment, or are you expecting——

The President. No, it's just—we want to help people. That's peanuts compared to the kind of money that has been spent in the Middle East by Bush, by Obama, by all of these people, by Biden—I mean, the money he spent—but the money he spent, it—you know, that's such a small amount of money by comparison. But we want to make it successful. I think it has the chance to be the most consequential board ever assembled of any kind.

Thank you.

The President's Golf Game With Governor Ronald D. DeSantis of Florida and Retired College Football Coaches Urban Meyer and Nick Saban

Q. How was golf with Ron DeSantis?

The President. Great. We had a great time. We had Ron and a couple of other people—two great coaches, as you know—the two greatest coaches, I would say, certainly in college football. And we had a good time playing golf.

Thank you very much.

Q. Who won? Who won?

The President. I didn't get to play today because I'm working on other things—very important things, much more important than golf.

Thank you very much, everybody.

First Lady Melania Trump

Q. Any plans with Melania for Valentine's?

The President. She's on the plane.

She's on—Melania is on the plane. We have a movie star on the plane.

Q. Did you have any Valentine's Day plans with her?

The President. Did I what?

Q. Did you do anything for Valentine's with her? Did you give her flowers?

The President. I'd better not tell you that. *[Laughter]*

Goodbye, everybody. That's the toughest question.

No, she's very—I'm proud of the fact—you know, her movie is so successful. It's a tremendous hit.

And she does a good job. She does very consequential work. I think you're going to see in the end that she's going to go down as one of the truly great First Ladies, when you see what she's doing with Russia-Ukraine and so many of the other things she's doing. She's done a good job. She works very hard.

Okay?

National Governors Association Events

Q. Is Wes Moore invited to the White House this week, Mr. President?

The President. Just so you understand, the Governors were all—other than two. One was Colorado, where he's got a 73-year-old woman, who's probably got serious cancer, confined and for some time in solitary confinement because she pointed out the voter theft that was taking place. In other words, she pointed it out, they arrested her, and they gave her a 9-year sentence. And he'd better let her go, because it's a disgrace.

And the other guy is just a bad Governor. He's not doing a good job. Wes Moore. He's doing a terrible job. And you can——

Q. So he's not invited?

The President. —see that—well, I didn't invite those two. If the rest of them don't want to show up, that's okay. I hear they're coming—a lot of them. The White House is a great place to be.

But no, I don't like the job that Wes Moore is doing. I don't like the job he's doing on the bridge. I don't like the fact that he did that horrible—you know, with the pipes and the Potomac, and he's not doing the job. They've got to do it. And we're going to—I'm going to have to get the Federal Government involved in getting it fixed, because he can't fix anything.

Thank you very much.

Q. Thank you, sir.

Q. Thank you, Mr. President.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:59 p.m. in the press cabin. In his remarks, he referred to former President William J. Clinton; former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton; journalist and author Michael Wolff; Vice President James D. "J.D." Vance; former Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene; Texas Republican senatorial candidates Sen. John Cornyn III, Texas State Attorney General W. Kenneth Paxton, Jr., and Rep. Wesley Hunt; Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez; Gov. Gavin C. Newsom of California; former Presidents George W. Bush and President Barack Obama; Gov. Jared S. Polis of Colorado; and former Mesa County, CO, Clerk and Recorder Tina Peters, who was convicted of criminal charges related to efforts to overturn the 2020 election of President Joseph R. Biden, Jr., in August 2024. Reporters referred to Corey R. Lewandowski, Senior Adviser to Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi L. Noem; former President Nicolas Maduro Moros of Venezuela, who was captured, along with his wife Cilia Flores, in a U.S. military operation in Caracas, Venezuela, on January 3 and exfiltrated to the U.S. for criminal processing in New York City; U.S. Special Envoy for Peace Missions Steven C. Witkoff; and the President's son-in-law Jared C. Kushner. The transcript was released by the Office of Communications on February 17.

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

Locations: Air Force One.

Names: Biden, Joseph R., Jr.; Bush, George W.; Clinton, Hillary Rodham; Clinton, William J.; Cornyn, John, III; DeSantis, Ronald D.; Greene, Marjorie Taylor; Hunt, Wesley; Meyer, Urban; Moore, Westley W.O. "Wes"; Newsom, Gavin C.; Obama, Barack; Ocasio-Cortez, Alexandria; Paxton, W. Kenneth, Jr.; Peters, Tina; Polis, Jared S.; Rodriguez Gomez, Delcy; Rubio, Marco A.; Saban, Nick; Takaichi, Sanae; Trump, Melania; Vance, James D. "J.D."; Xi Jinping.

Subjects: Board of Peace; Border security; California, Governor; China, President; Colorado, Governor; Crime rates; Cuba, political and economic stability; Department of Justice files concerning deceased convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein; District of Columbia, law enforcement improvement efforts; Election security and integrity, strengthening efforts; Federal

Government appropriations, partial lapse; Florida, Governor; Gasoline costs; Gaza, humanitarian situation; Georgia, special congressional election; Golf; Inflation; Iran, U.S. airstrikes on nuclear facilities; Iran, U.S. diplomatic efforts; Israel-Hamas cease-fire agreement implementation; Japan, Prime Minister; Law enforcement officers, service and dedication; Maryland, Governor; National Governors Association; News media, Presidential interviews; Russia, conflict in Ukraine; Saudi Arabia, relations with United Arab Emirates; Secretary of State; State of the Union Address; U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement; Ukraine, Russian invasion and airstrikes; Undocumented immigrants, deportation of criminals; United Arab Emirates, relations with Saudi Arabia; Venezuela, Acting President; Vice President.

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