

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2026

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

March 15, 2026

The President. Hello, everybody. So we have a lot of things to talk about, but there's not much I can say to you about them. So it's one of those little problems in life.

And we had some very good results today, as you probably heard, in Iran. Very strong results—militarily, results. We're talking to countries about policing the straits, because they are the ones—you know, we don't get oil—very little—1 percent, 2 percent. China, as an example, gets about 90 percent of its oil from the Hormuz Strait. And it would be nice to have other countries police that with us, and we'll help. We'll work with them.

Militarily, we've—as far as I'm concerned, we've essentially defeated Iran. I guess they can have a little bit of fight back but not much. Not much.

We've taken out their air force, as you know. We've taken out their navy. We've taken out their air defense. They have no air defense whatsoever. We've taken out their leadership times two or three. Might be three. We'll find out soon.

But militarily, it's been amazing. We attacked Kharg Island, and we left just the one little area standing, and the standing part is where they have the pipes—all the oil pipes come in. And we can do that on 5 minutes' notice. We have it all locked and loaded and ready to go if we want to do it, but we chose not to do it. I chose not to do it yet. We'll see what happens.

They want to negotiate. They want to negotiate badly. I don't think they're ready, just on what I'm hearing. They want to negotiate badly, as they should, but I don't think they're ready to do what they have to do. But I think they will be ready at some point.

But we're doing very well with respect to that whole situation in Iran. We are talking to other countries about working with us on the policing of the Strait, and I think we're getting good response. If we do, that's great. And if we don't, that's great too. But remember, like as an example, in many cases, they're NATO countries. We're always there for NATO. We're helping them with Ukraine, as many—it's got an ocean in between us. It doesn't affect us, but we've helped them.

It would be interesting to see what country wouldn't help us with a very small endeavor, which is just keeping the Strait open. That, by comparison, is a small—it's small because Iran has very little firepower left. Their missiles are down to a low number. You see they're shooting very few of them. You know why? Because they don't have very many of them and because we've decimated their manufacturing capability.

Likewise, the drones are way down. They're down to about 20 percent of what they had. Still have some. I think they're pretty tough, but the drones are down. And we're hitting—we're starting hitting—as of yesterday, we're hitting places where they manufacture the drones. We think most of which we know where they are.

So it's a very strong military operation, just as it was in Venezuela. We have the strongest military anywhere in the world by far. Not even a contest. And I think people understand that. And we will finish the job.

Commercial Transit Through the Strait of Hormuz

Q. Mr. President, which countries have said that they will help with policing the Strait of Hormuz?

The President. Well, I can't say yet. It's a little early. They were contacted today and last night, but we've had some positive response. We had a few that would rather not get involved.

Q. Is China one of them?

The President. I don't want to tell you about that. I mean, I—can't really say for sure, but China is an interesting case study. They get most of their oil, as you know—by—far, they get a lot—about 90 percent—from the Strait. So I've said, "Would you like to come in?" And we'll find out. Maybe they will, maybe they won't.

You know, there's some other deeper reasons why they may not. They should come in, in my opinion. It never made sense. For years—if you go back and look at what I've said—years ago, I said, "Why are we maintaining the Hormuz Strait when it's really there for China and many other countries?" Why aren't they doing it? And that's because we had weak leadership, to be honest with you. But I'm bringing it up now because I think—even long-term, I think it's something that other countries should help us with.

Commercial Transit Through the Strait of Hormuz

Q. How many other countries, Mr. President?

The President. And again, remember this—about seven. We've talked to about seven.

Q. About seven.

The President. Just remember that it's something that we don't need and these countries do need. And yet, for years, it's like—for years, we've been maintaining and doing a great job. And now that the war is—now that they've been diminished in terms of military—their military has been greatly diminished—I think it's a good thing for other countries to come in.

Now, it would have been nice, as I said to the Prime Minister of the U.K., who sort of was reluctant to put his two aircraft carriers into harm's way—that would be 2 weeks ago. And as soon as we demolished—essentially, pretty much demolished them—not over yet, but pretty much we're in great shape, let's put it that way, as everybody knows—he said, "We'd like to send our aircraft carriers." I said: "I don't want them after we win the war. I want them before we start the war."

So whether it's—whether we get support or not—but I can say this, and I said it to them: We will remember.

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

Iran/International Cooperation

Q. How soon—how soon, sir, would this begin?

The President. Well, it would start immediately, but it will take a little time to get here.

Some of the countries have minesweepers. That's good. Some of the countries have a certain type of boat that could help us. Some of the countries would be—*[inaudible]*. Remember, it only takes a couple of people to screw up the Strait—a couple of terrorists. You don't need—their—their military is defeated. But all you need is a few people dropping mines here and there, and, you know, you—you louse it up.

So we need—I would—really, I'm demanding that these countries come in and protect their own territory, because it is their territory. It's the place from which they get their energy. And they should come, and they should help us protect it.

You could make the case that maybe we shouldn't even be there at all, because we don't need it. We have a lot of oil. We have—we're the number-one producer anywhere in the world times two, by double—at least double. Now I think it's much higher than that. But we do it. It's almost like we do it for habit, but we also do it for some very good allies that we have in the Middle East.

U.S. Military Operations in Iran

Q. Sir, you mentioned that Iran wants to make a deal. However, earlier today we heard their Foreign Minister say they never said they wanted to make a deal and that they'll do whatever they can to defend Iran. What's your response?

The President. What they tell you and what they tell the public—you know, I just put out a Truth about their disinformation. I assume most of you saw it. They use AI. They said they attacked the USS *Abraham Lincoln*, one of the largest ships in the world, an aircraft carrier. And they show pictures of it burning. It was never attacked. It was never burning.

The Wall Street Journal put out a false story that five of our big, beautiful tankers that we feed the planes with the—they give the planes the gas, the jet fuel—hundreds of thousands of gallons of gasoline—that they were all essentially destroyed. They weren't destroyed at all. In fact, four of them weren't—were not even—I mean, literally, were not damaged. And one of them has slight damage. It will be back in the air soon.

But they—if you read the Wall Street Journal, it's like they were totally decimated and destroyed, like Iran has been. So they put out a phony story.

The kamikaze boats. The kamikaze boats don't exist. They're fake. And you can almost see that when you look at them. It looks great, you know. Because if they did exist, we'd hit them just like we hit other boats all over the place, but they don't exist.

In fact, some of the people are saying: "Where are the boats? How come nobody's seen the boats?" You know why? Because it's AI-generated. It's fake.

And I found—I didn't realize this before we started—but Iran is known for a lot of fake news, and they deal with our fake news. And I actually think it's pretty criminal, because our media companies, who have no credibility whatsoever, are putting out information that they know is false, and it's a very dangerous thing for the country. I think it's—I think they can be in serious jeopardy—[inaudible].

Dignified Transfer of Remains Ceremony at Dover Air Force Base, Delaware

Q. Mr. President, your PAC put out a fundraising e-mail a couple of days ago, and it's being criticized for using official White House photos of you at the dignified transfer. And the PAC is also promising access to secret briefings.

The President. Well, I was at the dignified transfer, unlike a lot of other people.

Q. Do you think it's an appropriate e-mail to send?

The President. Yes, I do.

Q. Your critics are saying that you're fundraising off of—

The President. I didn't see it.

Q. ——off of——

The President. I mean, somebody puts it out. We have a lot of people working for us. But there's nobody that's better than the—to the military than me. And all you have to do is look at the election—look at the election results, look at the kind of votes that we get, look at the poll numbers. There's nobody that's ever been higher as a President than me with the military.

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

Who are you with? Who are you with?

Q. ABC News.

The President. The—one of the worst, most fake, most corrupt——

Q. Can you give a comment on the dead soldiers?

The President. You know what, ABC News? I think it's maybe the most corrupt news organizations on the planet. I think they're terrible.

Okay. I don't want any more from ABC.

Commercial Transit Through the Strait of Hormuz

Q. [*Inaudible*] What's Israel——

The President. You're much better.

Commercial Transit Through the Strait of Hormuz

Q. Thank you, sir. What's Israel doing to help secure the Strait of Hormuz?

The President. Well, they're doing—they're working with us. The relationship with Israel—that was other fake news. They were saying, "Oh, did I have an argument with Bibi?" No, we really get along well. And he would tell you, we're leading the whole thing. And I'm—I don't—I can say it or not say it. It doesn't matter. The main thing is to get it done.

But my relationship with Bibi Netanyahu is, I would say, extraordinary, actually.

Q. Sir, if I can, one more.

U.S. Military Operations in Iran/Political Demonstrations

The President. Yes, go ahead.

Q. When you called for the people of Iran to rise up, overthrow their government——

The President. I did.

Q. What's going on there?

The President. Well, it's——

Q. They haven't done that. Do you expect them to?

The President. You're dealing with thugs. You're dealing with horrible people. You're dealing with people that are violent and vicious, and that's the leadership and the people right under them—their military or their police. And they've notified everybody, and they put out statements that if you protest, you're going to be shot and killed.

The protesters have no guns. And I know you're a brave person, but I don't think you'd be protesting. And so I think it's very hard for them to protest.

I fully understand it. They said, "If you protest, you will be killed."

A week ago and 2 weeks ago, they killed 32,000 protesters—at least. We think the number is much higher than that. They shot and killed 32,000 protesters who were greatly enthusiastic and want to see a change, because they've destroyed the country. The people that are running it destroyed the country.

But think of it. They shot and killed much more than 32,000 people. Now they put out a notice 2 days ago that "We're going to kill—we're going to shoot and kill any protester." And they don't have guns—meaning the protesters. They have no guns. So I can fully understand why they're not doing.

Oh, one other thing that was AI-generated. They showed about 250,000 people in a square saying how much they love Khamenei. Totally AI-generated. It never took place. The media knew it didn't take place, but they built it up like they have great support. They don't have support.

And that whole rally that they had 3 days ago, 4 days ago, that they said was fake, it was AI-generated. AI can be very dangerous. We have to be very careful with it.

But the rally—because I was actually surprised to see it, because I know how much they—they're—the people hate this leadership. This leadership has destroyed the country.

The rally that everybody, including ABC fake news—your network is the worst. But everybody put that rally on, like, "Oh." And even I was surprised. I looked—it turned out—I found out today was a totally AI-generated fake news story put out by news organizations in the U.S. and elsewhere. And honestly, they really shouldn't be allowed to do it.

Iran/U.S. Diplomatic Engagement

Q. Mr. President, do you have—are there any diplomatic talks going on between the U.S. and Iran at all—

The President. Yes.

Q. —right now?

The President. Yes.

Q. With who?

The President. We're talking them.

Q. What are the—

The President. But I don't think they're ready, but they're getting pretty close, I'll tell you.

[*Several reporters spoke at once.*]

Q. Mr. President, you mentioned that—

The President. I don't know that I want to make a deal, because—you know why? First of all, nobody even knows who you're dealing with, because most of their leadership has been killed, as you know, right? So I don't even know that we want to make a deal.

[*Several reporters spoke at once.*]

But they want to make a deal badly.

Yes.

U.S. Military Operations in Iran

Q. Mr. President, you mentioned that Iran's military has been "decimated"—

The President. Yes.

Q. —economically, in other ways.

The President. Yes.

Q. Are you ready to officially declare victory against Iran?

The President. No, I don't want to do that. There's no reason to. I—think I'd just say they're decimated, but I wouldn't do that.

I think that we've done damage to them. Right now—if we left right now, it would take them 10 years and more to rebuild. But I'm still not declaring it over.

Our military is incredible. The job they've done is just incredible.

[*Several reporters spoke at once.*]

And the problem is that when you look at fake stories written by you people, written by and generated by AI, it's incredible.

And I just wonder—like, Jeff [Jeff Mason, Bloomberg News], do you know that these are fake stories? Did you know that the rally of 250,000 people—the supposed rally, was fake? Did you know that? Because you reported about it.

Q. I saw the reporting on it.

The President. But you wrote about it. You talked about it, and you knew it was fake. It was AI-generated.

Q. No, I didn't know it was fake, sir.

The President. I—you did. You knew it. You knew it.

[*Several reporters spoke at once.*]

Anybody—anybody that knew the country knew there's not 250,000 people willing to stand in a circle and say how great Khamenei is. Okay?

Q. Are you unhappy that—

Q. You talk a lot about—you talk about the military objectives.

The President. Yes.

Iran/Political Leadership

Q. What about political leadership in Iran? What type of leadership needs to be—

The President. We have people. Some are dead, but we have some people that we think would be good. I mean, we'll see about that.

Q. Is that a requirement, sir?

The President. It's something we talk about. We'll see what happens.

Q. Sir, can you talk about selling oil futures—

Q. Can you explain why we're sending 5,000 marines and sailors? Can you explain why—

The President. You're a very obnoxious person.

Go ahead. What were you going to say?

Oil Markets and Prices

Q. I wanted to ask if you talked about capping—about selling oil futures as a way of capping prices, trying to keep prices down at the pump.

The President. The prices are going to come tumbling down as soon as it's over, and it's going to be over pretty quickly.

U.S. Military Operations in Iran

Q. Do you have any concerns about the political impacts of this? I mean—

The President. I have to do what's right. You know, political—sure, everybody has concern. I have to do what's right.

Q. Is there a time—

Iran/Nuclear Weapons Development

The President. I can't say that, you know, "Gee, I—I don't want to have any impact on oil prices for 3 or 4 weeks or 2 months, and we're going to let Iran have a nuclear weapon and blow up the entire Middle East and beyond." Right? Because, you know, they—they were going to blow up the Middle East.

If I didn't terminate the Obama horrible deal—the Iran nuclear deal, it's called—if I didn't terminate that in my first term, they would have already had a nuclear weapon, and they would have used it immediately upon getting it.

And if I didn't send in the B-2 bombers to bomb the hell out of it and obliterate—and that's what it was. We obliterated that site and stopped all their potential nuclear. If I didn't do that, you would have had Israel and the Middle East hit by nuclear weapons, and—we wouldn't be talking about this right now.

[*Several reporters spoke at once.*]

What I did in terminating the Iran nuclear deal and what I did in sending in the B-2 bombers who were—it was one of the most incredible attacks anyone's ever seen. Late at night. Dark. No moon. And every single bomb went right down those chutes and blew the whole place apart.

If I didn't do that, you'd have—you would have had nuclear warfare in the Middle East, and I think Israel would have been obliterated. I think lots of the Middle East would have been—and you saw that when they sent thousands of missiles to countries that didn't expect anything—they didn't think they're going to be involved.

And yet you look at what happened with Kuwait, U.A.E., Saudi Arabia, Qatar. You take a look at Qatar. I mean, they sort of got along. And all of a sudden, they're being barraged by missiles.

These people would have used nuclear on the entire Middle East. And that was their plan: Take over the whole Middle East. And it failed with the nuclear. And then they had thousands of missiles. And, for the most part, largely, we've now destroyed those missiles.

Thank you very much everybody.

Cuba

Q. On one other topic. Can you tell us about Cuba?

The President. Yes.

Q. You're talking to Cuba. What do you want to hear from them?

The President. Well—

Q. And what is that risk for them?

The President. —I am holding Cuba. Cuba's a failed nation. Cuba also wants to make a deal. And I think we will pretty soon, or—either make a deal or do whatever we have to do.

We have a lot of great people that happen to vote for Trump—not that that matters—but we have a lot of great people from Cuba that were violently and viciously thrown out of the country and worse. Their families were killed.

And so we're talking to Cuba, but we're going to do Iran before Cuba.

Q. And what is at risk for Cuba?

The President. You know, people have been waiting 50 years to hear this story with Cuba. And when I left Palm Beach today, there were thousands of people in the road—I'm sure you saw them—and they were from Cuba and from Venezuela. All friendly. All friendly. Waving the flag and waving the American flag. They've been waiting 50 years for what's happening with Cuba.

So I think something will happen with Cuba pretty quickly.

Q. And when you say—

U.S. Military Operations in Iran

Q. Do you have any update on the Iran school strike? Is it looking more likely that it was the U.S.'s fault, maybe? The Iran school strike that happened on the first day of the war.

The President. We don't know. That's under investigation.

Israel/U.S. Military Readiness

Q. Mr. President, what—what do you want to see in a deal with Iran to end the war? And how does that differ from Israel's objectives?

The President. I—think—

Q. You said the other day they might have different objectives.

The President. You know, I think we have similar objectives, really, but could be a little bit different. You know, they're there, and we're very far away. But I think we probably have pretty similar—with Israel.

The relationship has been very good. The militaries are very well coordinated, and ours is the strongest by far in the world. And they have a real good military—you know, really good. They have a lot of our weapons. They have our planes. They have our missiles. They have our Patriots. They have a lot of our weapons. We have the best—we make the best weapons in the world.

And now what we're doing, as you probably saw—we have the Raytheon and all of the—Lockheed—all of these companies are now building plants because we don't want to wait. We make the best weapons, but we don't like to have to wait for them.

What we do have, though, is, at a very high level, we have unlimited weapons—at a medium to high level, and they're really doing the trick. And we're not using the—they call it the elite weapons, because, frankly, they have a—outside of the original attack, they haven't been necessary.

[*Several reporters spoke at once.*]

But these—but these companies are building facilities, and they've already started—all over the—many of them are building many buildings right now to make so that we wait 2 weeks instead of 2 years for weapons.

U.S. Military Operations in Iran

Q. So, last week you said that we are nowhere near sending ground troops to the Middle East. Are we still in that situation?

The President. I'm not talking to people like you about that. I mean, why would I tell you I'm sending or not sending? I don't talk about a military strategy. Who would talk about—I mean, who would answer a question like that?

Q. Do you have a comment on the six servicemembers who passed last week—

The President. Go ahead. Who else—[inaudible]?

Iran/Nuclear Weapons Development

Q. What do you want to see in the deal? Because earlier, you've said—or reportedly—

The President. Well, you start off with—

Q. —that the deal wasn't good enough.

The President. —there will be no nuclear weapons. That's where it starts.

And then, on top of that, there's plenty of things that we're going to get.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:59 p.m. in the press cabin. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Keir Starmer of the United Kingdom; Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel; Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei of Iran; and former President Barack Obama. A reporter referred to Minister of Foreign Affairs Abbas Araghchi of Iran. The transcript was released by the Office of Communications on March 16.

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

Locations: Air Force One.

Names: Khamenei, Mojtaba; Netanyahu, Benjamin; Obama, Barack; Starmer, Keir.

Subjects: ABC News; Artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies; China, energy supply chain; Cuba, political and economic stability; Iran, commercial transit through Strait of Hormuz; Iran, diplomatic engagement with U.S.; Iran, political unrest and violence; Iran, Supreme Leader; Iran, U.S. airstrikes on nuclear facilities; Iran, U.S. military operations; Israel, defense relationship with U.S.; Israel, Prime Minister; News media, fairness and accuracy; News media, Presidential interviews; North Atlantic Treaty Organization; Oil and natural gas, domestic production; Russia, conflict in Ukraine; U.S. servicemembers, service and dedication; Ukraine, Russian invasion and airstrikes; United Kingdom, defense relationship with U.S.; United Kingdom, Prime Minister.

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