

*Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2026*

**Remarks in an Exchange With Reporters Prior to Departure for Palm Beach, Florida**

*March 20, 2026*

*The President.* Hello, everybody. Hello, everybody. I thought I'd bring our great Secretary of State out, and he is doing a fantastic job. So we have Marco.

Go ahead, please.

*Iran/U.S. Military Operations*

*Q.* Mr. President, I wanted to ask you: Iran executed three people this week.

*The President.* Terrible.

*Q.* You have vowed strong action in the past. What message would you send?

*The President.* Well, we've been hitting them awfully hard. I mean, I don't know if you could possibly get hit harder. But these are thugs and animals and horrible people. But you can't hit anybody harder than we've hit them.

*Q.* And do you——

*The President.* But I'm not surprised. They executed three young people for protesting.

*Commercial Transit Through the Strait of Hormuz*

*Q.* And do you plan to escort those ships through the Strait of Hormuz with or without allies?

*The President.* Well, we're doing very well there. We're doing very well overall.

You know, we don't use the Strait. We don't—the United States, we don't need it. Europe needs it. Korea, Japan, China—a lot of other people. So they'll have to get involved a little bit on that one.

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

*South Korea*

*Q.* Do you still want South Korea supporting the United States?

*The President.* Yes, what about it?

*Q.* Do you still want South Korea supporting United States?

*The President.* Well, I love South Korea. We have a great relationship with South Korea where we're helping South Korea a lot.

Yes.

*Israel-U.S. Relations*

*Q.* Mr. President, do you think Israel will be ready to end the war when you're ready to end the war?

*The President.* I think so, yes. Yes.

[*Several reporters spoke at once.*]

*Q.* What makes you think that?

*The President.* The relationship's a very good one. I think so. You know, it's a—we want, more or less, similar things.

You know what we want? We want victory, both of us. And that's what we've got.

[Several reporters spokes at once.]

#### *U.S. Military Operations in Iran*

*Q.* What's your plan for Kharg Island, Mr. President? What's your plan for Kharg Island?

*The President.* Well, you know, I may have a plan or I may not, but how would I ever say that to a reporter? If I said that to a reporter, Marco would say, "Please, sir, let's bring you over to the helicopter immediately." Right?

No, I can't tell you that. It's certainly a place that's—people are talking about, but I can't say.

Yes.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

*Q.* Are you ruling out ground troops there though?

#### *Russia/Ukraine*

*Q.* Mr. President, how will the Operation Epic Fury affect talks with Russia on Ukraine?

*The President.* What about it?

*Q.* Are the talks on back burner right now because of the——

*The President.* No, no.

*Q.* No?

*The President.* We're talking. We're talking about it. I think it'll get done.

*Q.* But when do you expect the next round of talks to take place?

*The President.* They take place almost every day. We're making a lot of progress.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

#### *U.S. Military Operations in Iran*

*Q.* You said that the war was militarily won in Iran. What did you mean by that? You said the war was militarily won in Iran. What did you mean by that?

*The President.* Oh, I think we've won. We've knocked out their navy, their air force. We've knocked out their anti-aircraft. We've knocked out everything. We're roaming free. From a military standpoint, all they're doing is clogging up the Strait. But, from a military standpoint, they're finished.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

#### *Commercial Transit Through the Strait of Hormuz/International Cooperation*

*Q.* You said opening the Strait of Hormuz is a simple military maneuver.

*The President.* Very simple.

*Q.* Yes, but what did you mean by that?

*The President.* It's a simple military maneuver, it's relatively safe, but you need a lot of help in the sense of you need ships, you need volume. And NATO could help us, but they so far haven't had the courage to do so. And others could help us.

But, you know, we don't use it. You know, at a certain point, it'll open itself—at a certain point.

But we've defeated the enemy, and they are an enemy. They're a sick group of people. Their leadership is gone. The navy is gone. The air force is gone. The anti-aircraft equipment that they have, the radar they have is all gone. Everything is gone. The Strait itself, the actual Strait——

How are you?

*Q.* Hi.

*The President.* The Strait itself is—we're doing a good job. But it would be nice if the countries, including China—if the countries that use it—China uses it, 90 percent of their energy. Japan is 95 percent of the energy. It would be nice if those countries would get involved. It would be very nice.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

*Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard*

*Q.* Is Tulsi Gabbard's job still safe as DNI?

*The President.* What?

*Q.* Is Tulsi Gabbard's job still safe as DNI? And have you spoken to Netanyahu recently?

*The President.* I thought she did a good job yesterday, actually.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

*North Atlantic Treaty Organization*

*Q.* Mr. President, on the American bases in Europe. Lindsey Graham has asked for you to reconsider the American bases in Spain, in Germany after what they have done in the Strait of Hormuz. What's your take on that?

*The President.* Well, it deserves—he's right about asking that. And I think NATO has gone down a long way because they haven't—I mean, they should be helping with the Strait. They get much of their energy from the Strait of Hormuz. And if Lindsey Graham said that—and don't forget, he was the big NATO guy for a while, and now he's not. And a lot of Senators and Congressmen, they were big—they're very upset with the fact that NATO has done nothing.

*Pope Leo XIV*

*Q.* Sir, Pope Leo is calling for a cease-fire in the Middle—Pope Leo is calling for a cease-fire in the Middle East and to reopen dialogue. What do you say to the Pope, sir?

*The President.* Well, look, we can have dialogue, but we don't—I don't want to do a cease-fire. You know, you don't do a cease-fire when you're literally obliterating the other side. They don't have a navy. They don't have an air force. They don't have any equipment to, they don't have any spotters. They don't have anti-aircraft. They don't have radar. And their leaders have all been killed at every level. We're not looking to do that.

Thank you. Thank you very much.

*Death of Actor Chuck Norris*

*Q.* Sir, Chuck Norris passed away recently. He was a big supporter——

*The President.* Oh, he did?

*Q.* Yes, yesterday.

*The President.* Oh.

*Q.* Chuck Norris, 86 years old. You know, the famous——

*The President.* Aw, I thought he was a great guy. Wow.

*Q.* Yes, he died in the hospital, I believe in Hawaii. But he was a supporter of yours.

*The President.* Yes, he was a big——

*Q.* A big actor.

*The President.* Chuck Norris died. I didn't know that. He was a great guy. He was a really good, tough cookie. You didn't want to fight him—I can tell you. He was a tough, great guy with—and he was a great supporter.

Wow. That's too bad. Tell his family highest respect. Okay? Great man.

*Q.* Mr. President, how much is this war costing taxpayers?

*President Aleksandr Lukashenko of Belarus*

*Q.* Sir, inviting the leader of Belarus to U.S.? And what are you——

*The President.* Well, I know him. I get along with him great. And I probably would, actually.

*Q.* Do you want to make a deal with him? Do you want to make a deal with leader of Belarus?

*The President.* Well, I get along with him very well.

*U.S. Military Operations in Iran*

*Q.* Mr. President, are you deploying the additional troops to the region for deterrence or to optimize your operational capabilities?

*The President.* Well, I would say this: that if I told you the answer to that question, my military people wouldn't be very happy.

*Q.* [Inaudible]

*The President.* But we have a lot of troops, we have unlimited ammunition, we have the greatest equipment in the world, and we are decimating Iran. It's about time.

And frankly, it should have been done long before me. It should have been done before other Presidents.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

*Polling Data*

*Q.* Polls have shown that MAGA is essentially unified behind you, as are Republicans, when it comes to Iran. There's been reports that, you know, the United States might be sending 2,500 marines to the Middle East. Are you concerned that a move like that could potentially change the unity?

*The President.* Well, I don't know. It seemed to have great support, because CNN came out with a poll today that I'm at 100 percent. And they said they've never seen a poll like that. The

CNN poll said I'm at 100 percent, and they've never seen that before, which is an honor. I was impressed that CNN would do that.

But as far as troops are concerned, I can't tell you what we're doing with that.

*[Several reporters spoke at once.]*

#### *U.S. Military Operations in Iran*

*Q.* Mr. President, you took issue with Australia, Japan, and South Korea this week over the——

*The President.* Yes, I was very surprised.

*Q.* Very surprised about Australia. And what would you like them to do?

*The President.* Well, they should get involved. And I was a little bit surprised that they said no, because we always say yes to them.

*Q.* What did Australia say no to? What did Australia say no to, Mr. President?

#### *United Kingdom*

*Q.* The U.K. has said that they'll allow the U.S. to use air bases to defend the Strait of Hormuz. What's your response to that? Is that enough?

*The President.* Well, it's a very late response from the U.K. Surprised because the relationship is so good, but this has never happened before. They were really pretty much our first ally, all over the world—first ally. And they didn't want us to use the island—the so-called "island," which, for some reason, they gave up rights to it. And I was a little surprised at the U.K., to be honest with you. They should have acted a lot faster.

*Q.* Have you spoken with the Prime Minister?

*The President.* I have. I have. They should have acted a lot faster.

*[Several reporters spoke at once.]*

#### *Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders of Arkansas*

*Q.* President Trump——

*The President.* Let's go, Peter [Peter Doocy, Fox News].

*Q.* ——did you see that your former Press Secretary, Sarah Sanders, was asked to leave a restaurant by staff who felt threatened by her politics?

*The President.* Well, her politics are right down the center. She's a good person, and that shouldn't have happened.

Where did that take place? Here or in Arkansas?

*Q.* In Arkansas.

*The President.* Wow. In Arkansas? That's very surprising. I love Arkansas. I won that State by so much. I think that Sarah is going to be just fine, but it's too bad. She's a good woman: Sarah.

#### *Oil Markets and Prices*

*Q.* Mr. President, the price of oil is way up. The stock market is dying.

*The President.* It's going to go down.

### *Economic Impacts of U.S. Military Operations in Iran*

*Q.* Did you miscalculate the cost of going into Iran?

*The President.* No, no, no. No. We're not giving a nuclear weapon to terrorist thugs. And we're knocking the hell out of them. Their navy is gone. Their air force is gone. Their leaders are gone. Their anti-aircraft is gone. Everything is gone. And——

*Q.* But did you expect the economic effect?

*The President.* No, I expected worse, actually.

I really thought—I thought that oil prices would go much higher when I did this. We just set every record—every record in the book with Dow, with the S&P. Dow had 50,000; S&P had 8,000, 7,000—at levels, at speed like nobody has ever seen before.

But I said I have to go off of that path and I have to take a little journey. We have to get the—and he would agree, but he's not going to say it. I——

And this is not St. Patrick's Day, by the way. What are you doing with that tie?

But we had to go off on a circuitous path and take care of business. And we have—we are in the process of doing it. And, I'll tell you, I think we're weeks ahead of schedule.

My Secretary of State is very happy. Do you have a question for Marco?

*Q.* Yes. How soon—President Trump said this week that he can take Cuba. How soon can that happen?

*Secretary of State Marco A. Rubio.* Well, I mean, Cuba is a disaster, and it's because of their communist government. It doesn't work. So I don't have any news for you on that today, other than this has been going on for 67 years. They're a disaster. It's the worst it's ever been.

### *Election Reform/White House Ballroom Construction Project*

*Q.* And what are you guys hearing from your Senate colleagues about the chances of the SAVE America Act passing?

*The President.* Well, it seems to be doing okay. It's voter ID. It's—you have to have citizenship to vote. And I'm hearing very good things.

I mean, I was hearing negative things because the Democrats are all against voter ID. They're all against citizenship to vote. They're against transgender—you know, they have—they like the transgender thing with mutilization of your children. All of the things that we talk about.

You know, we added two—you know, we added two little elements. No men in women's sports.

*Q.* Yes.

*The President.* Right? You know that. We added that. And when you add them all up, whether you take four or five, I think they're all 95 -to 99-percent issues.

I hear it's going—look, it should be an easy pass, but we need Democrat votes. They don't want to approve voter ID because they cheat. They don't want to approve citizenship—in other words, we want to have citizenship in order to vote. You have to prove your citizenship.

The Democrats don't want to do that. You know why, Peter? You know why? Because they want to cheat, Peter.

Now, speaking of something that's more pleasant. See that?

*[The President motioned toward the White House.]*

It's going to be the greatest ballroom anywhere in the world. Nothing like it. And they just started today, one of the biggest pours of concrete that's ever been seen in Washington, DC.

*White House Renovation and Construction Projects*

*Q.* When they're doing the construction, does it ever wake you up?

*The President.* It makes me happy when I hear those pile drivers. My wife doesn't love it, but I love the sound. I love the sound of concrete. I love the sound of pile drivers.

*[Several reporters spoke at once.]*

Bye, everyone.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:40 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House prior to boarding Marine One. In his remarks, he referred to Saleh Mohammadi, Saeed Davodi, and Mehdi Ghasemi, who were reportedly executed by government authorities in the city of Qom, Iran, on March 19. He also referred to S. 1383. Reporters referred to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel; and Prime Minister Keir Starmer of the United Kingdom. The transcript was released by the Office of Communications on March 21.

*Categories:* Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters, White House.

*Locations:* Washington, DC.

*Names:* Davodi, Saeed; Gabbard, Tulsi; Ghasemi, Mehdi; Graham, Lindsey O.; Lukashenko, Aleksandr; Mohammadi, Saleh; Norris, Chuck; Rubio, Marco A.; Sanders, Sarah Huckabee; Starmer, Keir; Trump, Melania.

*Subjects:* Arkansas, Governor; Australia, relations with U.S.; Belarus, President; Deaths, Chuck Norris; Director of National Intelligence; Election security and integrity, strengthening efforts; Iran, commercial transit through Strait of Hormuz; Iran, U.S. military operations; News media, Presidential interviews; North Atlantic Treaty Organization; Oil markets and prices; Russia, conflict in Ukraine; Secretary of State; Sock market; South Korea, relations with U.S.; Ukraine, Russian invasion and airstrikes; United Kingdom, Prime Minister; United Kingdom, relations with U.S.; White House Ballroom construction project.

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