

Remarks in an Exchange With Reporters Prior to Departure for Las Vegas, Nevada
April 16, 2026

Q. Something to say to Italian Prime Minister Meloni?

Q. Mr. President——

Q. Can you do something—[*inaudible*]?

Pope Leo XIV/Iran

Q. Mr. President, on the Pope. Mr. President, on the Pope. The Pope criticized people who, quote, "manipulate religion for political or military gain." Do you think that he's talking about you, sir?

The President. Very important that the Pope understands—very, very important; it'd be nice not to say it—Iran killed 42,000 people that were totally unarmed. They were protesters.

Iran cannot have a nuclear weapon. If they did, every country—including Italy, where he's stationed—every single country in—the world would be in trouble.

So we're doing very well with respect to that, having to do with the whole situation on Iran. The blockade is amazing. It's holding up very strong, very powerfully, and I think we're making a lot of progress in that.

But the Pope has to understand Iran—very simple—Iran cannot have a nuclear weapon. The world would be in great danger.

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

The President's Schedule

Q. Mr. President, would you meet—Mr. President, would you meet with the Pope to even out your differences? Because Catholics are torn.

The President. I don't think it's necessary.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India

Q. Mr. President, you spoke with Prime Minister Modi just a couple of days ago. What was the conversation like? What is it that is on the table now?

The President. I had a very good talk with him, and he's a friend of mine from India. And he's doing great. We had a very good conversation.

[*Several reporters spoke at once.*]

U.S. Military Operations in Iran

Q. Are you considering extending the cease-fire with Iran?

The President. With who?

Q. With Iran. [*Inaudible*]

The President. We're doing very well, I can tell you. Maybe it will happen before that. I'm not sure it needs to be extended.

[*Several reporters spoke at once.*]

Just so you know, Iran wants to make a deal, and we're dealing very nicely with them. We've got to have no nuclear weapons. If we do, that's a big factor. And they're willing to do things today that they weren't willing to do 2 months ago that are——

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Q. Do you have any news about Ukraine? Do you have any news regarding peace in Ukraine?

Hizballah Political-Paramilitary Organization/Lebanon

Q. Will Hizballah stick to the cease-fire?

The President. Say it?

Q. Will Hizballah stick to the cease-fire? Are you confident about that?

The President. I think they will. I think it's going to be—actually, it's very exciting, because it's 48 years. We're going to be meeting with Bibi Netanyahu, as you know, and the President of Lebanon. And I had a great talk with both of them today. They're going to be having a cease-fire, and that will include Hizballah. And I think it's—it could be number 10 for me.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Ukraine/Russia/Iran/U.S. Diplomatic Engagement

Q. Mr. President, do you have—do you have any news regarding peace in Ukraine?

The President. What?

Q. Do you have—do you have any news regarding peace in Ukraine?

The President. Ukraine is moving along. I wish they could get along, frankly. A lot of people are dying in Ukraine. We'll see what happens. There are things happening there.

Q. Mr. President——

The President. We're focused—we're focused so much right now on Iran, seeing if we can get that completed. And I think—we're going to be able to——

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

And I think, if you look, the stock market is good, the oil prices are coming down, and it's looking very good that we're going to make a deal with Iran. And it's going to be a good deal. It's going to be a deal with no nuclear weapons.

Iran/U.S. Diplomatic Engagement/Commercial Transit Through the Strait of Hormuz

Q. Mr. President, when is the next—Mr. President, when is the next in-person round of negotiations on the war in Iran? When will that take place?

The President. They're all important. I mean, it's not a question of Iran. All of them are important.

Q. When will the next in-person meeting take place?

The President. Probably—maybe over the weekend.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Maybe over the weekend.

Q. Will you send the Vice President? Mr. President, will you send the Vice President?

The President. Just so you understand, the blockade has been incredible. It's been—it's held. They're not doing any business. They're unable to do any business because of the blockade. And so the combination of having no navy, having no air force, having no anti-aircraft equipment—they have nothing. Everything is gone, including their leaders. Now they have a new set of leaders, and we find them very reasonable.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Iran

Q. And, Mr. President, on the 20-year minimum to stop enriching uranium. Would you—will that be acceptable to you?

The President. Well, we haven't agreed to any——

Q. Would that be acceptable to you, sir——

The President. We haven't agreed to any—no, no.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Q. —if that's the final sticking point? Would you be comfortable with that?

The President. What we have is we have a statement—very, very powerful statement that they will not have—beyond 20 years—that they will not have nuclear weapons. That's beyond. There's no 20-year limit.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Q. [Inaudible]—from Greenland, Mr. President?

Department of Justice Leadership

Q. Who are you looking at for Attorney General? Anyone interesting? Can you please give us more information on if they'll go against the weaponization from Biden——

The President. I think—that Todd Blanche is doing a very good job, from what I'm seeing. All I can say, thus far, I think Todd Blanche is doing a very good job.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Q. President Trump——

U.S. Military Operations in Iran

Q. If there's no deal, Mr. President, would you be willing to extend the cease-fire? If there's no deal, would you be willing to extend the cease-fire? Or will the fighting resume, Mr. President?

The President. I would say the fighting—if there's no deal, fighting resumes.

Gasoline Prices

Q. Okay. And then on gas prices, how much longer will Americans continue to see these high gas prices?

The President. Well, they're not very high, if you look at what they were supposed to be, in order to get rid of a nuclear weapon, with the danger that entails. So the gas prices have come down very much over the last 3, 4 days still.

Q. Four dollars a gallon still.

The President. I know. You know, that's what ABC says. But the fact is that, if you look at—the stock market's up. Everything's doing really well. And the big thing we have to do is we have to make sure that Iran does not have a nuclear weapon, because if they do—you want to talk about problems, you'd have problems.

So very important is that Iran does not have a nuclear weapon. And they've agreed to that. Iran's agreed to that, and they've agreed to it very powerfully. They've agreed to give us back the nuclear dust that's way underground because of the attack we made with the B-2 bombers.

So we have a lot of agreement with Iran, and I think something's going to happen very positive.

Iran/U.S. Diplomatic Engagement

Q. Mr. President, if you've—already agreed to that, then what are you waiting on?

The President. Very complicated subject. It's—I don't think we're waiting. I think we're moving very fast. It could happen pretty quickly.

U.S. Naval Blockade of Sanctioned Commercial Transit Through the Strait of Hormuz

Q. How long you could sustain the maritime—how long do you—

Q. Mr. President, you're not willing to extend the deadline?

The President. Say it.

Q. How long—how long you could sustain the blockade on the Strait of Hormuz?

The President. The what?

Q. How long you could sustain—keep the blockade on the Strait of Hormuz?

The President. We're doing very well with the blockade. It's very routine for us. The Navy is incredible, and I think the blockade is doing very well. It's—no ship is even thinking about entering the—no ship is going past our Navy.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Pope Leo XIV/Iran

Q. Mr. President, why are you fighting with the Pope? And are you worried it upsetting your—

The President. No, no. I don't—

Q. —Evangelical supporters and Catholic supporters?

The President. I have to do what's right. The Pope has to understand that. Very simple. I have nothing against the Pope. His brother's MAGA all the way. I like his brother Louis.

Q. But why are you fighting with him, then?

The President. I'm not fighting with him. The Pope made a statement. He says Iran can have a nuclear weapon. I say Iran cannot have a nuclear weapon.

Q. He didn't say that.

The President. And if the Pope looked at the 42,000 people that were killed over the last 2 or 3 months, as a protestor with no weapons, no nothing—I mean, you take a look at that. So I can disagree with the Pope.

Q. When did he say Iran could have a nuclear weapon?

The President. I have a right to disagree. I have a right to disagree with the Pope.

Iran/Nuclear Weapons Development/Pope Leo XIV

Q. When did he say Iran could have a nuclear weapon, Mr. President?

Q. What do you say—what do you say to people who see that—who say your criticism of—

The President. You can't have—look, nothing—I have no disagreement with the fact the Pope can say what he wants, and I want him to say what he wants. But I can disagree.

I think that Iran cannot have a nuclear weapon. If they do, the whole world would be in jeopardy. The Middle East will be blown up, and the whole world will be in jeopardy.

We're very close to making a deal. That will be a great thing.

The Pope has to understand: Iran has killed more than 42,000 people over the last few months. Think of it. Protesters without guns, without anything—they were totally unarmed protestors. The Pope has to understand that. This is the real world. It's a nasty world.

But as far as the Pope and saying what he wants, he can do that.

Now, I know the Pope's brother. He is a big MAGA person. He's got MAGA all over his house. His name is Louis. He's actually a great guy, and I'm sure the Pope is a great guy. I haven't met him. But I disagree with the Pope.

If the Pope would allow Iran to have a nuclear weapon, you can't do that.

The President's Schedule

Q. Are you still interested in meeting the Pope? Are you still interested in meeting?

The President. No, not really.

Q. No?

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Q. Anthony Merchak from MTV Lebanon.

The President. What?

Lebanon/Hizballah Political-Paramilitary Organization

Q. Anthony Merchak from MTV Lebanon. I would like to ask you regarding—congratulations for the 10th war that you've—[inaudible]—

The President. Yes, it's very exciting. With Lebanon, it's very exciting. I think we're going to have a deal. We're going to have a meeting—first time in 44 years—and Lebanon will be meeting with Israel, and they're probably going to do it at the White House.

Q. When do you think—Mr. President, when do you think they will meet?

The President. Over the next week or two.

Q. Over the next week? And do you think this agreement can be reached—

The President. I do. I think they're going to—

Q. —without Hizballah agreeing with Lebanon's agreement?

The President. I think we will have an agreement between Lebanon, and they're going to take care of Hizballah. But they're going to—they're going to be working on Hizballah right now. But we'll have an agreement between Israel, very importantly, and Lebanon.

Q. Will you support our Lebanese army as well in order to—[inaudible]—Hizballah?

The President. I would. I would. Yes. I would.

Hizballah Political-Paramilitary Organization/Israel

Q. Has Hizballah agreed to the cease-fire? I mean, how do you even communicate?

The President. They're all agreeing. It's a very nice little package for about a week, and we're not going to have lots of bombs dropping. And we're going to see if we can make peace between Lebanon and Israel.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Pope Leo XIV/Iran

Q. And just one more on the Pope, Mr. President, because there was a group of bishops that did put out a statement saying the Pope isn't merely exercising his opinion, he's preaching the Gospel. I mean, what do you say to people that view this as an attack on the Catholic church?

The President. Well, I want him to preach the Gospel. I'm all about the Gospel. But I also know that you cannot let a certain country, which is a very mean-spirited country, have a nuclear weapon. If they did, they would use it, and I think they'd use it quickly and they would kill many millions of people.

So, you know, the Pope can disagree with me on that, but certainly we're allowed to have that.

I'm all about the Gospel. I'm about it as much as anybody can be. But I can't allow—as President of the United States of America, I can't allow Iran to have a nuclear weapon.

And here's the story: They won't have. They've already agreed not to have. That's good news. And I think the Pope will be very happy.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Federal Reserve System

Q. The Treasury Secretary said yesterday that—the Federal Reserve should "wait and see" about this Iran before lowering interest rates. Do you agree with that?

The President. No, I don't agree. I think we should have lower interest rates.

Iran/Repression of Political Protest

Q. Iran's going to execute four more protesters, reportedly, including the first woman protester. What do you tell Iran, sir?

The President. Well, tell that to the Pope. What did you say? Tell that to the Pope that—that Iran is going to——

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Is that—did you just hear that? Iran is going to execute four people, including a woman?

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Q. President Trump——

U.S. Military Operations in Iran

Q. What makes you extend the cease-fire? Do you extend the cease-fire? What makes you to extend that cease-fire?

The President. I don't know if we're going to have to, but we—if we need to, I would do that.

U.S. Airstrikes on Iranian Nuclear Facilities/Commercial Transit Through the Strait of Hormuz

Q. What are you telling the airlines and the oil companies about the way you're going to open up the Strait of Hormuz?

The President. So, if you look at the oil, and if you look at the price we're paying, it's about half what people thought it would be if you did what I had to do. We had to take this journey to the Middle East in order to get rid of a nuclear weapon. They would have been—if we didn't hit it with the B-2 bombers, or if I didn't kill the Barack Hussein Obama deal—the nuclear deal, which was a disaster—we would have had nuclear weapons exploding in the Middle East and beyond.

I believe I've been able to stop that. I think we have a very successful negotiation going on right now. And I think it will be—if it—happens, it will be announced fairly soon. And that will give us free oil, free Hormuz Strait. Everything will be nice. And I think your oil price will go down to lower than what it was before. And I think a lot of good things will happen.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

U.S. Military Operations in Iran

Q. Just for clarity, you're willing to extend the cease-fire if there is no deal? Just for clarity, you're willing to extend the cease-fire if there is no deal?

The President. Well, we'll see. I don't know that we'll have to. Ideally, we won't. But if I needed to, I would.

Lebanon

Q. The Lebanese people love you so much. The Lebanese people love you so much. What's your message for them? And do—you will visit Lebanon after this deal?

The President. Yes, I will do that. At—the right time, I would certainly go there.

Ukraine/Russia

Q. Do you think this war in Ukraine—you know, Putin doesn't want to stop it, apparently. He keeps bombing Ukraine. Do you think this war has the potential to go on for years more?

The President. Well, it should have been—it should have never started. If I were President, the war in Ukraine never would have started with Russia. But it's going on. Hopefully, it will get over soon.

First Lady Melania Trump

Q. Mr. President, the First Lady came out last week and said she had no link to Jeffrey Epstein. Do you——

The President. Who did?

Q. The First Lady, Melania Trump.

The President. Yes, she had none.

Q. Why did she come out and say that last week?

The President. Because the fake news was saying she did, and she had none. And I think that's been proven.

It bothered her that the fake news was being fake news. That's all. She just wanted to clarify.

Q. Were you surprised?

Hizballah Political-Paramilitary Organization

Q. Mr. President, who's taking care of Hizballah? Do you think that they're destroying the deal that you're trying to make between——

The President. We're going to see how it all works out. But they'll be working and coordinating, if you know—you know Lebanon, right?

Q. Yes.

The President. So they'll be working with Hizballah.

Q. If you fire Jay Powell——

Iran/Oil Supply and Refining

Q. Mr. President, are you still interested in acquiring Iranian oil?

The President. What?

Q. Are you still interested in acquiring Iranian oil after this is all over?

The President. Well, we'll see. I mean, we have a very good relationship with Iran right now, as hard as it is to believe. And I think it's a combination of about 4 weeks of bombing and a very powerful blockade. The blockade is maybe more powerful than the bombing, if you want to know the truth.

U.S. Military Operations in Iran

Q. Are you going to make the Arab countries pay a portion of all of the cost that the U.S. has had?

The President. I think they'll make that—I think they're going to make that contribution. I think—the Arab countries—because we've done a lot—I think they'd make a contribution toward the cost, yes.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Commercial Airline Consolidation

Q. Mr. President, have you been involved—[inaudible]—about United Airlines and American Airlines possibly merging? Would you support that?

The President. Not been involved.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Iran

Q. Mr. President, will you release any Iranian assets without any condition if you make a deal?

The President. We're going to see what happens. But I think we're very close to making a deal with Iran. You'll be the first to know.

But I think we're—we have a chance. And if that happens, oil goes way down, prices go way down, inflation goes way down. And you're going to have—much more importantly than even that, you won't have nuclear holocaust.

Thank you.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

U.S. Military Operations in Iran

Q. Mr. President, if a deal is not reached by the end of the cease-fire next week, will you extend that ceasefire?

The President. Well, possibly, but I think a deal could be reached. Possibly. I would be foolish not to. I mean, if we're close to a deal, would I extend? Yes, I would do that.

But we're close to a deal. We're getting along very well with the new Iranian leaders. It really is—it's regime change. These are people that are a lot different than we were dealing with at the beginning. As you know, they're no longer around. They're no longer with us.

But we're—we have a very good relationship, and I think there's a very good chance we're going to make a deal.

Also, Israel and Lebanon, I think there's a good chance that they'll make a good deal. So——

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Q. And when are they coming here to the White House?

Ukraine/Russia

Q. Any reaction to Russia's overnight attack on Kyiv? They killed 20 more Ukrainians.

The President. No, I think it's terrible.

China-U.S. Relations

Q. Are you going to send any Cabinet member to China before your visit?

The President. Well, I have a great relationship, as you know, with President Xi, and I look forward to being there. We have a very special relationship, so I look forward to being in China.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Rwanda

Q. Mr. President—thank you. Mr. President, you imposed sanctions on Rwanda because they keep violating the Washington Accords.

The President. Yes, I do.

Q. But President Kagame just say he don't care about sanctions, and he said he will not withdraw from Congo—his troops will continue in Congo. What is your reaction to that?

The President. We're going to look into it very strongly, but they do have very big sanctions.

Group of Twenty (G-20) Nations

Q. Mr. President, there was a G-20 meeting in Washington today. Why did you invite Poland instead of South Africa?

The President. Well, Poland is a great country. We like it a lot. We're friends with Poland. The President is doing a great job, so we invited them.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

New York Gubernatorial Election

Q. I saw your Truth Social post—I saw your Truth Social post about Bruce Blakeman in New York. He's being denied up to \$7 million of public campaign funds in New York by partisan Democrats. Have you seen that, and what's your reaction to it?

The President. I can just tell you this: Bruce Blakeman is running for Governor. He will be a great Governor, if he wins. I don't know that he wins or not because it's New York, and, you know, people cheat on elections and a lot of other things. But——

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Wait.

Bruce Blakeman is a great, great gentleman. As you know, he comes from Nassau County, which is a Democrat area, and he wins by a landslide all the time. And if Bruce Blakeman gets in, your taxes are going to go way down, and a lot of good things are going to happen including—including cleanliness and all of the things that you want to see.

I know him very well. He's been a great leader, a great executive in Nassau County. Even though it's largely Democrat, he wins in a landslide. Everybody loves him. He's a very talented guy, a very great politician. And I think he probably has a chance. If Bruce Blakeman gets in, your taxes are going way down. And you know what else is going down? Crime.

Missing Scientific Researchers

Q. President Trump, there are these 10 missing scientists with access to classified stuff——

The President. Yes.

Q. ——nuclear material, aerospace. They've all gone missing or turned up dead——

The President. Yes.

Q. ——in the last couple months. Based on what you've been briefed, what do you think is happening here? And do you think that this is connected or totally random?

The President. Well, I hope it's random, but we're going to know in the next week and a half. I just left a meeting on that subject. So pretty serious stuff. But we're going to be—now, hopefully, I don't know, coincidence. If you want to—whatever you want to call it, but some of them were very important people, and we're going to look at it over the next short period.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Q. Is it possible that some foreign adversary is in the United States scooping these people up?

The President. Well, you know, Biden had open borders. It wasn't very hard to get here, but we've gotten many of them out. You know, we've caught many, many people—many, many very bad people, including thousands of murderers that we've taken out of our country, thousands of drug lords that we've taken out of our country, hundreds of thousands of prisoners that were let into the U.S. that we've taken out of our country.

As far as the scientists are concerned, we'll probably have a pretty good answer over the next week.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

U.S. Military Operations in Iran

Q. And with—peace talks in Iran, does it have to be a big deal all at once, or would you accept a little deal to start?

The President. Well, I have a little deal. I can make a little deal. I don't want to do that. I want to get it done and get back to—keep—going with lower—you know, our pricing is doing great. As soon as the war is over, we're going to be lower than we were 2 or 3 years ago. So I want to get back to that.

I want—we had to do something. We had to make sure that Iran never gets a nuclear weapon. And we're at that—they've agreed to that. They've totally agreed to that. They've agreed to almost everything.

So maybe if they can get to the table—there's a difference. They agree. They've got to get to the table with a pen. We'll have that over with, and then we can focus on our great economy.

And, also, you know, I inherited the highest prices in the history of our country, the worst inflation in the history of our country. I'll get it down to a very low number. We had it to a very low number, and it's still low.

But the most important thing right now is to make sure Iran can never have a nuclear weapon.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Q. Mr. President——

Iran/U.S. Diplomatic Engagement

Q. Would you ever go to Pakistan to seal the deal yourself?

The President. I would. I would go to Pakistan, yes.

Pakistan has been great. They've been so good. Islamabad, I'll be—I might go, yes. I might go. If the deal is signed in Islamabad, I might go.

The field marshal has been great. The Prime Minister has been really great in Pakistan. So I might go. They want me.

Department of Justice Files Concerning Deceased Convicted Sex Offender Jeffrey Epstein

Q. Mr. President, the First Lady last week called on Congress to further look into and uncover the truth on the Epstein files, the Epstein saga.

The President. Yes.

Q. Do you believe that there should be a public hearing for more of these Epstein survivors?

The President. Well, I'm okay with it. I think we've had a lot of public hearings. I'm okay with it. But I understand that the women didn't want to go under oath. That's what I heard, that the women—the victims or whatever—they refused to go under oath, which was a little surprising.

No, Melania felt strongly about it because she was accused of—that I met her through Epstein, but it turned out to be totally false. It was a false story.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Lebanon/Israel

Q. Mr. President, does—sorry. Does this cease-fire also include Iraq and region?

The President. Are we talking about the one with Lebanon?

Q. Lebanon, Iraq, and——

The President. Yes. Well, the whole thing.

So we just made a deal with Lebanon. As of 2 hours from now, we have a ceasefire with Israel and Lebanon, and that'll be great. And they'll be meeting, probably coming to the White House, over the next 4 or 5 days. And that will be the first time they've met in 44 years, which is pretty unneighborly when considering they're neighbors. But there's a really good chance that that'll work out with Lebanon and Israel.

I met with——through the telephone——with the President of Lebanon—who's a really good guy, highly respected—and with Bibi. And I think there's a chance we'll be meeting right here in the not-too-distant future.

Q. Are the Epstein survivors receiving justice? Do you think the Epstein survivors have received justice?

Lebanon/Israel

Q. Israel and Lebanon have tried to make peace before. What's going to be the difference this time?

The President. Me. I'm the difference. Big difference. Me.

Q. Australia announced——

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Tax Code Reform

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. About taxes. States like Virginia, North Carolina—and New York, Democratic States, are looking at raising taxes. Is that going to take away from the tax cuts——

The President. What's happen- ——

Q. ——that you have?

The President. No, because, you know, no tax on tips. I'm going over no tax on tips today. That's why I am going to Nevada; I'm going to Arizona. But this is sort of a no tax on tips.

What's happening is, people are finding out that in their tax returns, they're getting a big refund, much bigger than they thought. So it's no tax on tips, no tax on Social Security, no tax on overtime. I think it's——

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Wait, wait, wait, wait.

I think it's going to be amazing.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

But if you look at what they're doing in New York and California, they're raising taxes and they're driving people out. It's a shame.

U.S. Military Readiness/Iran/U.S. Diplomatic Engagement

Q. Australia has just announced that it's increasing its defense spending to 3 percent. You've been asking for 3.5 percent. Are you satisfied——

The President. No, we're going to see what happens.

Q. —with that?

The President. But, on defense spending, look, we built the greatest military anywhere in the world. There's nobody even close. All you have to do is take a look at the blockade. Nobody's ever seen anything like it. That blockade is the best thing to—and I'll tell you something: I think the blockade has been more powerful than the bombs.

The bombs were powerful, and it weakened them. They have no navy. They have no air force. They have no anything. They have no leaders. But their new leaders, the ones that have replaced them, it's a regime change. They are much more—I think, frankly, more intelligent and more moderate.

But we have a real chance to make a deal very soon with Iran.

Q. But on Australia. Just on Australia, they've increased defense spending.

Q. You're going to Nevada, Mr. President—

Australia

Q. On Australia, Mr. President. You asked for 3.5 percent increase, like 5 percent you did with NATO. Australia has only gone to 3 percent. Are you satisfied with that decision? Would you consider—

The President. Well, I'm not happy—

Q. —reviewing defense with—

The President. —with Australia, because they were not—

Q. Why, specifically?

The President. Because they were not there when we asked them to be there. So Australia—

Q. What did you ask for?

The President. Australia was another one. They were not there having to do with Hormuz—the Hormuz Strait.

Q. What do you mean by that, though? What do you mean by that specifically?

The President. So I'm not happy. I'm not happy with Australia.

Q. But why, specifically?

Q. Mr. President, what message do you think the cease-fire in Lebanon—

Q. Do you still have a good relationship with the Australian Prime Minister?

North Atlantic Treaty Organization/Iran/Ukraine

Q. What message do you think the cease-fire in Lebanon sends to the U.K. and other European allies who chose not to get involved in the war?

The President. Well, you know, we spend trillions and trillions of dollars on NATO, and when I asked them to get involved on a much smaller situation, which is Hormuz and Iran, they weren't there for us. Remember what I said? They weren't there. None of them. They weren't there.

So we were there on Ukraine. I mean, we shouldn't have been. It would have never happened if I were President. But nevertheless, when they've had problems over the years, we were there.

When we asked them to get involved on a very minor skirmish, by comparison to what it could be, they weren't there. So I don't think they'd be there for a large skirmish, and therefore, I think they've got themselves a problem.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Tax Code Reform/Democratic Party

Q. Do your policies like no tax on tips, no tax on overtime show that the Democrat Party is no longer the party of the working class and the Republican party, under your leadership, actually is?

The President. I love this question. This is the greatest guy. Look how handsome he is. What a great guy he is.

Yes. The Democrats don't know what they're doing. They want to tax everybody out of business. They want men playing in women's sports. They don't want voter ID. They don't know what they're doing.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

We've had an unbelievable run. And the people getting their tax returns, and they're coming back, and they're ending up getting \$5-, \$6-, \$7,000 more than they thought possible.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Pope Leo XIV/Iran

Q. Do you think the Pope was being disrespectful to you, sir?

The President. The who?

Q. The Pope. Do you think he was being disrespectful to you?

The President. I don't think about it that way. The Pope has to understand that Iran could not have a nuclear weapon, and the Pope has to understand that you can't let a country kill 42,000 protesters—totally unarmed protesters. You can't do that.

So the Pope—you know, I know his brother. His brother is MAGA all the way. You know that. Louis. He's a great guy.

But the Pope has to understand you're not allowed to kill 42,000 protesters who are totally unarmed, and you cannot let Iran have a nuclear weapon, or the entire world could be gone. And, you know, when the Pope realizes that, I think we'll have a different understanding.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

United Kingdom/Energy Sources

Q. Does energy dominance mean that Europeans should be buying more gas and oil from the United States?

The President. Well, they should be buying more from us. And what they should be doing is using the North Sea. I can tell you, U.K.—I've been telling that to your Prime Minister. U.K. should open up the North Sea. It's one of the greatest in the world, and they should use it, instead of buying oil from Norway and other places that use the same source. They should use it, and they're not doing it.

They're doing windmills, and windmills—windmills do one thing. You know what they do? Put you out of business.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

International Cooperation/Iran

Q. Mr. President, did you recently talk to Mr. Erdoğan or the regional leaders about the peace deal or the peace talks about—with Iran?

The President. We're dealing with everybody. We're dealing with all of the leaders on many different subjects. We're very close to a deal with Iran.

Thank you.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:55 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House prior to boarding Marine One. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel; President Joseph Aoun of Lebanon; Deputy Attorney General Todd W. Blanche; Louis M. Prevoist, brother of Pope Leo; Mohammadreza Majidi-Asl and his wife Bitā Hemmati, Behrouz Zamaninejad, and Kourosh Zamaninejad, who received death sentences for their political activities in Iran; former President Barack Obama; President Karol Nawrocki of Poland; Chief of Defense Forces Syed Asim Munir Ahmed Shah and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif of Pakistan; and Prime Minister Keir Starmer of the United Kingdom. Reporters referred to President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia; Chairman of the Federal Reserve System Board of Governors Jerome H. Powell; Prime Minister Anthony Albanese of Australia; and President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan of Turkey.

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

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Aoun, Joseph; Biden, Joseph R., Jr.; Blakeman, Bruce; Blanche, Todd W.; Hemmati, Bitā; Leo XIV, Pope; Majidi-Asl, Mohammadreza; Modi, Narendra; Munir Ahmed Shah, Syed Asim; Nawrocki, Karol; Netanyahu, Benjamin; Obama, Barack; Prevoist, Louis M.; Sharif, Shehbaz; Starmer, Keir; Trump, Melania; Xi Jinping; Zamaninejad, Behrouz; Zamaninejad, Kourosh.

Subjects: Acting Attorney General; Australia, defense spending level; Border security; China, President; Department of Justice files concerning deceased convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein; Gasoline costs; Group of Twenty (G-20) nations; Holy See (Vatican City), Pope; India, Prime Minister; Inflation; Interest rates; Iran, commercial transit through Strait of Hormuz; Iran, diplomatic engagement with U.S.; Iran, human rights issues; Iran, nuclear weapons development; Iran, oil supply and refining; Iran, U.S. airstrikes on nuclear facilities; Iran, U.S. military operations; Israel, military operations in Lebanon; Israel, Prime Minister; Lebanon, Hizballah political-paramilitary organization; Lebanon, Israeli military operations; Lebanon, President; News media, fairness and accuracy; News media, Presidential interviews; North Atlantic Treaty Organization; Nuclear scientists, reported disappearance; Oil markets and prices; Pakistan, Chief of Defense Forces; Pakistan, Prime Minister; Poland, President; Russia, conflict in Ukraine; Rwanda, relations with U.S.; Stock market; Tax Code reform; U.S. military readiness, improvement efforts; Ukraine, Russian invasion and airstrikes; Undocumented immigrants, deportation of criminals; United Kingdom, defense relationship with U.S.; United Kingdom, energy sources; United Kingdom, Prime Minister.

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