

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

April 17, 2026

The President. Hello, everybody. Nice to be with you. We're landing pretty soon.

We had some pretty good news 20 minutes ago, but it seems to be going very well in the Middle East with Iran. We'll know over a little period of time. We're negotiating over the weekend.

And, as you know, we have the blockade. The blockade has been very successful. And of equal success has been the 5 weeks before the blockade. The combination was pretty lethal, I would say.

So we're going to be knowing very shortly, but we're talking over—I expect things to go well. Many of these things have been negotiated and agreed to.

U.S. Military Operations in Iran

Q. Sir, what was the good news that you had 20 minutes ago?

The President. Having to do with Iran.

Q. Can you tell us anything about what you——

The President. No, but you'll hear about it.

Q. When are you going to be talking——

The President. But I just think it's something that should happen. It's something that only makes sense to happen, and I think it will. We'll see what happens, but I think it will.

Iran/U.S. Sanctions

Q. Have you agreed to sanctions relief?

The President. No, we have not.

Iran/U.S. Diplomatic Engagement

Q. Mr. President, you told me on the phone earlier that everything has been agreed to. You told me earlier that everything has been agreed to. Iran was saying something different. So what has been worked out in that time?

The President. Well, he's got to say something different because, you know, they have people that they have to cater to also. I really don't. I'm just doing the thing that's right. I'm just saying it like it is.

And we have a situation, I think, that is going to be very beneficial, and the main thing is that Iran will not have a nuclear weapon. You cannot let Iran have a nuclear weapon, and that supersedes everything else.

Q. Are you personally the one that's making these negotiations——

The President. Say it?

Q. Are you personally the one that's making these negotiations move forward?

The President. I guess. I mean, I have people——

Q. Is it you picking up the phone?

The President. I have people representing me, but I'm the one that makes the decision.

Q. Sir——

Cuba

Q. Mr. President, there have been reports that the Pentagon is preparing for military action in Cuba. Are those reports true? Is Cuba next?

The President. Well, it depends on what your definition of military action is.

Q. Would it look like Venezuela or Iran?

The President. It really—it does; it depends on what your definition of military action is, as Bill Clinton would say. [*Laughter*] You understand that? No. A lot of people don't understand that.

The President's Schedule

Q. Your 9 a.m. event tomorrow, what are—your 9 a.m. event tomorrow, what are you planning to announce? Is it on Iran?

The President. Well, we have something tomorrow, and it's a little bit of a surprise. I think it's a very positive thing, something I feel strongly about. Somebody is coming to the White House who's very good, very smart, very caring, a person that cares a lot about the country and beyond.

And so we're going to have a news conference tomorrow. A little unusual, Saturday morning.

Q. Is it about Iran?

The President. No. Well, it will be. Ultimately, everything is about Iran, I guess. It all morphs into Iran. You're going to be asking questions. But the Iran thing is just going well.

Tomorrow is unrelated, but you'll be probably—it will be a form of a news conference, and I think it's going to be something very good for our country.

Iran

Q. Do you hope to do something at the White House when this all does end, when the—when you are able——

The President. Yes. Sure. I mean, I'll—we'll have—we'll have a party, right? It will be great.

Hey, we've been pushed around by Iran for 47 years, but not anymore.

Iran/Disposition of Existing Nuclear Material

Q. Mr. President, when you say that Iran has agreed to turn over their nuclear dust——

The President. Yes.

Q. ——what does that mean? Are they destroying their nuclear material?

The President. No. No. No.

Q. They're turning it over. Can you walk us through——

The President. That's right.

Q. ——what that process looks like, sir?

The President. We're taking it. We're taking it.

Q. Taking it?

The President. Very simple, we're taking it.

Q. Going in?

The President. Yes. With Iran. We're going in with Iran. We're taking it. We will have it.

Q. Does that mean U.S. boots on the ground to get that?

The President. I don't call it boots on the ground. We'll take it after the agreement is signed. After the—there's a big difference. Before and after. BC. It's before and after.

Q. Sir, in the Strait, are there going to be restrictions——

The President. After the agreement is signed is a lot different than before. We would have taken it. If we didn't have an agreement, we would take it. But I don't think we'll have to.

Commercial Transit Through the Strait of Hormuz

Q. Sir, in the Strait, are there going to be restrictions and tolls managed by Iran for ships and vessels——

The President. Nope.

Q. ——passing through?

The President. No way. No way.

Q. None at all?

The President. Nope.

Q. No restrictions?

The President. None.

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

When I say no restrictions, yes, there'll be restrictions: You can't do the tolls. No, there are not going to be tolls.

Election Reform

Q. On—FISA, Mr. President. Anna Paul Luna [Anna Paulina Luna; White House correction] is pushing to have the SAVE America Act linked to FISA and the FISA renewal. Are you in favor?

The President. Well, I think she's great, and I'd love to see that. The SAVE America Act is so important. It's so good. It's voter ID. It's, you know, basic—it's your basics about a democracy: voter ID, birthplace. You have to be born in the United States to vote. We have no transgender—we added no transgender mutilization of our children. Very important. No men in women's sports. Now, we added that.

Also, we talk about, though, the top three, and we put as the three—you know, three having to do with the vote. We also have no mail-in ballots, other than for the military, et cetera—if you're sick, the military, if you're away, if you're disabled. Any of those things. It's pretty generous, actually. But mail-in ballot—the tremendous cheating that goes on with mail-in ballots. So we would have no mail-in ballots except for those various exceptions.

Lebanon

Q. Mr. President, did the cease-fire in Lebanon need to happen for you to get to a deal with Iran?

The President. No, it's not really tied, but you could say maybe psychologically tied. But we're going to help Lebanon become a country again. You know, it's been a long time for them. They've gone through a lot, and we're going to help them be a country again.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel/U.S. Military Operations in Iran

Q. And then were you frustrated with Netanyahu? While you were negotiating the ceasefire in the last round, was his action bombing Lebanon—did that impact peace talks?

The President. No. He's been a very good partner. No, we disagree on some things, but he's been a very good partner. We did a good job. There's probably never been anything like it.

He says we were the senior, and we are the senior. We're the senior to every—we have the greatest military in the world. I built it in the first term. Didn't think I'd be using it this much, but we have the greatest military in the world. Greatest equipment. Greatest—when you look at it, we had 101 to 111, depending on your definition—because some were two; they came out in twos—missiles shot at a certain—valuable asset of ours that happened to be sitting on the water. Every single one of those missiles was shot down. Think of it: 111 missiles. Every single one of them was shot down. Never even got close. Nobody has a military like this. Nobody has equipment like this. Nobody has the power that we have.

Iran/Disposition of Existing Nuclear Material

Q. Sir, you said that the U.S. was going to take the nuclear dust from Iran.

The President. Yes. Yes, if we didn't make a deal.

Q. What's the time—what's the timeline on that?

The President. Well, I'm not going to give you anything.

Q. How long will that take?

The President. Do you want me to give you the time and date and everything else?

Q. Is it like you've been—negotiated how long that process will go on?

The President. If we—obviously, I'm not going to give you the time, other than if we sign the agreement, then I can give you a time. Somewhere after the signing the agreement. We'll go in—

Q. And will it involve the U.S. military?

The President. —with Iran. We'll go in with Iran, and we will take it together, and we will bring it back—a hundred percent of it—back to the United States. If we don't do that, we will get it in a different form in a much more unfriendly form.

Q. And if that does not—

The President. But in any event, we'll get it.

Q. That unfriendly form—

The President. But in any event—

Q. —would that involve more—

The President. Excuse me. Excuse me.

But in any event, we'll get it.

Go ahead.

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

Q. If you don't have a deal by Wednesday, when the cease-fire ends, will you extend the cease-fire, or will you start——

The President. I don't know. Maybe not.

Q. ——attacks again?

The President. Maybe I won't extend it.

Q. Okay.

The President. But the blockade is going to remain.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

But maybe I won't extend it. So you'll have a blockade, and unfortunately, we'll have to start dropping bombs again.

Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you. I think it's going to happen.

Q. How about UFOs, Mr. President?

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:35 p.m. in the press cabin. In his remarks, he referred to former President William J. Clinton; and Rep. Anna Paulina Luna. He also referred to S. 1383. The transcript was released by the Office of Communications on April 18.

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

Locations: Air Force One.

Names: Clinton, William J.; Luna, Anna Paulina; Netanyahu, Benjamin.

Subjects: Cuba, U.S. policy; Election security and integrity, strengthening efforts; Iran, commercial transit through Strait of Hormuz; Iran, diplomatic engagement with U.S.; Iran, nuclear weapons development; Iran, U.S. military operations; Iran, U.S. sanctions; Israel, military operations in Lebanon; Israel, Prime Minister; Lebanon, Israeli military operations; News media, Presidential interviews; Safeguard American Voter Eligibility Act; U.S. military readiness, improvement efforts.

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