

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2026

Remarks During an Ultimate Fighting Championship Freedom 250 Event and an Exchange With Reporters

May 6, 2026

The President. You guys ready?

Mixed martial artist Justin Gaethje. Yes, sir.

The President. Well, thank you very much. I'm a big sports fan. There are no people tougher in sports than the people behind me. These are the toughest people. I know them all. I know the football players. I know just about everybody you can know, and they come to the Oval Office.

We give out all championships—baseball, football, basketball, everything. They're always up here. We take the champions. And these are the great champions. And, as you know, on June 14, we're having a big fight. It's never going to happen again, never happened before. And it's all of the best fighters. This—best four fighters standing right behind me and—all champions.

And it's going to happen right in front of the White House. Here's a picture. I think a lot of people haven't seen this yet.

[At this point, the President held up a book displaying images of the White House with an Ultimate Fighting Championship "octagon" on the South Lawn.]

I'll give you that. I think you'll probably be able to do okay with it.

Mixed martial artist Ilia Topuria. Wow. The media's going to go crazy.

The President. Isn't that—not bad, right?

[The President gestured toward an Ultimate Fighting Championship belt on the Resolute Desk]

Championship belt. Dana White was here last night. Did you know that?

Mr. Gaethje. No.

Mr. Topuria. No.

The President. He was here last night. He loves this guy. He loves all of them. Here's another one. This is another.

[The President held up a book displaying images of the White House with an Ultimate Fighting Championship "octagon" on the South Lawn.]

They're going all the way out, all online. It's—all people invited. Our country is invited to this. It's free. And, you know, in the park right across the street, they're going to have, I guess, anywhere from 75- to 100,000 people. Free. They're going to set up eight big screens, and they're going to have the fight.

And then out here, we're going to have 4,000 seats right in front of the front door of the White House. The hardest ticket I've ever had to deal with.

Mr. Gaethje. The best live show on Earth. June 14.

The President. This will be the greatest show on Earth.

[The President held up a book displaying images of the White House with an Ultimate Fighting Championship "octagon" on the South Lawn.]

Here's at night. That's all lighting and cover. And I think you get the idea.

So, it's going to be June 14, and it's going to be great. And this is a little different for these political people. And—but these are real—these are real warriors. When we talk about warriors, these are warriors.

Ciryl Gane was—these are all champions. I don't have to say champions. And most of you know—many of you know who they are. Ciryl, great honor.

Alex Pereira, who's—I've seen him knock out a lot of people. That's what he does. He knocks out people. Congratulations on an unbelievable career. Wow.

Mixed martial artist Alex Pereira. Thank you.

The President. Ilia Topuria, who they say does not get tougher. [Laughter] So, it's pretty much—

Mr. Topuria. Thank you very much.

The President. I mean, that's it. You're very special.

Mr. Topuria. Thank you.

The President. And a friend of mine, Justin Gaethje, who is just a fighter like you've never seen. You see the kind of pounding he'll take, and then, all of a sudden, it's over and the other guy's not in good shape, right? Huh?

Mr. Gaethje. It's a crazy game. It is a crazy game.

The President. Not in good shape. So, these are the—these are the toughest people. These are the greatest fighters in the world. They're all champions, and they'll be fighting against very tough people also. And—but I think you always go in thinking you're going to win.

Mr. Gaethje. Of course.

The President. But they're fighting against—they're Olympians. They're—they come from all over the world. Some come from extreme poverty. Some come from—not too many people come from Fifth Avenue, for the most part. I would say Fifth Avenue's not well covered in this sport.

But it's a special group of people with tremendous heart and really tremendous talent. And I really believe you're probably born with the punch, and you're born with an ability to take a punch too. I was talking to Dana White last night. He was talking about that. And some people can take a punch, and some people can't. And in life, it's always good to be able to do that.

And if you guys want to say anything—I don't want to pick out individual—but if you want to say anything, you could.

Mr. Gaethje. Yes.

The President. But we're going to see you all here on June 14.

Mr. Gaethje. Yes. I mean, what an unbelievable honor. I mean, I'm not sure many know how big of a part you were to the UFC coming out—coming on and becoming mainstream in the early '90s when nobody would let us, and nobody believed in us, and they thought we were just absolute animals. And you gave us a chance to fight in your properties.

The President. Well, they're right about that though. [Inaudible]

Mr. Gaethje. Well, yes—[laughter]—somewhat. Somewhat.

The President. In one way.

Mr. Gaethje. We just—yes. I mean, it's truly an honor. It's awesome it's your birthday. Awesome it's Flag Day. Wonderful to represent this country. I'm—you know, these guys aren't from this country, but I'm sure it's a—it's an honor for them as well. But I think we'd be 10 years behind if it wasn't for you. And so, thank you for that.

The President. Well, Justin, it's great being with you. You know, what he's saying is right. They couldn't get—Dana says it better than anybody can say it. They couldn't get any arenas because it was so violent that they couldn't get arenas. I was able to give them, I guess, the first four or five fights.

Mr. Gaethje. Yes.

The President. And I went and I said, "This sport is unbelievable." They had some of the greatest fighting I've ever seen, and it's continued on. Now it's really at a new level because the talent is much greater than it was even then and much tougher. Much—these are the best in the world right here.

So, I think you can all—a lot of the press is going to be there. And I think this is going to be one—this is going to be an event you're really going to like. Anybody want to say—and we have all of the great representatives there. They're making a lot of money. You're making a lot of money. *[Laughter]*

Look at that guy over there. Don't fight that one right there. But do you have anything to say? How about you?

Mixed martial artist manager Ali Ibrahim Abdelaziz. Me?

The President. Manager.

Mr. Abdelaziz. You know, like Justin said, without President Trump, probably the UFC would be 20 years behind. He gave us the jump start from the beginning. And I think this is going to be the greatest sport event ever created on planet Earth. It's going to be the most watched sports event on planet Earth. What an honor to fight on the ground, in red and white and blue.

You know, I know Justin is only American, but it is honor for guy from France, Spain, Brazil. But America is the dream. All these guys living the American dream, and all of it—all of us living an American dream. It's an honor to be in Oval Office, and it's an honor to have a President actually like, welcome the people—you know, welcome the people. Most the President, they just too good to do other things for other people. But this is the greatest President of all the time in any country, in any world, in any time. And I thank you, President Trump.

The President. Wow. I tell you, I like him. *[Laughter]* That was a good—I made a good move by asking him to say something. That was very good. Thank you. I really do. I appreciate it. Well, you're one of the greats and one of the great managers too and a very good friend of a very special fighter that we know, right?

Mr. Abdelaziz. Yes, sir.

The President. Khabib.

Mr. Abdelaziz. Yes, Khabib.

The President. Who fought 29 fights, and I think he won 29 fights, right?

Mr. Abdelaziz. Yes, sir.

The President. He had a tough fight with this guy right here.

Mr. Gaethje. I was his 29th.

The President. That was—it was your—[*laughter*]. That was a—that was some fight.

So, they're going to be going outside. Would you guys—anybody like to say something? I mean, if you want.

Mr. Topuria. We want to thank you for——

The President. Thank you.

Mr. Topuria. ——giving us this opportunity to build the biggest event in sports history. I also want to thank God to give us this beautiful day and to——

The President. Beautiful.

Mr. Topuria. ——give us the opportunity to experience how it feels to be in the Oval Office. So, it's going to be amazing, and we want to thank you for this opportunity.

The President. Thank you very much. Thank you.

Mr. Topuria. Thanks very much.

The President. Fantastic.

Mr. Topuria. And I never thought you will be so kind.

The President. Well, I'm——

Mr. Topuria. Honestly.

The President. I'm—I have—I have a false image.

Mr. Topuria. Yes.

The President. I have a false——

Mr. Topuria. And why did you wanted to give the toughest test to you—to friend of yours?

The President. To—to which?

Mr. Topuria. The friend of yours. You said he's friend of you.

[*Mr. Topuria gestured to Mr. Gaethje.*]

The President. Oh, yes.

Mr. Topuria. But you wanted to give him the——

Mr. Gaethje. Because he knows that's what I want.

Mr. Topuria. ——the toughest test.

The President. I do want to give—I want to give the hardest test is right. We're going to give the hardest test. And actually, each one of you are fighting your hardest test, I think, right?

Mr. Topuria. Yes.

The President. How do you think you'll—you know your opponent very well. Very tough. How do you think——

Mr. Topuria. I know him. A very tough opponent.

The President. Do you feel good?

Mr. Topuria. Very good.

The President. What are your chances of winning?

Mr. Topuria. Me?

The President. Yes.

Mr. Topuria. I have complete faith I'm going to win.

The President. A hundred percent, right?

Mr. Topuria. A hundred percent. Yes.

The President. Huh? Come here.

Mr. Topuria. That's why we here.

The President. Good. And they believe that too. Would you like to say something?

Mr. Topuria. And I hope he has the same faith.

The President. That's right.

Mr. Topuria. That's going to make an amazing fight.

The President. It's going to be great. Yes, that's right. Would you like to say something?

[*Mr. Pereira spoke in Portuguese, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.*]

Mr. Pereira. I would like to thank the opportunity to be fighting on the White House. We know it's a special event, that everybody would like to be present. It makes me feel special.

Thank you.

The President. Thank you very much. One of the greatest punches in the history of the business. I just shook his hand. He has a large hand. [*Laughter*] That's a powerful hand, I'll tell you. That's a—they're very unusual people, born with great talent, and then they hone the talent.

I'll save you for last. Okay?

Mr. Gaethje. Yes, sir.

The President. Because he's—he loves his country so much, but I'll save you for last.

Mr. Gaethje. Yes, sir.

The President. Please. Would you like to say something?

Mixed martial artist Cirył Gane. Yes, I just want to say thank you. It's an honor. I'm really proud. It's going to be really special. One time in your life. So, I just want to say thank you. Thank you very much.

The President. It's an honor to have you here.

Mr. Gane. It's honor. Yes.

The President. And we'll all be there watching, and you guys are something special. So, we'll—we're all be there watching.

Mr. Gane. Thank you, sir.

The President. I don't know how the hell you do it, but they wouldn't have it any other way. They love the sport. They really love the sport. They come out of a ring or—the most incredible fight you've ever seen, and they say, "This is the greatest sport." I could do a—you know, I'd rather sink a three-footer, personally. But these—there's no better thing to watch than this.

So—and Justin is known as just one of the truly—obviously, talented and everything else, but he's got more heart, and he just has an ability. They call it a motor. He's got a motor that doesn't stop, and that's——

Mr. Gaethje. Yes, sir.

The President. ——all starts—it all starts right up here.

[*The President gestured toward his head.*]

Mr. Gaethje. Yes. Here——

[*Mr. Gaethje gestured toward his head.*]

——and here.

[*Mr. Gaethje gestured toward his heart.*]

And I mean, I learned that growing up growing up in the small town of Safford, Arizona. Copper, cattle, and cotton: That's what we do down there. Three generations in the copper mines. So, yes, like you said, none of us come from opportunity or wealth, and this is one of the truest merit-based systems in the world, this sport right here. Everybody has an opportunity, and we all get a chance, and we will get a chance.

And so, of course, my faith is as strong as his, and I've committed my whole life to this. And so, to have a President that's willing to go against an upstream and against the norms is truly special. It's why you got my vote, and it's why we're such a great nation right now——

The President. Wow.

Mr. Gaethje. ——compared to where we were.

The President. Well, we all love you. He's got tremendous fanbase. All—every—each one of these people, these—in the sporting world, really, because I think most of the sporting world is watching the UFC. But Dana White was here last night. We were talking about it. He said they've never had anything like what's happening. They all—the problem was everybody wanted to fight. You know, we had so many guys. They all—they're all saying: "We want to fight at the White House." But——

Mr. Gaethje. Well, they all said, "We don't want to," because of the optics, and then they cried when they didn't get on it, so—[*laughter*].

The President. That's right. Yes. Now they're crying.

Mr. Gaethje. Now they're crying.

The President. But—it's true. But anyways. So, they're going to go outside. They're going to have some pictures taken on the balcony, the Truman Balcony. I think they're going up to Truman. And it's a beautiful balcony on the White House.

And do you have any questions? Only for the fighters now, I think, because——

Q. Mr. President——

The President. I mean, they want to ask about Iran and a couple of other things.

Q. Let me—I could try on Iran.

The President. Go ahead. Go ahead.

Q. Let me—let—I'll bridge this. Here you go. You're——

The President. So, I guess that's——

Q. You're facing——

The President. That's——

Q. Well, I'll try.

The President. That's fighting also.

U.S. Military Operations in Iran

Q. Wait, wait. This will work. You're facing an opponent right now in Iran that has refused to submit. You seem optimistic now that you may be closer to a deal. What's different about this moment now than in other moments where a deal has seemed close?

The President. Well, why do you say they refuse to submit? You don't know that. You don't know what's going on beyond——

Q. Well, they were firing on U.S. ships a few days ago.

The President. Yes, I know. A few days ago is a long time ago. You know? In the world of war, a few days ago——

No, they want to make a deal badly, and we'll see if we get there. If we get there—they can't have nuclear weapons. You know, it's very simple. But what's not to submit?

So, they had a navy with 159 ships, and now every ship is blown to pieces and lying at the bottom of the water. They had an air force, lots of planes, and they don't have any planes. They don't have any anti-aircraft. They don't have any radar left. Their missiles are mostly decimated. They have some—they have probably 18, 19 percent, but not a lot by comparison to what they had. And their leaders are all dead, so I think we won.

Now it's——

[*Several reporters began asking questions at once.*]

Now it's only a question of—look, if we left right now—Iran—it would take them 20 years to rebuild. You would call that we're in good shape, right?

Mr. Gaethje. That's fantastic shape.

The President. Huh?

Mr. Gaethje. Yes.

The President. We're in good shape. And, no, we're doing well. And then we have to get what we have to get. If we don't do that, we'll have to go a big step further. But with that being said——

Q. Is that what it's about now, getting that——

The President.——they want to make a deal. We've had very good talks over the last 24 hours. And it's very possible that we'll make a deal.

Q. So, Mr. President——

The President. Yes, please.

Iran/U.S. Diplomatic Engagement/Oil Markets and Prices

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Good to see you. What are the status of these talks? You said they're very good. Can you just give us some insight as to where we are with them this point?

The President. Well, we had talks. And we've had some good talks before, as you know——

Q. Right.

The President. —and all of a sudden, the next day, they're, like—

Q. Right.

The President. —they forgot what happened.

You know, they're proud like these guys are proud. Nobody more proud than these guys. Sometimes they fight on pride because, you know, they're injured and they're hurt. No matter how great you are, you get hit by somebody else that looks like them, it's very tough.

But they have great pride. These people have great pride. The others do too. Enemies have great pride. We went into Venezuela. Smart people. Great people. They have a really strong military. We won it very quickly. And we have a fantastic—it's been a great thing for Venezuela. The people are really happy. They're dancing in the streets because they have a lot of money coming in through the big oil companies that are all moving in.

I was with ExxonMobil last night. The chairman was here, and we were talking about Venezuela, along with a lot of them. Chevron. They're all—they were all here last night. They all want to go there and elsewhere.

We just hit a new high in the stock market. The stock market's the highest it's ever been. And I expected that the market would be down 20, 25 percent. I was willing to do that to get rid of a crazy country. Crazy, the people—look, you know, you talk about regime change. Their first-level leaders are dead. Their second-level leaders are dead. Some of their third-level leaders are dead. I call that regime change.

But I thought we'd be down maybe 20 percent, and we're up. The stock market's higher now than when we started this war. And I thought oil prices would go to \$200, \$250. It's at \$100 now. And I think you're surprised, and I'm surprised. But even if it went to \$200, it would have been worth it. I understood that.

We had just set a record: 50,000 on the Dow, 7,000 on the S&P. A record. And I said: "I hate to do this, but we have to make an excursion down to Iran because we can't let them have a nuclear—a nuclear weapon."

Look—and this is very simple—Iran cannot have a nuclear weapon, because as tough as they are, we want to keep them alive. We want to keep all of you alive. Iran cannot have a nuclear weapon, and they won't. And they've agreed to that, among other things.

Yes, please.

Pope Leo XIV

Q. Mr. President, you've had some recent back-and-forth with Pope Leo. I understand Secretary of State Marco Rubio is going to meet with the Pope tomorrow. What message do you hope he delivers to the Holy Father?

The President. Well, I can tell you this, that as far as the Pope is concerned, it's very simple. Whether I make him happy or I don't make him happy, Iran cannot have a nuclear weapon. And he seemed to be saying that they can. And I say they cannot because, if that happened, the entire world would be hostage, and we're not going to let that happen.

That's my only message. Okay?

Q. But just—

The President. So, they're going to go out now, and they're going to have some great pictures taken. And we'll see you guys on June 14. But I know, in your case, we're going to see you a lot more. [Laughter] We'll see you probably tomorrow. Yes.

Scheduled Ultimate Fighting Championship Match on the South Lawn

Q. Of all the events on the South Lawn, why this event?

The President. I think it's going to be the biggest event we've ever had at the White House. I mean, the White House doesn't really do athletic events for the most part. And this is—these are all the greatest champions in the world. They're the greatest fighters in the world. You can tell by looking at them. These are the greatest fighters in the world.

How do you think, if you went into heavy training—huh?—do you think you'd be okay?
[Laughter]

Q. I think those days are behind me, Mr. President.

The President. Those days——

Q. I don't think so.

The President. It'd be—be a little tough, right? Have a good time, everybody. Thank you.

Iran/U.S. Diplomatic Engagement

Q. Deadline for Iran, Mr. President? Is there a deadline?

Q. Do you have a deadline for when you expect to hear back?

The President. Never a deadline. It'll happen. It'll happen, but never a deadline.

Q. All right. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:47 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Dana F. White, Jr., president and chief executive officer, Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC); retired mixed martial artist Khabib Abdulmanapovich Nurmagomedov; and Exxon Mobile Corp. Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Darren W. Woods.

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