

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

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Internal  
Transcript

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REMARKS BY PRESIDENT TRUMP  
IN AN OFF-THE-RECORD CONVERSATION WITH PRESS

Aboard Air Force One  
En Route Paris, France

9:15 P.M. EDT

**On the visit to France:**

Q When were you last in Paris? When were you last in France?

THE PRESIDENT: So I was asked to go by the President, who I get along with very well, despite a lot of fake news. You know, I actually have a very good relationship with all of the people at the G20. And he called me, he said, would you come, it's Bastille Day -- 100 years since World War I. And I said, that's big deal, 100 years since World War I. SO we're going to go, I think we're going to have a great time, and we're going to do something good. And he's doing a good job. He's doing a good job as President.

**On North Korea, China, and trade:**

THE PRESIDENT: A big thing we have with China was, if they could help us with North Korea, that would be great. They have pressures that are tough pressures, and I understand. And you know, don't forget, China, over the many years, has been at war with Korea -- you know, wars with Korea. It's not like, oh, gee, you just do whatever we say. They've had numerous wars with Korea.

They have an 8,000 year culture. So when they see 1776 -- to them, that's like a modern building. The White House was started -- was essentially built in 1799. To us, that's really

old. To them, that's like a super modern building, right? So, you know, they've had tremendous conflict over many, many centuries with Korea. So it's not just like, you do this. But we're going to find out what happens.

Very important to me with China, we have to fix the trade. We have to fix the trade. And I've been going a little bit easier because I'd like to have their help. It's hard to go \*\*\*. But we have to fix the trade with China because it's very, very none-reciprocal.

Q Is that your bargaining chip with them to get on board with North Korea? Is, like, you want to --

THE PRESIDENT: Nobody has ever said it before. I say it all the time. Somebody said, what cards do you have? I said, very simple -- trade. We are being absolutely devastated by bad trade deals. We have the worst of all trade deals is with China.

We have a bad deal with South Korea. We're just starting negotiations with South Korea. South Korea, we protect, but we're losing \$40 billion a year with South Korea on trade. We have a trade deficit of \$40 billion. The deal just came up.

That was another Hillary Clinton beauty. Remember she said it was five-year deal, and now it's an extension period. She said this will put jobs in our country. She said we'll make money with it. Great. We're losing \$40 billion a year. It's a horrible deal. So we're starting -- we started, as of yesterday, renegotiating the deal with South Korea. We have to.

But the biggest strength we have are these horrendous trade deals, like with China. That's our strength. But we're going to fix them. But in terms of North Korea, our strength is trade.

Q And do you think that's going to bring them around?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, yeah, when I say reciprocal -- you make reciprocal deals, you're talking about hundreds of billions of dollars. But before I did that, I wanted to give it a good shot. Let's see. And they helped us. I have a very good relationship with him. I think he's a tremendous guy. But don't

forget. He's for China. I'm for the U.S. So that's always going to be.

So he could be a tremendous guy, but he's going to do what's good for China. And he doesn't want 50 million people pouring across his border. You know, there are a lot of things. I understand the other side. You always have to understand the other side.

Q What about steel?

THE PRESIDENT: Steel is a big problem. Steel is -- I mean, they're dumping steel. Not only China, but others. We're like a dumping ground, okay? They're dumping steel and destroying our steel industry, they've been doing it for decades, and I'm stopping it. It'll stop.

Q On tariffs?

THE PRESIDENT: There are two ways -- quotas and tariffs. Maybe I'll do both.

**On healthcare:**

THE PRESIDENT: No, I think, first, I want to do -- well, we have a few things. We have a thing called healthcare. I'm sure you haven't been reading about it too much. It is one of the -- I'd say the only thing more difficult than peace between Israel and the Palestinians is healthcare. It's like this narrow road that about a quarter of an inch wide. You get a couple here and you say, great, and then you find out you just lost four over here. Healthcare is tough.

But I think we're going to have something that's really good and that people are going to like. We're going to find out over the next -- you know, we just extended for two weeks. Which, that's a big --

**On the border wall:**

Q You were joking about solar, right?

THE PRESIDENT: No, not joking, no. There is a chance that we can do a solar wall. We have major companies looking at that. Look, there's no better place for solar than the Mexico border -- the southern border. And there is a very good chance

we can do a solar wall, which would actually look good. But there is a very good chance we could do a solar wall.

One of the things with the wall is you need transparency. You have to be able to see through it. In other words, if you can't see through that wall -- so it could be a steel wall with openings, but you have to have openings because you have to see what's on the other side of the wall.

And I'll give you an example. As horrible as it sounds, when they throw the large sacks of drugs over, and if you have people on the other side of the wall, you don't see them -- they hit you on the head with 60 pounds of stuff? It's over. As [crazy] as that sounds, you need transparency through that wall. But we have some incredible designs.

But we are seriously looking at a solar wall. And remember this, it's a 2,000 mile border, but you don't need 2,000 miles of wall because you have a lot of natural barriers. You have mountains. You have some rivers that are violent and vicious. You have some areas that are so far away that you don't really have people crossing. So you don't need that. But you'll need anywhere from 700 to 900 miles.

Plus we have some wall that's already up that we're already fixing. You know, we've already started the wall because we're fixing large portions of wall right now. We're taking wall that was good but it's in very bad shape, and we're making it new. We're fixing it. It's already started. So we've actually, in the true sense -- you know, there's no reason to take it down or \*\*\*. So in a true sense, we've already started the wall.

**On Donald Trump, Jr.:**

THE PRESIDENT: Don is -- as many of you know Don -- he's a good boy. He's a good kid. And he had a meeting, nothing happened with the meeting. It was a short meeting as he told me -- because I only heard about it two or three days ago.

As he told me, the meeting went -- and it was attended by a couple of other people who -- one of them left after a few minutes -- which is Jared. The other one was playing with his iPhone. Don listened, out of politeness, and realized it wasn't  
. . . .

Honestly, in a world of politics, most people are going to take that meeting. If somebody called and said, hey -- and you're a Democrat -- and by the way, they have taken them -- hey, I have really some information on Donald Trump. You're running against Donald Trump. Can I see you? I mean, how many people are not going to take the meeting?

**On President Putin and Russia:**

Q Are you mad that Putin lied about the meeting that you had with him, especially about --

THE PRESIDENT: What meeting?

Q At the G20, when he said that you didn't -- you know, you accepted that the hacking wasn't real.

THE PRESIDENT: He didn't say that. No. He said, I think he accepted it, but you'd have to ask him. That's a big difference. So I said, very simply -- and the first 45 minutes, don't forget, most of the papers said I'd never bring it up. Had to be the first 20 to 25 minutes.

And I said to him, were you involved with the meddling in the election? He said, absolutely not. I was not involved. He was very strong on it. I then said to him again, in a totally different way, were you involved with the meddling. He said, I was not -- absolutely not.

Q Do you remember what the different way was that you asked --

THE PRESIDENT: Somebody said later to me, which was interesting. Said, let me tell you, if they were involved, you wouldn't have found out about it. Okay, which is a very interesting point.

Q But did you say, okay, I believe you, let's move on?

THE PRESIDENT: What I said, I asked him, were you involved? He said, very strongly -- said to him a second time -- totally different -- were you involved? Because we can't let that happen. And I mean whether it's Russia or anybody else, we can't let there be even a scintilla of doubt when it comes to an election. I mean, I'm very strong on that.

And I'm not saying it wasn't Russia. What I'm saying is that we have to protect ourselves no matter who it is. You know, China is very good at this. I hate to say it, North Korea is very good at this. Look what they did to Sony Studios. They were the ones that did the whole deal to Sony. You know, we're dealing with highly sophisticate people.

So, China is very good. You have many countries. And you have many individuals that are very good at this. But we can't have -- and I did say, we can't have a scintilla of doubt as our elections and going forward.

Q                   Have you told him that?

THE PRESIDENT: I told him. I said, look, we can't -- we can't have -- now, he said absolutely not twice. What do you do? End up in a fistfight with somebody, okay? Because then I brought up Syria, and I said --

Q                   Afterwards?

THE PRESIDENT: Very shortly there afterward. And I said, there's so much killing in Syria. We got to solve Syria. We've got to solve Ukraine. And you know, I've always said -- and I'm not just talking about Russia -- we're a lot better off -- like it's a good thing that I have a good relationship with President Xi. It's a good thing I have a good relationship with every one of them -- Modi -- you saw that. Every single one of them of all 19 -- there's 20 with us. All 19, I have a great relationship with.

#### **More on the Visit to France and Trade:**

So we're doing well. I mean, we're doing well and we're having a good time. Now what we'll do is we'll go celebrate with the President of France -- we have a good relationship -- open up a little trade with them. But it's got to be fair trade. I mean, every deal we have is bad. It's got to be fair trade.

I mean, the European Union, as an example -- I'm all for the European Union, but we have things that we can barely sell into the European Union. They're very protectionist. And we're not. And you have to be reciprocal.

To me, the word reciprocal is a beautiful word. Because people can say, we don't like a border tax or we don't like this or we don't like that. But what they can't say is that, if you're

selling a motorcycle and they're coming into your country and not paying tax, and they're going into another country and paying 100 percent tax, people understand that's not fair. So we say we make it reciprocal.

**More on President Putin and Russia, and on energy:**

Q Do you think you'll invite Putin to the White House?

THE PRESIDENT: I would say yes, yeah. At the right time. I don't think this is the right time, but the answer is yes I would. Look, it's very easy for me to say absolutely, I won't. That's the easy thing for me to do, but that's the stupid thing to do. Let's be the smart people not the stupid people. The easiest thing for me to tell you is that I would never invite him. We will never ever talk to Russia. That all of my friends in Congress will say, oh he's so wonderful, he's so wonderful. Folks, we have perhaps the second most powerful nuclear country in the world. If you don't have dialogue, you have to be fools. Fools. It would be the easiest thing for me to say to Maggie and all of you, I will never speak to him, and everybody would love me. But I have to do what's right.

And, by the way, I only want to make great deals with Russia. Remember this, I have built up -- we're getting \$57 billion more for the military. Hillary was going to cut the military. I'm a tremendous fracker, coal, natural gas, alternate energy, wind - everything, right? But I'm going to produce much much more energy than anyone else who was ever running for office. Ever. We're going to have clean coal, and Hillary wasn't. Hillary was going to stop fracking. She was going to stop coal totally. Hey, in West Virginia I beat her by 42 points. Remember, she went and sat with the miners and they said get the hell out of here. So, I was going to -- if Hillary got in, your energy prices right now would be double. You'd be doing no fracking. You'd be doing practically no fossil fuels.

So Putin, everything I do is the exact opposite. I don't believe -- in fact, the one question that I didn't ask him that I wish I did -- but we had so many other things going, and really the ceasefire was a very complicated talk, it was a very important talk to me because I wanted to see if we could start a ceasefire.

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Now, why does that affect Russia? Because Russia makes its money through selling of oil, and we've got underneath us more oil than anybody, and nobody knew it until five years ago. And I want to use it. And I don't want that taken away by the Paris Accord. I don't want them to say all of that wealth that the United States has under its feet, but that China doesn't have and that other countries don't have, we can't use. So now we no longer have the advantage. We have a tremendous advantage. We have more natural resources under our feet than any other country. That's a pretty big statement. Ten years ago, five years ago even, you couldn't make that statement. We're blessed. I don't want to give it up. I don't want to say oh, okay, we won't use it. But think of it. So, if Hillary is there, you're going to have a far less amount of fuel. Therefore, energy prices will be much, much higher. That's great for Russia.

So, the next time I'm with Putin, I'm going to ask him: who were you really for? Because I can't believe that he would have been for me. Me. Strong military, strong borders -- but he cares less about the borders -- but strong military, tremendous. We're going to be an exporter of fuel this year. We're going to be exporting. What was the first thing I signed when I got in? The Keystone Pipeline, and the Keystone Pipeline goes from Canada all the way through our country right into the Gulf, and the ships are there to take it all over and compete with Russia.

### **More on Energy:**

The first thing I signed, the first day, was the Keystone Pipeline. That first \* was the Keystone and the Dakota Access Pipeline -- also Dakota Access. Now, what does that mean? Dakota Access takes it to the Pacific. Who do they compete with? Russia. Hillary would have never signed -- that was with the reservation -- she would have never signed it. I was given great credit for that one. That was a tough one. First day. It's also 48,000 jobs between both of them. The other one I signed, that was the Keystone. That was dead. That was dead for two years. It was never going to happen. I revived it on day one. You know, you'll check, please check it. I have to be exactly accurate. They'll say, oh I wasn't totally accurate. But that goes to the Gulf, right? Competes with Russia.

**More on Energy and Russia:**

THE PRESIDENT: So now oil is getting to be record low -- and gas -- because we're producing so much. That means Russia -- and you know Russia \*\*\* is having a little hard time because it has come down so much.

**On Russia sanctions:**

Q But you wouldn't sign a new sanctions bill if it passes the House?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I'm not talking about new, I'm talking about the old sanctions. Wait, we got to get this right. Ready? I think I said it right but just in case. We have very heavy sanctions on Russia right now. I would not and have never even thought about taking them off. Somebody said, Donald Trump wants to -- I don't want to take them off.

Q Putin didn't raise that with you?

THE PRESIDENT: He never raised it. We did, I think, talk about the sanctions that Congress wants to pass, but it was very brief. Much of it was talked about Ukraine. Look, we talked about the elections. We talked about Ukraine and Syria. Not in that order. We talked about Syria and Ukraine. But I will just tell you, I didn't say this to him. We didn't talk about this aspect of it. I would never take the sanctions off until something is worked out to our satisfaction and everybody's satisfaction in Syria and in Ukraine.

I saw a report and I read a report that Trump wants to take off the sanctions. I've made a lot of money. I've made great deals. That's what I do. Why would I take sanctions off without getting anything?

**On allegations of collusion with Russia:**

THE PRESIDENT: What pressure? I didn't -- I did nothing. Hey, now it's shown there's no collusion, there's no obstruction, there's no nothing. Honestly, the whole thing, it is really a media witch hunt. It's been a media witch hunt. And it's bad for the country. You know, when you talk about Russia, if Russia actually did whatever they want to do, they got to be laughing, because look at what happens -- how much time. . . .

They feel it's a witch hunt, the people. There are a lot of people. And those people vote. They don't stay home because it's drizzling. We proved that. But every single party chairman said that my base is substantially stronger than it was in November. That's a big compliment. That's a big compliment. And I feel it.

And I think what's happening is, as usual, the Democrats have played their card too hard on the Russia thing, because people aren't believing it. It's a witch hunt and they understand that. When they say "treason" -- you know what treason is? That's Julius and Ethel Rosenberg for giving the atomic bomb, okay? But what about all the congressmen, where I see the woman sitting there surrounded by -- in Congress.

So I think it's a good thing. When Hillary Clinton spent her ads -- you know, she spent almost 100 percent of her ads on anti-Donald Trump ads. You know that. Every ad was an anti ad. When the election came, nobody knew what she stood for.

I heard tonight, and I saw tonight, and I read tonight that they're making a big mistake. And I a lot of the Democrats feel -- they say, we're putting all our money into this Russia stuff and it's making Trump stronger. Because my people and the people that support me, who are incredible people, those people are angry because they feel it's being unfair and a witch hunt.

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10:15 P.M. EDT