

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2017

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai of Afghanistan and an Exchange With Reporters in New York City
September 21, 2017

President Trump. Good morning. It's a pleasure to have President Ghani of Afghanistan with us. We're working very well together. We're working very hard.

Our military is, as you know, over there right now and doing, really, an incredible job, more of leadership than fighting. We're leading a lot of wonderful Afghan troops who are fighting very hard. We were just discussing that, and great progress is being made.

So it's an honor to have you and all of your representatives with us. Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. President.

President Ghani. Mr. President, first of all, I'd like to pay tribute to American soldiers, officers, and civilians, particularly those who paid the ultimate sacrifice. That sacrifice can now result in a stable Afghanistan.

I want to thank you on behalf of the people of Afghanistan, the Government of Afghanistan for making a decision that is historic. You asked very fundamental questions. You made this decision on the basis of courage and determination. We salute your courage.

Since the decision, there has been an immense change on the ground. I've been to six of our seven army corps, and they all greet you and the people of the United States and the American soldiers and officers who fought shoulder to shoulder with them. It's a difference of day and night.

The cloud of uncertainty has been lifted, but equally important is your commitment to a political solution at the end of this process. What we want to assure the American people is that there's not going to be a combat role. You've made that crystal clear, and we are committed to make sure it's the Afghan people, the Afghan soldiers, the Afghan officers who will take the burden of responsibility.

The additional—the modest additional troops that have been sent are to enhance the "assist, support, advise" mission, and that is playing a very crucial role. Victory—political and military-wise—is within our sight. And I'd like to thank you for the thoroughness of the review and especially for ordering that all instruments of American power—military, diplomatic, and economic—are brought together in a coherent plan of action to lift Afghanistan out of 40 years of crisis and to make it a platform for stability and prosperity.

And because of this, we equally, Mr. President, understand and fully endorse the concept that you use. We do not ask for a blank check. We are determined to do what is ours: fight corruption; ensure that there's no waste of resources; full accountability for the results; and significant momentum so that the American people can know that, under your wise leadership, the results that were not within grasp will now be achieved.

Thank you, Mr. President.

President Trump. Well, thank you very much, Mr. President, also. And I think it's important to understand that the Afghan soldiers are doing the fighting. We're training, and we're working with them very closely, but it's the Afghans that are doing the fighting.

I've also heard, not only this morning, but over the last few weeks, that the spirit is tremendous over there of your Afghan forces and of the American forces. Rules of engagement

are now different than they were, and we're able to do the job. And I will say that the spirit—and I'm hearing it from everybody—everybody that goes over comes back and said, really, it's like a different place. But the spirit is tremendous.

People don't realize you had 20 terrorist groups in Afghanistan. This is where the World Trade Center people—I'll call them "people"—were trained. This is what happened. But you had 20 groups, more than anyplace else. It's really a—it's a hornet's nest from that standpoint. We are hitting them very, very hard and very, very effectively, and we really have no choice but to do it.

So I'm honored to have you, and I'm very, very happy with what I've heard and the reports that I've heard from our generals and our people. And I think we're going to be very successful. We're there for a number of reasons, but one of the reasons is to stop these terrorist organizations, which, for whatever reason, seem to accumulate in Afghanistan more than anyplace else.

So we're doing our job. I think we're doing it very effectively. Tremendous esprit de corps. And we'll see what happens, but I think it's going to be good. Thank you all very much. Thank you.

North Korea

Q. Are you going to place more sanctions on North Korea?

Q. Mr. President, can you guarantee you will try—[inaudible]?

President Trump. Yes.

Q. Any comment on Paul Manafort?

President Trump. We will be putting more sanctions on North Korea. Yes.

Thank you very much. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:35 a.m. in the Hubbard I meeting room at the Lotte New York Palace hotel. A reporter referred to Paul J. Manafort, Jr., former campaign chairman, Donald J. Trump Presidential campaign.

Categories: Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters :: New York City; Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials : Afghanistan, President Ghani.

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