

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2017

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Prime Minister Justin P.J. Trudeau of Canada and an Exchange With Reporters

October 11, 2017

President Trump. Thank you all very much. I very much appreciate. We are here with a man who has become a friend of mine, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Mrs. Trudeau. Thank you so much. Appreciate it.

And we are discussing many things, including NAFTA. But we have discussions scheduled for quite a few subjects, and I think we both look very much forward.

Prime Minister Trudeau. Indeed.

President Trump. And I want to just tell you, Justin, great honor to have you both with us. Thank you. Thank you very much.

Prime Minister Trudeau. Thank you. Great to be back here in the Oval Office. As the President said, a lot of things to discuss. We have an incredibly close relationship of two countries that are interwoven in our economies and cultures, in our peoples.

But we have a good partnership, and there's always ways to improve it, always issues we need to talk through. And that's why having an ongoing, constructive relationship between the President and the Prime Minister is really important. And I'm glad to be able to meet with you here again today.

Merci beaucoup.

[*At this point, a reporter asked a question in French and Prime Minister Trudeau responded in French. No translation was provided. A reporter then asked a question in English as follows.*]

North American Free Trade Agreement

Q. Mr. President, is NAFTA dead?

President Trump. We'll see what happens. We have a tough negotiation, and it's something that you will know in the not-too-distant future. But we are going to be discussing NAFTA, and we'll be discussing defense because we have a great—I mean, these are truly great and original allies, and mutual defense is very important.

And I guess we'll also be discussing mutual offense, which people don't mention too often. But offense is part of defense.

So we have many things to talk about, but NAFTA will certainly be a big factor today. Okay?

Q. Have you warned the Prime Minister——

U.S. Nuclear Weapons Stockpile

Q. Do you want to increase the nuclear arsenal?

President Trump. No, I never discussed increasing it. I want it in perfect shape. That was just fake news by NBC, which gives a lot of fake news, lately.

No, I never discuss—I think somebody said I want ten times the nuclear weapons that we have right now. Right now we have so many nuclear weapons. I want them in perfect condition, perfect shape. That's the only thing I've ever discussed.

General Mattis put out a statement, or is putting out a statement, saying that that was fake news, that it was just mentioned that way. And it's, frankly, disgusting the way the press is able to write whatever they want to write. And people should look into it.

No, I want to have absolutely perfectly maintained—which we are in the process of doing—nuclear force. But when they said I want ten times what we have right now, it's totally unnecessary, believe me. Because I know what we have right now.

Q. You want no increase whatsoever? You're happy with—[inaudible]?

President Trump. We won't need an increase, but I want modernization, and I want total rehabilitation. It's got to be in tip-top shape.

North American Free Trade Agreement

Q. Mr. Trump, you said that NAFTA just needed some little tweaks. What changed?

President Trump. Well, I don't think anything changed. We're negotiating a NAFTA deal. It's time, after all of these years, and we'll see what happens. It's possible we won't be able to make a deal, and it's possible that we will. We have a great personal relationship, and we have a relationship now as two countries, I think, that's as close as ever.

But we'll see if we can do the kind of changes that we need. We have to protect our workers, and in all fairness, the Prime Minister wants to protect Canada and his people also. So we'll see what happens with NAFTA, but I've been opposed to NAFTA for a long time. In terms of the fairness of NAFTA, I said we'll renegotiate. And I mean, I think Justin understands this: If we can't make a deal, it'll be terminated, and that will be fine. They're going to do well; we're going to do well. But maybe that won't be necessary. But it has to be fair to both countries.

Freedom of the Press

Q. Mr. President, do you think there should be limits on what the press should write?

President Trump. No, the press should speak more honestly. I mean, I've seen tremendously dishonest press. It's not even a question of distortion, like the question that was just asked before about ten times the nuclear capability. I know the capability that we have, believe me, and it is awesome. It is massive.

And so when they make up stories like that, that's just made up. And the generals will tell you that. And then, they have their sources that don't exist. In my opinion, they don't exist. They make up the sources. There are no sources.

Any other question?

Q. [Inaudible]—recertify the Iran deal?

North American Free Trade Agreement

Q. When are you going to decide what happens to NAFTA?

President Trump. We'll decide over the next fairly short period of time, but I think it's going to work out very well for both countries and Mexico.

Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action To Prevent Iran From Obtaining a Nuclear Weapon

Q. What's your thinking on the Iran deal right now?

President Trump. You're going to see very soon. We're going to be announcing that very shortly.

Q. Would you rather see——

North American Free Trade Agreement

Q. If you can't make a deal with Mexico, would you still want free trade with Canada?

President Trump. What?

Q. If you can't reach a deal with Mexico, can you envision still having free trade with Canada?

President Trump. Oh, sure. Absolutely. It's possible we won't be able to reach a deal with one or the other. But in the meantime, we'll make a deal with one. But I think we have a chance to do something very creative that's good for Canada, Mexico, and the United States.

Q. So you do want to see NAFTA survive?

Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson

Q. How was your lunch with Secretary Tillerson and Mattis?

President Trump. Very good.

Q. Full confidence?

President Trump. You mean last week?

Q. And you have full——

President Trump. Jon [Jonathan Karl, ABC News], you're so far behind the times.
[Laughter]

Q. Your meeting yesterday.

President Trump. Do you mean today or last week? Because today I didn't have lunch with him.

Q. Yesterday, sir.

President Trump. No, I had a lunch last week, and we had a very good lunch. We have a very good relationship. The press really doesn't understand that, but that's okay. We actually have a very good relationship.

What else?

North Korea/Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson

Q. Are you on the same page on North Korea?

President Trump. I think I have a little bit different attitude on North Korea than other people might have.

Q. And your Secretary?

President Trump. And I listen to everybody, but ultimately, my attitude is the one that matters, isn't it? That's the way it works. That's the way the system is.

But I think I might have a somewhat different attitude and a different way than other people. I think perhaps I feel stronger and tougher on that subject than other people, but I listen to everybody. And ultimately, I will do what's right for the United States and, really, what's right for the world. Because that's really a world problem; that's beyond just the United States. That's a world problem, and it's a problem that has to be solved.

Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you.

North American Free Trade Agreement

Q. If NAFTA doesn't work out, would you negotiate with both countries individually? If NAFTA doesn't work out, would you see a deal with each individual country?

President Trump. I would. Yes, I would see that. Yes.

Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:57 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Sophie Grégoire-Trudeau, wife of Prime Minister Trudeau; and Secretary of Defense James N. Mattis.

Categories: Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters :: White House; Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials : Canada, Prime Minister Trudeau.

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