

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2018

Remarks Prior to a Working Lunch With President Kersti Kaljulaid of Estonia, President Raimonds Vejonis of Latvia, and President Dalia Grybauskaitė of Lithuania and an Exchange With Reporters

April 3, 2018

President Trump. Okay, thank you very much. Today it's my pleasure to congratulate Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania on the 100th anniversary of their independence. That's really quite a great achievement, and congratulations. And I'm honored to have you with us in the White House and the Oval Office. We covered a little territory today. Right? Really tremendous. One hundred years.

We're thrilled to celebrate this historic milestone by welcoming all of you to our country. And I know you've been here a little bit before, but this is something special. So we really enjoy having you.

From the very beginning of your countries' independence, the United States never—and this is, like, never, and I think you know that better than anybody—never ceased to recognize the sovereignty of the three Baltic republics, even though, throughout the years, there's been a lot of conflict, a lot of problems, a lot of difficulty. We never let you down, and we won't let you down.

At today's U.S.-Baltic Centennial Summit, we're inaugurating 100 years of renewed partnership among our nations, grounded once more in our shared commitment to independent sovereignty and a total respect of the rule of law. This afternoon we will discuss our cooperation on a range of issues, including expanding bilateral trade and investment. And I know you're making a lot of investment in our country. You're buying a lot of military equipment from the United States. And we make the best military equipment in the world by far, whether it's missiles or planes or anything else. So we appreciate that.

And we're also going to be promoting joint security initiatives. I especially want to commend the Baltic nations on meeting their defense spending obligations this year for NATO, unlike some of the other countries, frankly, that haven't met their obligations, but they will.

We have a tremendous amount more—and I will take credit for this, and you have given me credit for this—a lot more money coming into NATO because of my initiative. I said, "You have to pay." A lot of years, they weren't paying. They were delinquent. And now they're paying. So NATO is taking in a lot more money than it ever did before. And ultimately, it will be at least \$33 billion more over a short period of time. That's a lot of money. Big difference.

It's a privilege to host all of you at the White House for this historic summit, and I look forward to getting to know you better. And we're going to be meeting with your representatives throughout the day and throughout the days. And we're going to have a very long and strong relationship.

Thank you very much for being here. Thank you. Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you. Thank you very much.

China/Trade/U.S. National Economy/Immigration Policy/Border Security

Q. [Inaudible]—stock market volatility, sir?

President Trump. I have to say this: China. I have great respect for President Xi. Two of the most incredible days of my life were spent in China, and many of you were with me. He's a tremendous person. But we have a problem with China. They've created a trade deficit, and I

really blame our representatives and, frankly, our preceding Presidents for this. They [We]^{*} have a trade deficit of \$500 billion a year. It's not something we can live with.

So we'll be working with China. We'll be negotiating with China. Again, our relationship is very good with China, and we intend to keep it that way. But we have to do something to seriously relieve that trade deficit. We can't have a \$500 billion-a-year trade deficit.

We also have the theft of intellectual property, and that probably is in the neighborhood of \$200 [billion]^{*} to \$300 billion a year.

So whether we like it or not, we have a great stock market. We have a very, very powerful country. We have our country, militarily, as you know, Presidents. We have just received \$700 billion. Our military will be stronger than ever before. But we have to do something on trade with certain countries. And obviously, China is the leader in terms of deficits. We've never had a situation where a country—nor has there ever been in history a situation where a country—has done that to another country.

We've helped rebuild China over the last 25 years, if you take a look at what's happened. We have helped rebuild China. So we intend to get along with China, but we have to do something very substantial about the trade deficit. And with that, nothing is easy. I campaigned on that; I talked about that. China won't be the only country, but I did, in fact, campaign on it.

Mexico—if you look at the caravan of thousands of people coming across—I told Mexico, look, you have a cash cow in NAFTA. NAFTA has been great for Mexico; it has not been good for the United States. A lot of businesses have closed down because of NAFTA. You look at empty plants all over the place—and this is from years ago—they still haven't recovered. NAFTA has been a terrible deal for the United States. We're renegotiating the deal right now, but it will still be good for Mexico and for Canada.

And when this caravan came in—and this is a caravan of a lot of people coming in—in this case, from Honduras. If it reaches our border, our laws are so weak and so pathetic, you would not understand this because—I know how strong your laws are at the border. It's like we have no border because we had Obama make changes. President Obama made changes that basically created no border. It's called catch-and-release. You catch them, you register them, they go into our country—we can't throw them out. And in many cases, they shouldn't be here. In many, many cases, they shouldn't be here. And after they get—whatever happens over the next 2 or 3 years, they're supposed to come back to court. Almost nobody comes back to court. They're in our country, and we can't do anything about it because the laws that were created by Democrats are so pathetic and so weak.

So I told Mexico—and I respect what they did—I said, look, your laws are very powerful; your laws are very strong. We have very bad laws for our border, and we are going to be doing some things—I've been speaking with General Mattis—we're going to be doing things militarily. Until we can have a wall and proper security, we're going to be guarding our border with the military. That's a big step. We really haven't done that before or certainly not very much before.

But we will be doing things with Mexico—and they have to do it; otherwise, I'm not going to do the NAFTA deal. NAFTA has been fantastic for Mexico, bad for us. We've had our car plants moved to Mexico, many of them. We make tremendous numbers—millions of cars—in Mexico that years ago didn't exist. They closed in Michigan, they closed in Ohio, they closed in other places. Now they're starting to move back. Because of what we've done with regulation and with taxes, they're starting to come back into our country in a big way.

^{*} White House correction.

But I told Mexico very strongly: You're going to have to do something about these caravans that are coming up. And I just noticed that the caravan now, which is toward the middle of Mexico, coming up from Honduras, is breaking up very rapidly. That's because Mexico has very strong immigration laws, as we should have. We should have those laws. We don't have—we have immigration laws that are laughed at by everybody. And it's got to be changed. We need the wall, we need the protection, and we have to change our immigration laws at the border and elsewhere.

So Mexico has—at this moment, it seems they've broken up large numbers of that particular caravan. And we'll see what happens. But we're prepared at our border. We cannot have people flowing into our country illegally, disappearing, and by the way, never showing up to court. So the court case will be set for 2 years or 3 years, if you can believe this, and they never show up, for the most part. Very rarely do they show up.

Plus, if you notice, they're trying to hire thousands of judges so every person that walks across—and they're taught to say the right thing—they walk across, and then they go, and they're supposed to go to court. So we're supposed to have thousands of judges, because we cannot have them take it out. We have to bring them before a ridiculous court system.

We have to change our policies fast—just like we have to change on sanctuary cities. If you look at what's happening in California, they're having revolts out there, because there are a lot of areas—Orange County and others—they don't want to have sanctuary cities, which are guarding criminals.

So a lot of things are changing. But I've just heard that the caravan coming up from Honduras is broken up, and Mexico did that. And they did it because, frankly, I said, "You really have to do it." We're going to have a relationship on NAFTA. We're going to have to include security in NAFTA. So Mexico—very strong laws, and that's the way it is. So it looks like it's been broken up. So that will be good.

Okay. Thank you all very much.

Border Security

Q. Mr. President, it seems as though the caravan is starting to irritate you.

President Trump. No, the caravan doesn't irritate me. The caravan makes me very sad that this can happen to the United States, where you have thousands of people that decide to just walk into our country, and we don't have any laws that can protect it. And the wall, because of the Democrats, has been delayed—which we've started the wall.

Just so you understand, we have \$1.6 billion. We're fixing and building brandnew walls in certain areas. And we have—we're doing a lot of work on walls. We have \$1.6 billion, and we're starting brand-new sections of walls. But we need to have a wall that's about 800 miles—700 to 800 miles—of the 2,000-mile stretch. We have a lot of natural boundaries.

But it's very sad to see it. And it's sad, even, for both sides. It's sad for the people in the caravan, and it's sad for the people of the United States. It's really sad that we don't have laws that say we have a border and if you don't do it legally, you can't come into the United States. To me, that's a very sad thing for the people of the United States.

Thank you all very much.

Q. Sir, is Scott Pruitt staying? Is Scott Pruitt staying?

President Trump. Thank you. Thank you very much.

Baltic States

Q. [*Inaudible*]*—air defense system for Baltic States?*

President Trump. Well, we'll be very good. I have great respect for the Baltic States. Tremendous people.

Q. But the air defense system——

President Trump. Tremendous leaders, who I've known now for a pretty long period of time. No, we have great respect for the Baltic States. Thank you. Thank you very much, everybody.

Q. Scott Pruitt, sir? [*Inaudible*]*—Scott Pruitt, sir?*

Russia-U.S. Relations/North Atlantic Treaty Organization/Baltic States

Q. Do you want Vladimir Putin to come to the White House, sir?

President Trump. We want to be able, if possible—and this is speaking with the Baltic States—ideally, we want to be able to get along with Russia. Getting along with Russia is a good thing, not a bad thing.

Now, maybe we will, and maybe we won't. And probably nobody has been tougher to Russia than Donald Trump. If you take a look at our military strength now, which would not have happened had the opponent won; if you take a look at the oil and gas that we're producing now—we're independent, we're now exporting oil and gas—this is not something that Russia wanted.

If you—the three Presidents just told me that NATO is taking in a tremendous amount of money because of Donald Trump. That would have never happened. So NATO is much stronger. You may want to say that. Would you like to say that, Madam President?

President Grybauskaitė. Yes, of course. We talked already in the—5 minutes ago that, for us important is the presence and impetus of the United States in NATO. We expect, together with the United States, to go ahead with deep reforms of NATO, especially on decision-making, on decisiveness, on their denial—acts of denial, which we expect to see from Russia in case of aggression.

Without United States, this is not possible. About 80 percent of spending is coming to United—to the NATO from the United States, and why the vital voice and vital leadership of United States for the reforms is important. We are behind and with you. I think that the best allies you have in Europe and NATO is Baltic States today.

And we also doing our homework. We're modernizing armies. We're spending already 2 percent. And together, I think we can do a lot. And I am very much looking forward to see everybody around the table in Brussels and going ahead with a better NATO, a more resultative NATO, and more efficient NATO.

President Trump. And has Donald Trump made a difference on NATO? [*Laughter*]

President Grybauskaitė. As I said——

President Trump. This is a very risky question. [*Laughter*] But I think——

President Grybauskaitė. No, no, no.

President Trump. If she says the same thing that she said in the Oval Office, it will be——

President Grybauskaitė. I can repeat that it is very good pressure to all of us, all members of NATO—is perfect pressure to all political elite who thinks that somebody else needs to protect, but not themselves. So the first, you do homework, and then you ask for your partner to come with you. And that's exactly what you did.

And this kind of leadership is good. We're using it, also, I am hoping. We're using it to influence the opinions in our countries: that the first, we need to invest ourselves, and only then the partners can come with us. And that's——

North Atlantic Treaty Organization/Russia-U.S. Relations

President Trump. And again, NATO has taken in billions of dollars more because of me, because I said, "You're delinquent, you're not paying," to many of the countries. Is that right? Many of the countries weren't paying. And even now, Germany is paying 1 percent and they're not even paying the full 1 percent. Germany hooks up a pipeline into Russia, where Germany is going to be paying billions of dollars for energy into Russia. And I'm saying: "What's going on with that? How come Germany is paying vast amounts of money to Russia when they hook up a pipeline?" That's not right.

So you look at what's going on. Now, so Germany pays 1 percent. The United States is paying close to 4 percent. The United States, as you said, is paying 80 percent of the cost of NATO. Do you think that's fair?

With all of that being said, because of me—and you can speak to the head of NATO, Mr. Stoltenberg; he said that because of what I've said to the countries, they've taken in—General, I think you'll confirm this too—many billions of dollars more than they would have had if you had crooked Hillary Clinton as President. Okay? That I can tell you. Many billions of dollars more.

So you know, we've been very tough on that. We've been very tough on Russia, frankly. But I will say that if we got along with Russia, that would be a good thing, not a bad thing. It's possible we won't. We're going to find out whether or not we do. But if we could all get along, that would be great. And that includes China, and that includes many other countries. But we'll see what happens. Only time will tell.

But nobody has been tougher on Russia. But getting along with Russia would be a good thing, not a bad thing. And just about everybody agrees to that, except very stupid people. Okay?

Russia-U.S. Relations

Q. How do you see Vladimir Putin? Is he a friend or a foe?

President Trump. We'll find out. I'll let you know. I mean, there will be a time when I'll let you know. You're going to find out very quickly. We'll see what happens. Okay.

Thank you all.

Baltic States

Q. Any frontline troops? Any frontline troops in the Baltics?

President Trump. Thank you. No, I have great respect for the Baltics. I have great respect for my friends. I've known them now for—right from the beginning of my Presidency. These are great, courageous people and have done a fantastic job for their countries. So I have great respect for you and for your nations.

Thank you all.

Amazon.com, Inc.

Q. Is it Amazon or the Washington Post, sir? What's Amazon done that bugs you, sir?

President Trump. When you take a look at the Post Office—you take a look at the Post Office, and the Post Office is losing billions of dollars and the taxpayers are paying for that money because it delivers packages for Amazon at a very below cost. And that's not fair to the

United States. It's not fair to our taxpayers. And Amazon has the money to pay the fair rate at the Post Office, which would be much more than they're paying right now.

The other thing is, a lot of retail businesses all over the country are going out of business, so that's a different problem, and it's a big problem. You have retailers all over the United States that are going out of business. You look at some of these small towns where they had a beautiful Main Street with stores, the stores are all gone. So that's a different problem that we're going to have to talk about.

But if you look at the cost that we're subsidizing—we're giving a subsidy to Amazon. And we're talking about billions of dollars a year. The real cost. And a report just came out; they said, \$1.47, I believe, or about that—for every time they deliver a package, the United States Government—meaning, the Post Office—loses a \$1.47. So Amazon is going to have to pay much more money to the Post Office, there's no doubt about that.

Thank you all very much. Thank you.

Environmental Protection Agency Administrator E. Scott Pruitt

Q. Scott Pruitt, sir? Do you support Scott Pruitt?

President Trump. I hope he's going to be great.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:12 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Defense James N. Mattis; and 2016 Democratic Presidential nominee Hillary Rodham Clinton. Reporters referred to President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia.

Categories: Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters :: White House; Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials : Estonia, President Kaljulaid; Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials : Latvia, President Vejonis; Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials : Lithuania, President Grybauskaitė.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Clinton, Hillary Rodham; Grybauskaitė, Dalia; Kaljulaid, Kersti; Mattis, James N.; Obama, Barack; Pruitt, E. Scott; Stoltenberg, Jens; Vejonis, Raimonds; Xi Jinping.

Subjects: Armed Forces, U.S. : Funding; China : President; China : Relations with U.S.; China : Trade with U.S.; Commerce, international : Intellectual property law, strengthening efforts; Commerce, international : North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA); Defense and national security : Border security; Defense, Department of : Secretary; Economy, national : Improvement; Energy : Domestic production, promotion efforts; Environmental Protection Agency; Estonia : President; Europe : Baltic States :: Independence, 100th anniversary; Europe : Baltic States :: Relations with U.S.; Europe : Baltic States :: Security cooperation with U.S.; Europe : Baltic States :: Trade with U.S.; Government organization and employees : Federal regulations, review; Holidays and special observances : Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, independence, 100th anniversary; Immigration and naturalization : Illegal immigration; Immigration and naturalization : Reform; Justice, Department of : Sanctuary cities, efforts to combat; Latvia : President; Lithuania : President; Mexico : Border with U.S., infrastructure and security; Mexico : Relations with U.S.; North Atlantic Treaty Organization; Postal Service, U.S.; Russia : Relations with U.S.; Taxation : Tax Code, reform.

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