

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2018

Remarks at a Breakfast With Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and an Exchange With Reporters in Brussels, Belgium

July 11, 2018

President Trump. Good morning, everybody. Good morning to the media, the legitimate media and the fake news media. Good morning to them. A lot of good people here.

Secretary General Stoltenberg. Yes.

President Trump. Surprising.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization/Germany/Russia

Q. Mr. President, which countries did you want to spend more on NATO in particular?

President Trump. Just look at the chart. Take a look at the chart. It's public. And many countries are not paying what they should. And frankly, many countries owe us a tremendous amount of money for many years back, where they're delinquent, as far as I'm concerned, because United States has had to pay for them. So if you go back 10 or 20 years, you'll just add it all up. It's massive amounts of money is owed. The United States has paid and stepped up like nobody. This has gone on for decades, by the way. This has gone on for many Presidents. But no other President brought it up like I bring it up. And so something has to be done, and the Secretary General has been working on it very hard.

This year, since our last meeting, commitments have been made for over \$40 billion more money spent by other countries. So that's a step, but it's a very small step. It sounds like a lot of money, and it is. But it's a very small amount of money relative what—to what they owe and to what they should be paying. And it's an unfair burden on the United States.

So we're here to talk about that, and I'm sure it will be resolved. I have great confidence in the Secretary General. He's worked very, very hard on this, and he knows it's a fact. But I have great confidence in him and his representatives.

Would you like to say something?

Secretary General Stoltenberg. No. First of all, it's great to see you again, Mr. President. And good to have you here for a summit. And we are going to discuss many important issues at the summit. Among them is defense spending. And we all agree that we have to do more. I agree with you that we have to make sure that our allies are investing more. The good news is that allies have started to invest more in defense.

After years of cutting defense budgets, they have started to add billions to their defense budgets. And last year was the biggest increase in defense spending across Europe and Canada in that generation.

President Trump. Why was that last year?

Secretary General Stoltenberg. It's also because of your leadership, because of your carried message. And——

President Trump. They won't write that, but that's okay.

Secretary General Stoltenberg. No, I have said it before, and—but the thing is that it really has. And your message is having an impact, and we are going to build on that to make sure that we have further increases. You initiated last year that all allies are going to develop national plans on how to spend more on defense. And based on these national plans, we now estimate that European allies and Canada will add 266 extra U.S. dollars for defense from now until—

Participant. Billion.

Secretary General Stoltenberg. —billion U.S. dollars until 2024.

So this is really adding some extra momentum. It helps and we are moving in the right direction. But we still really owe—but we still have to do more, and that is what we're going to address after the summit later on today.

Let me also add that strong NATO is good for Europe, but it's also good for United States. The U.S. main purpose is in Europe—helps to protect Europe, but it also helps the United States project power to the Middle East, to Africa. And I think also that the clout—the military clout of Europe, the economic clout, the political clout—also is helpful in dealing with Russia. And we look forward to the meeting you're going to have with President Putin. And I think that leaders are also looking forward to your thoughts about the meeting with President Putin later on.

President Trump. Well, I have to say, I think it's very sad when Germany makes a massive oil and gas deal with Russia, where you're supposed to be guarding against Russia, and Germany goes out and pays billions and billions of dollars a year to Russia. So we're protecting Germany. We're protecting France. We're protecting all of these countries. And then, numerous of the countries go out and make a pipeline deal with Russia, where they're paying billions of dollars into the coffers of Russia.

So we're supposed to protect you against Russia, but they're paying billions of dollars to Russia, and I think that's very inappropriate. And the former Chancellor of Germany is the head of the pipeline company that's supplying the gas. Ultimately, Germany will have almost 70 percent of their country controlled by Russia with natural gas.

So you tell me, is that appropriate? I mean, we're—I've been complaining about this from the time I got in. It should have never been allowed to have happened. But Germany is totally controlled by Russia, because they will be getting from 60 to 70 percent of their energy from Russia and a new pipeline. And you tell me if that's appropriate, because I think it's not, and I think it's a very bad thing for NATO, and I don't think it should have happened. And I think we have to talk to Germany about it.

On top of that, Germany is just paying a little bit over 1 percent, whereas the United States, in actual numbers, is paying 4.2 percent of a much larger GDP. So I think that's inappropriate also. You know, we're protecting Germany, we're protecting France—we're protecting everybody. And yet we're paying a lot of money to protect.

Now, this has been going on for decades. This has been brought up by other Presidents. But other Presidents never did anything about it, because I don't think they understood it or they just didn't want to get involved.

But I have to bring it up, because I think it's very unfair to our country. It's very unfair to our taxpayer. And I think that these countries have to step it up; not over a 10-year period, they have to step it up immediately. Germany is a rich country. They talk about they're going to

increase it a tiny bit by 2030. Well, they could increase it immediately—tomorrow—and have no problem. I don't think it's fair to the United States.

So we're going to have to do something, because we're not going to put up with it. We can't put up with it. And it's inappropriate.

So we have to talk about the billions and billions of dollars that's being paid to the country that we're supposed to be protecting you against. You know, everybody is talking about it all over the world. They'll say: "Well, wait a minute, we're supposed to be protecting you from Russia, but why are you paying billions of dollars to Russia for energy? Why are countries in NATO, namely Germany, having a large percentage of their energy needs paid to Russia and taken care of by Russia?"

Now, if you look at it, Germany is a captive of Russia, because they supply. They got rid of their coal plants. They got rid of their nuclear. They're getting so much of the oil and gas from Russia. I think it's something that NATO has to look at. I think it's very inappropriate. You and I agreed that it's inappropriate. I don't know what you can do about it now, but it certainly doesn't seem to make sense that they paid billions of dollars to Russia, and now we have to defend them against Russia.

Secretary General Stoltenberg. You know, NATO is an alliance of 29 nations, and there are sometimes differences and different views and also some disagreements. And the gas pipeline from Russia to Germany is one issue where allies disagreed. But the strength of NATO is that despite these differences, we have always been able to unite around our core task: to protect and defend each other, because we understand that we are stronger together than apart.

I think that two World Wars and the cold war taught us that we are stronger together than apart.

President Trump. But how can you be together when a country is getting its energy from the person you want protection against or from the group that you want protection against?

Secretary General Stoltenberg. Because we understand that when we stand together, also in dealing with Russia, we are stronger. I think what we have seen is that——

President Trump. No, you're just making Russia richer.

Secretary General Stoltenberg. Well——

President Trump. You're not dealing with Russia. You're making Russia richer.

Secretary General Stoltenberg. Well, as I—I think that even during the cold war, NATO allies were trading with Russia, and then there have been disagreements about what kind of trade arrangements we should go after——

President Trump. We should. I think trade is wonderful. I think energy is a whole different story. I think energy is a much different story than normal trade. And you have a country like Poland that won't accept the gas. You take a look at some of the countries, they won't accept it, because they don't want to be captive to Russia. But Germany, as far as I'm concerned, is captive to Russia, because it's getting so much of its energy from Russia. So we're supposed to protect Germany, but they're getting their energy from Russia. Explain that. And it can't be explained. You know that.

Thank you.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization

Q. Mr. President, will you endorse article 5?

President Trump. What? Who?

Q. Mr. President, what will do if they don't spend more?

Q. What are the consequences if they don't spend more, Mr. President?

President Trump. They will spend more. I have great confidence that they'll spend more. I have great confidence.

Q. Will you change the military posture?

Q. Mr. President, sir, does something have to change on trade for you to keep your troop levels in Europe?

President Trump. I have great confidence that they will be spending more money, as they should be.

Q. Mr. President, why is it necessary to spend 10 times more than Russia for defense? Why is it necessary to spend 10 times more money on defense than Russia? You are a businessman.

President Trump. It's a shame they made that deal. Too bad. It's too bad. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:13 a.m. at the U.S. Chief of Mission's Residence. In his remarks, he referred to Gerhard Schröder, chairman of the board of directors, Rosneft.

Categories: Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters : Brussels, Belgium; Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials : North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Secretary General Stoltenberg.

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