

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2018

**Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Iván Duque Márquez of Colombia
and an Exchange With Reporters in New York City**

September 25, 2018

President Trump. Thank you very much. It's a great honor for me to be with President Duque, who had a tremendous victory. He won by a lot. They love him in Colombia. And it's an honor to have you with us. And I just want to congratulate you. That was a very big and powerful victory.

President Duque. Thank you, Mr. President.

President Trump. So the people are agreeing with what you're stand for—and what you do stand for. Very, very powerful against drugs and drug trafficking. And you've been a friend to the United States, and we look forward to working with you, Mr. President.

President Duque. Thank you so much, Mr. President. I appreciate those words, and I also want to thank you for your interest in the best of our country. We want to strengthen the ties between Colombia and the United States. We share democratic values. And we also share this important effort against illegal drugs throughout the world.

So I commend your words, and I thank for the response and the support we've gotten from your administration in Colombia.

President Trump. Thank you, Mr. President.

President Duque. Thank you so much, Mr. President.

President Trump. And good luck. Good luck.

Venezuela

Q. President Trump, have you thought about a military intervention to Venezuela—or in Venezuela?

President Trump. Well, we're looking very strongly at Venezuela. It's a horrible thing that's going on there. It's a very disruptive, dangerous—it's a horrible place right now. And this used to be—I remember not so long ago, Mr. President, that was the richest country in South America by a lot, and now it's a country that's going through tremendous turmoil. People are dying. People are being killed. They're also dying of hunger and lots of other things. The medical is in horrible shape.

We will always be looking at it. We have been looking at it. And we'll see what happens. But what is going on in Venezuela really is unacceptable. And I know from the standpoint of Colombia and other nations fairly close by, it's very unacceptable also.

Venezuela

Q. What's the most important thing for Maduro to do? What should Maduro do?

Q. Every option is still on the table, Mr. President? Every option is still on the table against Maduro's regime? Every option is it still on the table against Maduro's regime? Every option, including military option?

President Trump. But, see, Maduro—if you look at it, you're asking about the regime. The Maduro regime is obviously is not doing the job.

First of all, it's brutal, and people are seeing what's happening. It's a horrible, horrible thing to witness. It's one of the truly bad places in the world today. And there are some other pretty bad places. But it's not acceptable to us, and it's not acceptable to many of the surrounding countries. Many of those countries, including Colombia, are taking in refugees who are literally starving. They're literally starving.

It's having a big impact on other countries. So—and they're doing a very good job with what they have to work with. They don't have that much to work with, but they're doing a good job. They're trying to help.

Q. What do you want Maduro to do? What should Maduro do?

Colombia

Q. Is the United States—[inaudible]—Colombia's drugs policy?

President Trump. What I want—what I want and what we've discussed, and one of the reasons I was so happy to see the President's victory—that was a great victory, and there was a very worldwide, world-renowned victory because of his strong stance on drugs.

Now, if he comes through, we think he's the greatest. If he doesn't come through, he's just another President of Colombia. [Laughter] But I think he's going to come through. I really do.

President Duque. Let me add something there, Mr. President. And I think this is a very important message. Yesterday 130 countries signed this amazing declaration. So we're not going to drop the towel. And we want to continue the efforts against illegal drugs. It's not only prevention, but it's also dismantling the cartels. So we're very committed.

And since the first day of our administration, we've begun with very important policies to dismantle those cartels in Colombia. And also, we're going to face prevention.

And something very important, Mr. President, that I want to share with all the press corps here: We are going to sign a decree this week that allows the Colombian police to confiscate any of those in Colombian streets, because we don't want to see more consumers in Colombia. We don't want to see more families being destroyed by illegal drugs.

Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) Insurgent Group/National Liberation Army (ELN)

Q. Are you going to talk about FARC and ELN or the peace process?

President Trump. Are you asking me that question? We're going to be talking about everything.

President Duque. But let me——

President Trump. We'll be talking about everything.

President Duque. Mr. President, if I may take that.

President Trump. Go ahead.

President Duque. And this a very important message: ELN is a terrorist group that has been killing Colombian people. They have been introducing kidnappings in the last 17 months while they were negotiating with the past administration.

And I have said they have to put an end to all their criminal activities, and they have to free all the persons that are kidnapped. Otherwise, there will be no chance for any negotiation with them.

Q. President Trump, are there going to be more sanctions for Venezuela, Maduro, and his—[inaudible]?

President Trump. We're spending a lot of time and effort on Venezuela, a lot of time and effort. What is going on in Venezuela is not acceptable on a humanitarian basis, on any basis. So we're looking at that very, very strongly, yes.

Q. Would you—[inaudible]—at the U.N.?

North Korea

Q. When—how are the plans going for the second summit with Kim Jong Un?

President Trump. So we've been communicating, and we are doing very well with North Korea. And we have some very good feelings going on with North Korea, far greater than the media understands or knows. And I'm not blaming the media for that. Actually, in this case, I'm not at all, because we have been doing communication. Letters have been going back and forth, and conversations have been happening.

And I can only say—you know, look, in the end, who knows? Who knows? But I can say this: We're doing very well, far better than anybody would understand.

Now, if you just take a look at the outer signs: no nuclear testing, no missiles, no rockets, hostages back. We're getting back the remains of our great heroes from many, many years ago. Already, some have been notified. Some families have been notified that they found, in many cases, the grandfather, or whoever it may be, the family member. But we're getting back their remains.

And it was a really—Vice President Pence went to Hawaii, and he did an incredible job. That was one of the most beautiful ceremonies. I've had people come to me—in fact, just today they came to me and they said, that was one of the most beautiful ceremonies they've ever seen. The remains coming back, the way the military handled it, Mike's dignity, it was an incredible—really, a very important event, in my opinion. But it was so beautiful.

But many people have told me that. Many people have said that was one of the most beautiful things that they've seen, and it was very special. And we've gotten that back, and a lot more of our great heroes will be coming back. They're working very hard to do that.

I can only say—you know, I listen to commentators, and I'm not blaming them, because we can't tell them, and we don't want to tell them what's going on. But we've had communication that nobody will know about that is extraordinary.

Q. Mr. President, how—

President Trump. And if you look at just last year, at this exact time, my words were slightly different having to do with the events taking place in North Korea. Slightly different. I was going to point that out, but I didn't even want to. I didn't want to bring up the past.

But there's—

Q. Mr. President, how did—

Q. Could the same thing happen with Iran?

President Trump. Excuse me. But there's been a tremendous difference if you look at from one year to the next. A tremendous difference. And again, far greater than anybody really would understand, because we know what's happening behind the scenes.

Q. Mr. President——

Iran

Q. Could the same trajectory happen with Iran, where you criticized them very heavily today, but a year from now you could be talking to them?

President Trump. Well, I hope we have a similar trajectory. I think Iran should be something that happens. They're not doing well.

So when I became President, if you look at the day before or the day after, but if you look at that period of time—less than 2 years ago—everybody looked at Iran as they're just going to take over the Middle East.

I'd speak to General Kelly; I'd speak to everybody. Everybody would just—it was like: They're going to take over the Middle East. They're going to take over Syria; they're going to take over Yemen; they're going take over Iraq. They're going to take over everything.

And that's not happening. Remember the statement, "They're looking for the Mediterranean"? That's very far away. They wanted to have the Mediterranean as part of their doorstep. Not going to happen. It's not going to happen.

Q. Mr. President——

President Trump. And Iran is a much different country today than it was a year ago. Now they have riots in the street. They have horrible inflation, the worst in the world. They have—their currency is a disaster. Everything about Iran is failing right now.

They're, frankly, bringing back their warriors, their soldiers, because they have no choice, because their country is rioting in every city. They have other problems. They're not looking for the Mediterranean so much anymore.

So I think that, at some point, they're going want to negotiate. I have said "no" so far. It was me that said "no," not them. The media covered that incorrectly. But these are—that's relatively a minor mistake by the media. [*Laughter*] But it was me that said "no," not them.

And I think that at some point we will have meaningful discussions and probably do a deal. I don't see how it works for them otherwise, because otherwise, they're going to be in the worst economic trouble of any country anywhere in the world. Okay?

Q. Mr. President——

[*At this point, several reporters shouted questions.*]

President Trump. You don't mind this, do you? You don't mind this? Do you?

President Duque. No, no, no.

President Trump. I have to ask Colombia if he thinks—have you ever even thought about Iran? [*Laughter*]

See, the nice part about that—you can worry about drugs and do a great job, but you don't have to worry about Iran and various other places.

President Duque. We don't have to worry about that—[*inaudible*].

Q. President Trump, would do you think of sending troops to Colombia and maybe from there managing——

President Trump. Say it again. What?

Use of Military Force

Q. Would you think of sending troops to Colombia and maybe from there trying to manage the relationship with Venezuela? Maybe getting closer——

President Trump. I don't want to say that. I don't like to talk about military. Why should I talk to you about military? I'm going to tell you like President Obama—he used to say exactly what he was going to do, and then it would be 10 times tougher to do it. I don't do that.

[*Laughter*]

Q. But how——

[*Several reporters shouted questions.*]

President Trump. Quiet. Hey, excuse me. Just quiet for a second.

Q. I'm sorry.

President Trump. You're so—nice and easy, I'll come to you next. Okay?

Q. Okay. Thank you.

President Trump. Go ahead.

Colombia-Venezuela Relations

Q. President Trump, President Duque, insofar as the demands against Maduro in the International Court, are you going to support it as well?

President Trump. I can't understand your question. What?

Q. He—the President Duque is supporting a demand—a claim against Maduro in the——

President Trump. A claim? A claim?

President Duque. We're denouncing him at the International Court.

Q. His denouncement.

President Trump. Well, if he's denouncing them, that's fine. I mean, I'm denouncing him. Everybody is denouncing him. So if you're denouncing him, join the crowd. Right? [*Laughter*]

Yes, go ahead. Go ahead.

Venezuela

Q. President Trump, I'm sorry, I don't want to talk about the military action again, but how dangerous is Maduro's regime for national security? And what you are going to do against him to stop him?

President Trump. Well, it's dangerous for their security. It's dangerous for their people's security. It's a regime that, frankly, could be toppled very quickly by the military if the military decides to do that.

And you saw how the military spread as soon as they heard a bomb go off way above their head. That military was running for cover. That's not good. I don't think the marines would have run. What do you think, General Kelly, do the marines run when they hear a bomb go off?

White House Chief of Staff John F. Kelly. They don't know how to run.

President Trump. They don't know how. [Laughter] You know what they do? They run toward the bomb. Right? That's even better.

Supreme Court Nominee Brett M. Kavanaugh

Q. Mr. President, did you see Judge Kavanaugh's interview last night?

Q. Mr. President, what do think is the immediate response toward the——

President Trump. I saw Judge Kavanaugh last night.

Q. Can you give us some thoughts, sir?

President Trump. I think he's just a wonderful human being. I mean, I think it's horrible what the Democrats have done. It's a con game they're playing. They're con—they're really con artists. They're trying to convince—you know, they don't believe it themselves, okay? They know he's a high-quality person. They don't believe it. It's just resist and obstruct.

They're playing a con game, and they play it very well. They play it, actually, much better than the Republicans. They're lousy politicians, and they have lousy policy. They don't know what the hell they're doing. They want to get rid of ICE. They want to get rid of law enforcement. They don't want to take care of our military. They want to raise your taxes. But they're good at one thing—they're good at one thing: that's obstruction and resisting and con.

He's one of the highest quality people. You know, when he said that really what he was focused on was trying to be number one in his class at Yale, to me that was so believable. I understand college very well, and I understand being number one in your class, and I understand a lot of things. When he said that, I understood exactly what—he was so truthful. And I think it came out. I mean, I hope it came out.

But for the Democrats to be trying to make him into something, number one—let's be nice about it—that he's not. He's a high-quality person. He's a great intellect.

You're also not seeing him on his footing. This isn't his footing. He's never been here before. He's never had any charges like this. I mean, charges come up from 36 years ago that are totally unsubstantiated.

I mean, you, as watching this, as the President of a great country, Colombia, you must say, "How is this possible?" Thirty-six years ago? Nobody ever knew about it? Nobody ever heard about it? And now a new charge comes up, and she says, "Well, it might not be him." And there were gaps, and she said she was totally inebriated, and she was all messed up. And she doesn't know it was him, but it might have been him. "Oh, gee, let's not make him a Supreme Court judge because of that."

This is a con game being played by the Democrats. Also, take a look at the lawyers. These lawyers are the same lawyers that have been fighting for years. They keep fighting. Take a look at the lawyers. And it's a shame that you can do this to a person's life.

And I'll tell you, maybe even more important, who is going to want to go before this system to be a Supreme Court judge or to be a judge or to be even a politician? I can tell you that false accusation and false accusations of all types are made against a lot of people. This is a high-quality person.

And I certainly hope—I certainly hope—it would be a horrible insult to our country if this doesn't happen.

Q. Mr. President—

President Trump. And it will be a horrible, horrible thing for future political people or judges, anything you want. It would be a horrible thing. It cannot be allowed to happen.

And the Democrats are playing a con game, C–O–N. A con game. And it's a shame. And they know it's a con game. They know he's high-quality. And they wink at each other. They're winking. They know it's a con game.

Go ahead.

Senate Confirmation Hearings for Supreme Court Nominee Brett M. Kavanaugh

Q. Should the second accuser be allowed to testify on Thursday? Would you welcome that?

President Trump. Well, I look at the second accuser—the second accuser has nothing. The second accuser doesn't even know—she thinks, maybe, it could have been him, maybe not. She admits that she was drunk. She admits time lapses. There were time lapses.

This is a person and this is a series of statements that's going to take one of the most talented, one of the greatest intellects, from a judicial standpoint in our country, going to keep him off the United States Supreme Court.

You know, I said something this morning: He has the chance to be one of the greatest Justices ever in the United States Supreme Court. What a shame. And what a shame it is for the so many other people whose world that isn't. That's not his world, and it's not their world.

These are legitimate people. They're not in the world of con and the world of obstruct and the world of resist. He never thought this was even a possibility. He's startled. He can't believe this is happening.

His wife is devastated. His children are devastated. I don't mean they're, like, "Oh, gee. I'm a little unhappy." They're devastated. And it's because these Democrats—and they know. They know. When I see Schumer, who never even saw this woman, "I believe her 100 percent," and I see these other Senators that I deal with on a daily basis—I know them better than they know themselves—it's just a game for them. But it's a very dangerous game for our country.

Thank you very much. Thank you. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:32 a.m. at United Nations Headquarters. In his remarks, he referred to President Nicolás Maduro Moros of Venezuela; Chairman of the State Affairs Commission Kim Jong Un of North Korea; Kim Hak-song, Tony Kim, and Kim Dong-chul, U.S. citizens formerly detained by North Korean officials who returned to the U.S. on May 10; Boulder, CO, resident Deborah Ramirez, who has accused Associate Justice-designate Kavanaugh of sexual assault at a party they attended when they were undergraduate students at

Yale University; and Ashley Estes Kavanaugh, wife of Associate Justice–designate Kavanaugh, and their daughters Margaret and Liza.

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

Locations: New York City.

Names: Duque Márquez, Iván; Kavanaugh, Ashley Estes; Kavanaugh, Brett M.; Kavanaugh, Liza; Kavanaugh, Margaret; Kelly, John F.; Kim Dong-chul; Kim Hak-song; Kim, Tony; Maduro Moros, Nicolás; Obama, Barack; Pence, Michael R.; Ramirez, Deborah; Schumer, Charles E.

Subjects: Armed Forces, U.S. : Servicemembers :: POW/MIA remains, recovery efforts; Colombia : Counternarcotics and drug interdiction efforts; Colombia : President; Congress : Senate :: Minority leader; Congress : Senate :: Presidential nominations, confirmation process; Iran : International diplomatic efforts; Judiciary : Supreme Court :: Associate Justice; New York : President's visits; North Korea : International diplomatic efforts; Venezuela : International diplomatic efforts; Venezuela : Political unrest and violence; Venezuela : President; White House Office : Assistants to the President :: Chief of Staff; White House Office : Vice President.

DCPD Number: DCPD201800632.