

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2019

**Remarks Prior to a Meeting With First Lady Fabiana Rosales of Venezuela
and an Exchange With Reporters**

March 27, 2019

President Trump. Thank you very much. It's a great honor to have the First Lady of Venezuela. She's been through a tremendous—she's been through a lot, let's put it that way. She's been through what people don't want to have to go through and should never have to go through.

Her husband is a tremendous man who is working so hard. And it's very dangerous. It's dangerous stuff. We hear what's going on. We know exactly what's going on. Our Vice President, Mike, was there for a period of time and got to know your husband very well.

But I just want to say we're going to have a terrific conversation; we already have. And a lot of progress is being made. With all of the problems, a tremendous amount of progress is being made.

Venezuela was a country with tremendous potential and is still a country with tremendous potential. But people are starving. They're being killed. They're being beaten. What's going there is unfathomable to everybody that sees and everybody that gets reports. We're getting reports that are horrible.

The potential of Venezuela, if done properly and with democracy, would be incredible. It was one of the richest companies [countries],^{*} certainly one of the truly rich countries of the world, and now it's one of the poorest countries of the world.

You look at what's happened: Despite oil, the oil is not coming out. Everything is broken. They have no water. They have no electric. They have—the lights are out. In fact, I understand, just today they had a big blackout.

So we're very much in contact with your husband and with everybody else. And a lot of things are happening. Many things are happening. Please.

So, just in concluding, I want to say, again, to have you and your friends and representatives with us has been incredible. I know that you've also suffered tremendously. And I'd like you maybe to say a few words.

But, please, First Lady? I'd love to have you say a few words to the media.

First Lady Rosales. Thank you very much, Mr. President. It is an honor for me to be here. I thank you. I thank the Vice President. It was a pleasure meeting you as well. And, Mr. Bolton, it's an honor to count on you as we do.

Venezuela is going through a terrible crisis. The power crisis is very serious. Children are dying—are dying in hospitals. Children are dying because they have no food. Hospitals are in darkness. The crisis is serious.

I fear for my husband's life. Yesterday he was attacked. His life was attacked. Also, his Chief of Staff, Roberto Marrero, was kidnapped in a very violent and vile manner. Not only is he his Chief of Staff, he is our personal friend.

^{*} White House correction.

Yesterday, also, they detained his mother's cousin. He was accused of terrorism. And Gustavo Guaidó, his brother, was also accused. So they are hitting everything that is closest to him, trying in that way to destabilize him.

But what they don't know is that, what—when they do that, what they're doing is pushing us forward. We will not rest. We are here to save lives and to give back freedom. We want to save our children, we want to save our elderly, who are the ones who are suffering. And we are—this is what Venezuela is going through.

Venezuela is not alone. The U.S. is with Venezuela. The international community is with Venezuela. The world is with Venezuela. The world sees and the world hears the terrible consequences of this dictatorship. But Venezuela decided that this is the year of peace, and we are going to be able to get to go forward.

And we also want to warn the world that what we are seeing is a wave of attacks against the President. There's repressions. There's prison. And what they want is to attack him.

We're fighting for life and death. And we know that what will triumph in the end is life. I know that you will be part of this process. Thank you.

President Trump. Thank you very much. That's very well said. Beautifully said. I appreciate it.

Could you tell us about your husband? Something happened that's very terrible.

Romy Moreno de Marrero, wife of Interim President Juan Gerardo Guaidó Márquez's Chief of Staff Roberto Marrero. Well, my husband is the—he was at home last week. And at 2:00 a.m., the political forces of Nicolás Maduro entered in a brutal raid in our home. And he called me, like, at 2 a.m. He was, like, you know, like, desperate. There were, like, 16 people around trying to get by force in our home. They finally did, and we—you know, with lack of communication. And they destroyed our house, our child's room, everything. They planted guns and things. And this happened for 3 hours. It was a nightmare.

And after that, they kidnap him, and we didn't know anything about him for 6 days. They've been trying to delay the process, because we have no lights at all. So the electricity is not working, so we doesn't know anything. He was the second on board and a personal friend of Juan Guaidó. So this is a personal attack to his team, because they work together. They take decisions together. They were working together in the National Assembly.

So, as a family, we are afraid for his life. We haven't had any communication. We have a 7-year-old kid who doesn't know anything. And I just explained to him, "We can't go back." And I want to ask you, you know, help. Because we are fighting, but we can't do it ourself.

President Trump. So they took him, and he's in prison now?

Ms. Marrero. Yes.

President Trump. Do you know where he is?

Ms. Marrero. Yeah, well, we know the place, but we haven't spoken to him or seen him.

President Trump. No communication whatsoever?

Ms. Marrero. No communication at all.

President Trump. Okay.

We are with Venezuela. We are with your husband, as you know. And we are with the people that he represents, which is a big, big majority of the country. What's happening there should not happen and be allowed to happen anywhere. So we're with you a hundred percent, okay? Please give him our regards. It will all work out.

It's all going to work out. It always does. We're going to get it to work out. Thank you very much. It will be fine.

Steve [Steve A. Holland, Reuters].

Russia's Role in Venezuela

Q. Mr. President, what sort of complications does the Russian involvement now pose?

President Trump. Russia has to get out.

What's your next question?

Venezuela

Q. Mr. President, are you thinking of increasing pressure on Venezuela? And how will you do that?

President Trump. Say it?

Q. Are you thinking of increasing pressure on Venezuela? And how would you do that?

President Trump. Well, they've got a lot of pressure right now. They have no money. They have no oil. They have no nothing. They've got plenty of pressure right now. So we'll see. They have no electricity. And other than military, you can't get any more pressure than they have. Unfortunately, a lot of people are starving. They don't take the aid; Maduro won't take aid.

We've sent hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of aid to the border. He won't take the aid. He'd rather have his people starve than take the aid. I don't think that's good, even from a political standpoint. Even from a dictator's standpoint, I don't think that's good.

But there's a lot of pressure on them right now.

Venezuela

Q. How are you going to get them out, Mr. President?

Q. [*Inaudible*]—military?

Q. How are you going to get them out?

President Trump. We'll see. We'll see. All options are open. All—just so you understand, all options are open. Go ahead.

Q. Does that include military action?

President Trump. All options are open. Yes.

Q. Would you tell them it's better to let go now before things get much worse?

President Trump. I'm not going to tell them anything. They'll make their own decision.

Russia's Role in Venezuela

Q. Mr. President, have you—you've just said Russia needs to get out. Have you in any way communicated that through Mr. Bolton or through your representative at the United Nations?

President Trump. They know. They know very well. They know very well.

Go ahead. Next question.

Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act

Q. Is your staff opposed to you and your views on health care? Do you think——

President Trump. No, look, we're not talking about health care right now, but I will. The Republican Party is the—and you will see this very soon. Because Obamacare is a disaster. It's too expensive, by far. People can't afford it. And the deductible is horrible. So the premiums cost too much. The deductible is horrible.

The only difference between now and the other administration is that we're administering Obamacare very well. So we've made it better. But it's still horrible, no good. It's something that we can't live with in this country, because it's far too expensive for the people, not only for the country, but I'm not even thinking about for the country. It's too expensive. The premiums are too expensive. People are going broke trying to pay for it.

And the deductibles are averaging over \$7,000. So you have to spend \$7,000 before you get anything. That's a very unusual circumstance. So the deductibles are way too high.

Obamacare is a disaster. So we're going to be the party—and I said it yesterday, and I mean it a hundred percent—I understand health care now, especially, very well. A lot of people don't understand it. We are going to be—the Republicans—the party of great health care.

The Democrats aren't. They've let you down. They came up with Obamacare. It's terrible. I got rid of the individual mandate. That was the worst part of Obamacare, because people were forced to pay a lot of money to get health care that they didn't want. Okay? Now they don't have to pay that money.

People are, all over this country, thanking me. Every time I go out, they thank me. They don't have to pay a vast amount of money to have bad health care. So we got rid of the individual mandate. That was a big thing.

We will—you watch—we're going to be the party of great health care. And the Democrats have let you down. They've really let you down. Obamacare doesn't work. It's too expensive. And the—you take a look at everything with deductibles, it's a disaster. It's a disaster for our people. We're not going to allow it to go.

So we're coming up with plans. We have a lawsuit right now going, where phase one of the lawsuit terminates Obamacare—essentially terminates Obamacare. You know that. That's the Texas lawsuit. We think it will be upheld, and we think it will do very well in the Supreme Court. And if the Supreme Court rules that Obamacare is out, we will have a plan that's far better than Obamacare.

Thank you all very much. I appreciate it. Thank you. Thank you.

Venezuela

Q. Mr. President, do you have a timeline for Venezuela? Do you have a timeline for Maduro—[inaudible]?

President Trump. No timeline.

Q. No timeline?

President Trump. No timeline.

Q. Mr. President, on Venezuela, what do you hope the message is for the Maduro regime that she is sitting here in the Oval Office? What is it that you want to—

President Trump. I greatly appreciate that she's here. And she's been a tremendous representative for her country.

Q. And the message to Maduro?

President Trump. And she's meeting tomorrow with the First Lady of the United States, in Florida. They're meeting tomorrow.

Venezuela/U.S. Foreign Policy/Health Care Reform/Israel

Q. So that is a message that the United States is committed to seeing Venezuela—

President Trump. I'll tell you, the—if you look at what we're doing, you will see a commitment that few people have made. And frankly, this didn't have to happen in Venezuela. Past administrations, right here, should have been more forward thinking. This should never have happened in Venezuela. This is a tragedy.

You know, we're fighting all over the world for countries. We're 5,000, 6,000, 7,000 miles away. They never did anything with respect to Venezuela. Past administrations allowed this to happen.

I've inherited a mess, between North Korea and all of the problems we have all over the world—the entire Middle East—and Venezuela. These are things that never—they never should have happened. They never should have allowed to get to this point. But I'll fix it. We're fixing it all over the world. That's what we're going to do. Just like, in a different sense, we are going to fix health care, we're going to fix a lot of problems that nobody else was able to do.

And we just left, as you know, the Prime Minister of Israel. They're having a lot of hard times over there right now. But the Golan Heights, which every President promised they'd do, they never did. I did that—not only with respect to the Jerusalem and the Embassy, but also now the Golan Heights. They desperately need it. It was good timing. They desperately need it. They need the Heights.

Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:16 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former President Nicolás Maduro Moros of Venezuela, whose legitimacy was challenged by the U.S. Government, which recognized National Assembly President Guaidó as Interim President of Venezuela on January 23; and Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu of Israel. First Lady Rosales referred to U.S. National Security Adviser John R. Bolton. First Lady Rosales spoke in Spanish, and her remarks were translated by an interpreter.

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