

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2020

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Lenin Moreno Garces of Ecuador and an Exchange With Reporters

February 12, 2020

President Trump. Well, thank you very much. It's great to be with the President of Ecuador, and it's a—one of the most beautiful countries in the world—and perhaps equally as important, and maybe even more importantly, your great First Lady. Thank you very much for being here.

First Lady Rocío González de Moreno. Thank you.

President Trump. This is a tremendous honor. Some of the most beautiful landscapes in the world and one of the most beautiful places on Earth, they say. I've heard that for a long time.

And we are working on trade deals, we're working on military options, including the purchase of a lot of our military equipment. We do make the best equipment in the world, by far. And we're negotiating some very important pacts between Ecuador and the United States.

So, Mr. President, Madam First Lady, thank you very much. Thank you very much. Appreciate it. Please.

[At this point, President Moreno spoke in Spanish.]

President Trump. Thank you.

Q. Mr. President, on Roger——

[An interpreter translated President Moreno's remarks as follows.]

President Moreno. I would like to first thank everyone for—especially Mr. President, for his kindness and to invite us over to talk about these very important topics, topics which are common to both countries. I'd like to thank the President for the warmth with which he has greeted us.

And I have to stress the fact that our relationship between Ecuador and the U.S.A. is a relationship of fraternity that has been going—that dates back a very long time. We actually have taken the foundational principles of the U.S. to—as a basis for our own foundational principles to create the first Republic of Ecuador.

We are going to be discussing issues that are common to both nations, such as democracy, liberty, freedom, respect of human rights, the fight against organized crime, the fight against drug trafficking, the fight against corruption.

And we are going to also be speaking about the importance of investment, trade, technology transfer that are all common principles to us. We know that both our peoples want to be governed with justice and equality, and that is what both of us are striving for.

President Trump. We want to thank you very much. This is a great honor to be with you.

Okay. Do you have any questions? Yes.

Prosecution of Political Consultant Roger J. Stone, Jr./Investigation Into Russia's Interference in the 2016 Presidential Election

Q. On Roger Stone, sir. On Roger Stone: Isn't your tweet political interference?

President Trump. No, not at all. He was treated very badly. Nine years recommended by four people that—perhaps they were Mueller people. I don't know who they were. Prosecutors. And they—I don't know what happened. They all hit the road pretty quickly.

Look, you had somebody—just recently, you saw what happened. He got 2 months. He got sentenced to 2 months for leaking classified information at the highest level.

Q. Who's that that you're referring to?

President Trump. They treated Roger Stone very badly. They treated everybody very badly. And if you look at the Mueller investigation, it was a scam, because it was illegally set up. It was set up based on false documentation and false documents.

You look at what happened—how many people were hurt. Their lives were destroyed. And nothing happened with all the people that did it and launched this scam. Where's Comey? Why—where is Comey? What's happening to McCabe? What's happening to Lisa and—to Peter Strzok and Lisa Page? What's happening with them? It was a whole setup, it was a disgrace for our country, and everyone knows it too—everyone—including NBC, which gives a lot of fake news.

The fact is that Roger Stone was treated horribly, and so were many other people. And their lives were destroyed. And it turns out, if you look at the FISA warrants and what just happened with FISA, where they found out it was fixed, that it was a dirty, rotten deal.

So when you look at that, and you see what happened to Roger Stone—but think of it: A man leaks classified information—highly classified. They give him 2 months—Roger Stone—for doing—nobody even knows what he did. In fact, they said he intimidated somebody. That person said he had no idea he was going to jail for that. That person didn't want to press charges. They put him in for 9 years. It's a disgrace.

And frankly, they ought to apologize to a lot of the people whose lives they've ruined.

All right. Next question. Next question, please.

Q. But, sir, he pled guilty though, right?

President Trump. Go ahead.

Q. Mr. President, it's the first time that——

Q. Mr. President——

President Trump. Yes. Please, Steve [Steve A. Holland, Reuters].

Q. ——are you considering a pardon for Roger Stone?

Q. ——that—[inaudible]—official visit——

President Trump. Wait, wait, wait. What?

Q. Oh, sorry.

Prosecution of Political Consultant Roger J. Stone, Jr./Investigation Into Russia's Interference in the 2016 Presidential Election

Q. Are you considering a pardon for Roger Stone?

President Trump. I don't want to say that yet. But I tell you what: People were hurt viciously and badly by these corrupt people.

And I want to thank—if you look at what happened, I want to thank the Justice Department for seeing this horrible thing. And I didn't speak to them, by the way, just so you understand. They saw the horribleness of a 9-year sentence for doing nothing. You have murderers and drugs addicts, they don't get 9 years. Nine years for doing something that nobody even can define what he did.

Somebody said he put out a tweet, and the tweet—you based it on that. We have killers, we have murderers all over the place—nothing happens. And then, they put a man in jail and destroy his life, his family, his wife, his children. Nine years in jail, it's a disgrace.

In the meantime, Comey walks around making book deals. The people that launched this scam investigation—and what they did is a disgrace. And hopefully, it will be treated fairly; everything else will be treated fairly.

Q. Sir, aren't you speaking—aren't you speaking to the Attorney General through your tweets?

Q. Mr. Donald Trump—

President Trump. Yes, go ahead, please. Yes.

[At this point, a reporter asked a question in Spanish, which was translated by an interpreter as follows.]

U.S. Economy/Ecuador

Q. Mr. President, I'd like to congratulate you for the macroeconomic indicators; they're excellent. But in Latin America, the growth expectations are going down, especially for the growth in Ecuador, which is at zero. How can we help Latin American economies? How can we help Ecuador, Mr. President? And congratulations.

President Trump. Well, thank you. I love that question. I wish we had some people like that here. [Laughter] He's congratulating us on our great success as a country. And I want to congratulate you too, because what you've done in Ecuador and your President have done a fantastic job. Thank you very much.

Department of Justice

Q. Mr. President, are you concerned about the four prosecutors?

Q. Thank you, Mr. President, it's been 17 years since the last time—

President Trump. I'm not concerned about anything, concerned about nothing.

Q. Does it show that there's something wrong at DOJ?

President Trump. I'm not concerned about anything. They ought to go back to school and learn, because I'll tell you what, the way they treated people, nobody should be treated like that.

Q. Some Republicans have—

President Trump. Go ahead.

U.S. Economy/Ecuador-U.S. Relations

Q. Mr. President, thank you so much. It's been 17 years since the last time a President from Ecuador visited the White House and a President of the United States did an official visit with them—

President Trump. And when was it? When was it?

Q. Seventeen years ago.

President Trump. Wow.

Q. It was with George W. Bush in 2003. What changed now? What is your specific interest with Ecuador now?

And *usted*—also in Spanish now—*Presidente de Ecuador*—

[The reporter asked a question in Spanish, and no translation was provided. She then continued in English as follows.]

Q. Thank you, Mr. President.

President Trump. She did a good job. Go ahead. I think I understood it.

President Moreno. Ecuador has—after having gone through very hard times, and especially where—in regards to its international relationships—has decided to come together again with the international community and bring refreshed relationships to those who are—who have the same way of thinking as we do. We wanted to come closer to them.

[The interpreter paused the translation as two reporters began asking questions.]

Q. Mr. President, some Republicans have expressed——

Q. *Señor Presidente, buenas tardes*——

Q. Some Republicans have expressed—oops, sorry. Sure. Yes, of course.

President Trump. Don't interrupt. Don't interrupt.

[The interpreter resumed the translation of *President Moreno's* previous remarks as follows.]

President Moreno. We need to remember that the U.S.A. is the main trade partner for Ecuador. And this is not only in terms of trade, but because we share many common values such as the love for liberty, democracy, justice, solidarity, fraternity, and the respect of human rights.

Q. *Señor Presidente*——

President Trump. And I can tell you the thing that has changed from our standpoint: We're the number-one economy in the world, by far. We've never done better. We have the strongest markets we've ever had. The market is up very substantially today, 250 points, when I last looked.

And our country has never done better, militarily. We've rebuilt our military. We've cut our taxes; we've cut regulations at a level that nobody has ever been able to cut them.

And our country is doing great, and we've really reestablished a lot of relationships, but we have certainly reestablished it with Ecuador. Ecuador had a very unusual outlook on life, but with your great President, he realizes how important it is to get along with the United States.

And I want to just congratulate him, because our relationship is very good. He's made tremendous progress.

Ecuador-U.S. Trade/U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement

Q. Mr. President, are you open to working on a trade deal with Ecuador?

President Trump. Yes, sure, we will. And they have incredible product. And they grow it, and they make it, and we like it. So we will. Sure. And they need our product too.

Q. Sir——

Q. Is it going to be like the USMCA? That's your model for that?

President Trump. Well, that's a great model. We just finished that, and it's a great model with Mexico and with Canada. USMCA has been very successful. Already, the fruits are really taking place. You take a look at what's happening in terms of the kind of numbers we'll be doing with the USMCA. And this, on a much smaller scale, would be interesting. We are looking at that kind of a model, yes.

Venezuela

Q. And, on Venezuela, are you going to talk about that? And are you worried about the assault on Juan Guaidó yesterday when he arrived in Caracas?

President Trump. Yes, we'll be looking at and talking about Venezuela. And it's always close to our heart. We have millions of people from Venezuela living in the United States very successfully. They love our country, and they love Venezuela. We'll take care of the Venezuelan people.

Q. Sir, some Republicans said they hope you learned a lesson from impeachment. What lesson did you learn from impeachment?

President Trump. I—you weren't—you weren't chosen. Steve, go ahead.

Q. Thank you, sir. The Filipino President decided to——

[*A reporter began asking a question in Spanish, and no translation was provided.*]

President Trump. Excuse me, one second. We'll do this gentleman then you. Go ahead. Steve?

Philippines-U.S. Relations/Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) Terrorist Organization

Q. The President of the Philippines decided to sever a U.S. military pact with the United States. What was your reaction to that, sir? Is there anything to convince him otherwise?

President Trump. Well, I never minded that very much, to be honest. We helped the Philippines very much. We helped them defeat ISIS. I get along—actually, I have a very good relationship there. But I really don't mind. If they would like to do that, that's fine. We'll save a lot of money. You know, my views are different than other people. I view it as: "Thank you very much. We save a lot of money."

But if you look back—if you go back 3 years ago, when ISIS was overrunning the Philippines, we came in and, literally, single handedly were able to save them from vicious attacks on their islands. But I haven't heard exactly that, what you—the way you expressed the question.

And my relationship, as you know, is a very good one with their leader. And we'll see what happens. They'll have to tell me that.

Q. Mr. President——

Q. Thank you, and good afternoon, Mr. President.

President Trump. Hi. Good afternoon. So polite.

[*The reporter asked a question in Spanish and then repeated it in English as follows.*]

Border Security/Mexico's Immigration Enforcement Cooperation With U.S.

Q. My question is about security. We know that Ecuador has a problem with narcotraffic——

President Trump. Yes.

Q. ——and some other problems. So one of the topics you're going to talk about is security.

President Trump. That's right.

Q. I want to know what Ecuador wants to learn from the United States in that topic.

President Trump. Well, we're doing very well on our southern border. We're doing incredibly well. We built over a hundred miles now. It's substantially more than that, of wall, very powerful wall. It's got all sorts of protections on it. We have alarm systems, we have lighting systems, we have everything you can have. It's pretty much the ultimate of what you can do in terms of that. We have great protection. We have great protection with our military.

We've been dealing also with Mexico. Mexico has 27,000 soldiers on our southern border, and they've been great. And we just set another record. As you saw, the numbers have come way down in terms of people coming through our border. Way down. They're going to be very low.

And after the wall is complete, even in the areas where we're now over a hundred miles, incredibly, the traffic has virtually stopped. It's come to a halt. The wall has been a tremendous, tremendous thing.

So we'll have that finished by the end of next year. And sometime during next year, we'll have it finished. And we'll probably be up to close—by the end of this year, close to 400 miles of wall. And it's made a tremendous difference.

So we have great security. We'll be discussing with Ecuador their situation and their security. They do have a problem with the narcos, and that's not good. And we will be working with them to help.

Okay?

[*A reporter asked a question in Spanish, and no translation was provided.*]

2020 Presidential Election/New Hampshire Primary/Iowa Caucus Results

Q. Mr. President, why—[*inaudible*—]—nomination?

President Trump. One second. She's going to just answer the question.

Q. He's going to answer my question.

[*President Moreno spoke in Spanish, and no translation was provided.*]

President Trump. Last night, as you know, we had a very interesting election, and from the standpoint of the Republican Party and myself, but from the standpoint of the Republican Party, it was a tremendous success. I got more votes than any incumbent President in many decades. That includes a lot of Presidents. And it was really incredible, the love in New Hampshire.

And by the way, we did the same thing in Iowa, and we were actually able to quickly count our votes. We knew within minutes after the poll how many votes we had, unlike the Democrats.

So we had a tremendous success in Iowa. And last night we had a tremendous—a very powerful—success in New Hampshire. So it was a great honor.

But setting that record in both states was terrific, and now we're off to some areas that I like very much: Nevada, you look at that; South Carolina, you look at that. And I think we're going to do very well there. Probably setting up a major rally in South Carolina. We already have one in Nevada. So we'll be in those two locations, and we'll be at a few others also. But it's been incredible.

The rally we had in New Hampshire and in Iowa—again, it was almost the same; it was—they were both spectacular. You could have put them in a big stadium. We were already in large arenas, but you could have put them in a big stadium. We could have sold it out numerous times, so it was really, really terrific. And we appreciate it.

Q. Who is the Democratic front-runner, sir?

President Trump. Yes, we appreciate it.

2020 Democratic Presidential Candidates

Q. Who is the Democratic front-runner, sir?

President Trump. That's a good question. I would say Bernie looks like he's doing very well.

Q. Why is he surging?

President Trump. I think people like his message. He's got energy. His people have energy. But they like his message. But a lot of people don't like that particular message. But there is a group that probably agrees with it. And you know, whoever it is, we'll take them on. But it would certainly seem that Bernie Sanders has the advantage right now.

Q. Will you debate whoever wins? Will you debate whoever wins?

President Trump. Yes, sure. I look forward to it, actually.

Impeachment/News Media

Q. Lisa Murkowski, moments ago—Lisa Murkowski, earlier, said that you shouldn't have gotten involved with the Roger Stone case. She said it's just bad. Some Republicans have said they hoped you would learn a lesson from impeachment. What lesson did you learn from impeachment?

President Trump. That the Democrats are crooked. They've got a lot of crooked things going. That they're vicious. That they shouldn't have brought impeachment.

Q. Anything about yourself?

President Trump. And that my poll numbers are 10 points higher because of fake news like NBC, which reports the news very inaccurately, probably more inaccurately than CNN, if that's possible. "MSDNC" and you're "MS"—and if you take a look at NBC. No, I think they're among the most dishonest reporters of the news.

Okay. Thank you very much, everybody. I appreciate it. Thank you very much. Thank you. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:42 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Jonathan Kravis, Aaron S.J. Zelinsky, Adam Jed, and Michael Marando, lawyers at the Department of Justice who resigned from the prosecution team working on the Federal Government's case against Mr. Stone in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia February 11; former Department of Justice Special Counsel Robert S. Mueller III; former Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Director James B. Comey, Jr., and former Deputy Director Andrew G. McCabe; Lisa Page, former legal counsel to former Deputy Director McCabe; former FBI agent Peter P. Strzok II, in his former capacity as lead investigator of former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton's use of a private e-mail server and the investigation into Russia's interference in the 2016 Presidential election; comedian and former radio host Randy Credico; Nydia Stone, wife, and Adria Stone, daughter, of Mr. Stone; President Rodrigo Duterte of the Philippines; and Sen. Bernard Sanders. Reporters referred to Interim President Juan Gerardo Guaidó Márquez of Venezuela; and Sen. Lisa Murkowski. President Moreno and some reporters spoke in Spanish, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Categories: Interviews With the News Media : Exchanged with reporters :: White House; Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials : Ecuador, President Moreno.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Comey, James B., Jr.; Credico, Roger; Duterte, Rodrigo; González de Moreno, Rocío; Jed, Adam; Kravis, Jonathan; Marando, Michael; McCabe, Andrew G.; Moreno Garces, Lenin; Mueller, Robert S., III; Page, Lisa; Sanders, Bernard; Stone, Adria; Stone, Nydia; Stone, Roger J., Jr.; Strzok, Peter P., II; Zelinsky, Aaron S.J.

Subjects: Armed Forces, U.S. : Funding; Canada : Trade agreement with U.S.; Communications : News media :: Accuracy and fairness; Congress : Senate : Impeachment vote; Defense and national security : Border security; Economy, national : Improvement; Ecuador : President; Ecuador : Relations with U.S.; Ecuador : Trade with U.S.; Elections : 2020 Presidential and congressional elections; Elections : Voter participation; Government organization and employees : Federal regulations, review; Immigration and naturalization : Illegal immigration; Mexico : Border with U.S., infrastructure and security; Mexico : Immigration enforcement, cooperation with U.S.; Mexico : Trade agreement with U.S.; Philippines : President; Philippines : Relations with U.S.; Russia : 2016 U.S. elections, interference; Taxation : Tax relief; Terrorism : Counterterrorism efforts; Terrorism : Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist organization; Venezuela : Democracy efforts.

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