

Remarks by President Trump at Cabinet Meeting



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Remarks

Foreign Policy

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Cabinet Room

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THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. I'd like to begin by condemning the heinous attack on innocent Syrians with banned chemical weapons. It was an atrocious attack. It was horrible. You don't see things like that. As bad as the news is around the world, you just don't see those images.

We are studying that situation extremely closely. We are meeting with our military and everybody else, and we'll be making some major decisions over the next 24 to 48 hours. We are very concerned when a thing like that can happen. This is about humanity. We're talking about humanity. And it can't be allowed to happen.

So we'll be looking at that barbaric act and studying what's going on. We're trying to get people in there. As you know, it's been surrounded. So it's very hard to get people in because not only has it been hit, it's been surrounded. And if they're innocent, why aren't they allowing people to go in and prove? Because as you know, they're claiming they didn't make the attack.

So if it's Russia, if it's Syria, if it's Iran, if it's all of them together, we'll figure it out and we'll know the answers quite soon. So we're looking at that very, very strongly and very seriously.

I'd also like to provide an update on trade negotiations. We have a situation with China where we have a very good relationship with China, and I think we'll maintain that relationship. I'm very good friends with President Xi. I have great respect for President Xi. And as you know, I spent two days in China. The President spent two days with us at Mar-a-Lago, in Florida. And they were four great days.

With that being said, China has been taking advantage of the United States for many years, really, if you look at it since the start of the World Trade Organization. And they have really done a number on this country.

And I don't blame China. I blame the people running our country. I blame Presidents, I blame representatives, I blame negotiators. We should have been able to do what they did. We didn't do it; they did. And it's the most lopsided set of trade rules, regulations that anybody has ever seen.

With that being said, we have many of them. NAFTA was a horrible deal. We're renegotiating it. We'll see what happens. But we're strongly renegotiating NAFTA. If you look at the European Union, they have tremendous barriers — trade barriers. We, essentially, have bad deals with everyone.

We're close to finishing a deal with South Korea, which was a horrible deal. It was going to give us 200,000 jobs. Well, that didn't exactly happen. It gave them 200,000 jobs. We lost jobs. And it was a horrible deal, and that's being renegotiated. And we have a long way to go, but we've made a tremendous progress.

We're fairly close on NAFTA, and if we don't make the right deal we'll terminate NAFTA and we'll make the right deal after that. But we have a chance to make a deal on NAFTA. And as I said, the North Korea and South Korea situation, which complicates it — the deal that we have with South Korea, I think, is going to be — I think it's going to be a very fair deal. We want a fair deal. And we don't have fair deals.

North Korea, by the way, as you've probably seen — and we've been in touch with North Korea — we'll be meeting with them sometime in May or early June. And I think there'll be great respect paid by both parties and hopefully we'll be able to make a deal on the denuclearization of North Korea. They've said so; we've said so. Hopefully, it will be a relationship that's much different than it's been for many, many years.

This should have been done by other Presidents and they've decided they didn't do it. They couldn't have done it. But it would have been a lot easier if it were done 5 years ago, 10 years ago, 20 years ago. A lot easier than now. But we have a meeting that is being set up with North Korea. So that will be very exciting, I think, for the world. I think it's going to be a very exciting thing for the world.

We're going to be talking about opioid today — opioid destruction and drug destruction. As you know, we strengthened up our southern border. Last year, we had record-low numbers. This year, they've gone up to a certain extent. It might be because our economy is good and people are trying to come into our good economy. But we're putting the National Guard and military at the border. We're beefing up the Border Patrol, who've done a fantastic job. ICE has done a fantastic job, and we will take care of that situation.

We need a wall. Whether you're a Republican or Democrat, we need a wall. And it will stop your drug flow. It will knock the hell out of the drug flow. And it will stop a lot of people that we don't want in this country from coming into our country. But right now, we're putting the military and we're putting the National Guard, and we're going to have very strong borders. We have strong borders now, but they're going to be much stronger.

And with that, the Cabinet meeting will begin. We're going to be discussing a lot of different elements of what's going on. The country is doing very well. We've created 3 million jobs since the election. We have 700,000 jobs in the last number of months. The numbers are starting to come out from companies, corporations. They're doing incredibly well. It's very solid. Our country is on very solid footing.

When we do a deal with China, which, probably, we will. If we don't, they'll have to pay pretty high taxes to do business with our country. That's a possibility. But if we do a deal with China, if during the course of a negotiation they want to hit the farmers because they think that hits me, I wouldn't say that's nice. But I tell you, our farmers are great patriots. These are great patriots. They understand that they're doing this for the country. And we'll make it up to them. And in the end, they're going to be much stronger than they are right now.

Don't forget, farmers have been trending downward over an eight-year period. Their numbers have trended downward, in some cases significantly.

So between NAFTA and China and all of the things we're doing, we're going to make them much better than they've ever been. But during this period of time — Sonny Perdue is here. You understand exactly what I'm saying. There will be a little work to be done. But the farmers will be better off than they ever were. We'll take a little while to get there, but it could be very quick, actually. But I say, it's not nice when they hit the farmers specifically because they think that hits me.

So with that being said, we're doing very well on trade and trade deals. I think deals will be made. I think we're going to make deals with a lot of countries that have taken advantage of us. And we will be reporting back to everybody, and we'll start our Cabinet meeting.

And thank you all, media, press. Thank you all for being here.

Q Mr. President, do you still want to get out of Syria? Do you still want to get out of Syria, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: We're going to make a decision on all of that, in particular Syria. We'll be making that decision very quickly, probably by the end of today. But we cannot allow atrocities like that. Cannot allow it.

Q Does Putin bear responsibility for this?

THE PRESIDENT: He may. Yeah, he may. And if he does, it's going to be very tough. Very tough.

Q He'll pay a price if —

THE PRESIDENT: Everybody is going to pay a price. He will. Everybody will.

Q Mr. President, is U.S. military action off the table?

THE PRESIDENT: Excuse me?

Q U.S. military action, is it off the table as it relates to Syria?

THE PRESIDENT: Nothing is off the table. Nothing is off the table.

Q Is there some doubt as to who was responsible for this, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, they're saying they're not. But to me, there's not much of a doubt, but the generals will figure it out probably over the next 24 hours.

Thank you, everybody. Thank you. Thank you.

Q Thank you, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Jon.

Q Mr. President, are you concerned about the stock market (inaudible)?

THE PRESIDENT: No, not at all. No. The market is up today very substantially. No, not at all.

Don't forget, our country is going to be much stronger when this is all finished, just so you understand. You know, these trade deals are horrible. Our country is going to be much stronger when this is finished. Okay? So that's very important.

Thank you. Thank you.

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11:48 A.M. EDT