

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2018

Remarks on the Arrival of United States Citizens Formerly Detained in North Korea and an Exchange With Reporters at Joint Base Andrews, Maryland

May 10, 2018

Q. Mr. President, how big a moment is this?

The President. This is a great honor. Hopefully, everything is going to work out at the highest level. We want to thank Kim Jong Un, who really was excellent to these three incredible people. They are really three incredible people. And the fact that we were able to get them out so soon was something—really a tribute to a lot of things, including a certain process that's taking place right now. And that process is very important.

So we will see what happens. We have a meeting scheduled in a very short period of time. You'll be hearing about it soon. We have the location set. And we will see if we can do something that people did not think was going to happen for many, many years, and a lot of bad things could have happened in between.

So I just want to say this is a special night for these three really great people. And congratulations on being in this country. Thank you.

Q. How does it feel to be home?

The President. How does it feel to be home? Tell them.

Fairfax, VA, resident Kim Dong-chul. It's like a dream. And we are very, very happy.

Q. How were you treated?

Q. How were you treated by the North Koreans?

The President. How were you treated? You have to give them the answer.

Mr. Kim. Yes, we were treated in many different ways. For me, I had to do a lot of labor. But when I got sick, I was also treated by them.

The President's Proudest Achievement/North Korea

Q. Mr. President, is this your proudest achievement, Mr. President?

Q. [Inaudible]—your thinking going into your meeting Kim Jong Un?

The President. My proudest achievement will be—this is a part of it—but will be when we denuclearize that entire peninsula. This is what people have been waiting for a long time. Nobody thought we could be on this track in terms of speed.

So I'm very honored to have helped the three folks. They're great people. You know, I got to speak to them on the plane. These are great people; they've been through a lot. But it's a great honor. But the great—the true honor is going to be if we have a victory in getting rid of nuclear weapons.

Q. [Inaudible]—Secretary of State?

North Korea

Q. Does tonight change how you will approach your meeting with Kim Jong Un?

The President. No, not at all. We very much appreciate that he allowed them to go before the meeting. It was sort of understood that we'd be able to get these three terrific people during the

meeting and bring them home after the meeting. And he was nice in letting them go before the meeting. I mean, frankly, we didn't think this was going to happen, and it did. So you could say we're a little bit——

[At this point, many reporters began asking questions.]

It was a very important thing to all of us to be able to get these three great people out.

Q. What you think of the timing?

The President. And I must tell you, I want to pay my warmest respects to the parents of Otto Warmbier, who was a great young man who really suffered. And his parents have become friends of ours. They are spectacular people. And I just want to pay my respects. I actually called them the other day, and Mike called them, also—Mike Pence. And they are really incredible people.

Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo/North Korea

Q. *[Inaudible]*—that North Korea is planning——

The President. I think our Secretary of State, despite the fact that the New York Times said he was missing—he was in North Korea—but I think our Secretary of State has done a fantastic job. Mike, did you know that you were missing? *[Laughter]* They couldn't find you. They couldn't find him. They couldn't find him because he was in North Korea. You know, it's——

North Korea

Q. Have you spoken with Kim Jong Un since—*[inaudible]*?

The President. I don't want to comment on whether or not I spoke to him.

Q. President Trump, is this enough to tell you that Kim Jong Un is an honest broker? Or was this just to get to the negotiating table?

The President. Well, we're starting off on a new footing. This is a wonderful thing that he released the folks early. That was a big thing. Very important to me. And I really think we have a very good chance of doing something very meaningful. And if anybody would have said that 5 years ago, 10 years ago, even a year ago, you would have said that's not possible. So a lot—I will say this: A lot of very good things have happened.

Q. *[Inaudible]*

The President. Say it?

Q. Why Kim decided to free these prisoners now?

The President. I really think he wants to do something. I think he did this because I really think he wants to do something and bring that country into the real world. I really believe that, Jon [Jonathan Karl, ABC News]. And I think that we're going to have a success. I think this will be a very big success.

It's never been taken this far. There's never been a relationship like this. And we're starting from here. But I really think a lot of progress has been made. And we'll see what happens. We're talking about a few weeks. I guess many of you will be with us. But some great things can happen, and that's what we hope.

So I want to thank you all. It's very early in the morning. I think you probably broke the alltime, in history, television rating for 3 o'clock in the morning—that I would say. But I want to just congratulate. These are three great people, and congratulations. Thank you, everybody. Thank you.

Q. Have you gotten any sleep or were you too excited?

Q. Will the meeting be held in Singapore? Is that the——

The President's Travel Plans

Q. Do you want to visit North Korea one day?

The President. It could happen.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:02 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Chairman of the State Affairs Commission Kim Jong Un of North Korea; Kim Hak-song, pastor, Oriental Mission Church in Los Angeles, CA; Tony Kim, former accounting professor, Pyongyang University of Science and Technology; and Wyoming, OH, residents Fred and Cindy Warmbier, whose son Otto was returned from 17 months of detention by North Korean authorities on June 13, 2017, and died on June 19, 2017. Mr. Kim spoke in Korean, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : U.S. citizens detained in North Korea, arrival at Joint Base Andrews, MD; Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters :: Joint Base Andrews, MD.

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