

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2018

Remarks During a Roundtable Discussion on Immigration and Border Security and an Exchange With Reporters at the United States Customs and Border Protection's National Targeting Center in Sterling, Virginia

February 2, 2018

Secretary of Homeland Security Kirstjen M. Nielsen. Well, Mr. President, thank you very much for coming to the National Targeting Center. It's my honor to introduce you to some of the men and women who work here and work in executing your mission to protect our country.

The President. Great.

Secretary Nielsen. As you heard on the watch floor, we have about 70 terrorists a day that we see trying to get here through some method of transportation. That's 500 a week, 2,000 a year. So needless to say, these men and women are very busy every day watching, not just cargo, but passengers and other sorts of traffic.

What we wanted to do today was just go around a little bit and give you a sense of the challenges that we face, and how you, in your recent framework—[*inaudible*]*—this to Congress, and help us to—[inaudible]—ways to solve those problems.*

As you know, last year, you asked the men and women of DHS, "How can we make our country more secure and what is it that you need to do that?"

The President. Right.

Secretary Nielsen. The framework, we thank you for, and thank you for your leadership. It does just that. We are very confident that the border security measures and the efforts to close the loopholes will give us the tools that we need.

So without further ado, I wanted to turn it over to the Acting Commissioner of CBP, who will tell us a little bit more about the challenges we face at the border.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection Acting Commissioner Kevin K. McAleenan. Thanks. Good to see you, sir.

Mr. President, I'd like to set the stage a little bit with our illegal activity numbers at the border from last year, which really tell the story of why we need to continue investing in border security, as well as closing the legal loopholes in our immigration system.

The numbers that you see here, sir, you can see the arrests at the border of people trying to cross illegally; they dropped dramatically early in your administration after your Inauguration.

[*At this point, Acting Commissioner McAleenan continued his remarks, concluding as follows.*]

Acting Commissioner McAleenan. The last number I'd like to show you, sir, is we've had a 45 percent increase in assaults on the men and women protecting our border, the law enforcement personnel risking themselves every day to protect our citizens.

The President. Why is that? Why? How come?

Acting Commissioner McAleenan. Well, we think there's two reasons. One, we've got this increase in narcotics. We've gotten more effective at securing our border, and so we're dealing with a more determined, a more sophisticated, and a more dangerous population with these

smugglers crossing, at the same time as we're seeing this increased flow of families and unaccompanied children.

So we really believe these dual trends require investments both in smart border security, like a border wall system, but also closing the legal loopholes that we face in our immigration——

The President. And where are the drugs coming from? Mostly the cocaine, heroin, meth—where's it coming from?

Acting Commissioner McAleenan. The cocaine is produced in South America.

The President. Which particular country?

Acting Commissioner McAleenan. In Colombia and Peru, primarily. Trafficked up through Central America or on maritime means into Mexico and coming across our land border, primarily. We also see significant heroin production in Mexico, with opium poppy growth in Mexico, then produced. And then, the fentanyl and the synthetics are coming from China, usually through our land border or through mail and express consignment.

Those are the vectors we need to shut down. And it's both between ports of entry with Border Patrol, but also at our ports of entry with CBP officers.

The President. And what are Mexico and Colombia and these other countries—what are they doing about it? Nothing?

Acting Commissioner McAleenan. Actually, sir, we're partnering closely with these governments to increase their effectiveness. In Mexico, in particular——

The President. Do you think they're really trying?

Acting Commissioner McAleenan. Well, I think we've had a significant improvement in our dialogue and in our effectiveness with Mexican law enforcement and military in the last year.

The President. Okay.

Secretary Nielsen. You've actually just signed the INTERDICT Act, which we thank you for. That's very helpful. And we continue to work with Congress on additional authorities, particularly on the fentanyl issue with the mail.

The President. Yes?

Secretary Nielsen. So thank you, Kevin.

The President. That's a big issue.

Acting Commissioner McAleenan. Sure. Thank you.

The President. Thank you.

Secretary Nielsen. Before we turn it over to the Acting Director of ICE, I just wanted to introduce the President to give him an opportunity to give some remarks. And then, we'll go back and talk more about enforcement.

The President. Okay, I will. And this is quite a facility, actually incredible. I'd love the media to take a look at that, and maybe you can show them—unless there's some reason you can't—but it'd be just as an overall glance. I will say to the press, what I've just seen is pretty incredible. Pretty incredible. Too bad we need it, but we need it. There's no doubt about it.

The National Targeting Center has really—we've really put a lot behind it, and we are going to be putting a lot more behind it. You hear—just from what you've heard right now, it's a very

big subject. And it's something, if we don't watch it, it's going to get worse, and it's going to get out of control. We're not going to let that happen.

I think one of the keys to stopping the drugs is very tough on the pushers and the drug dealers. I think we can have all the blue ribbon committees with all of our friends and all of the people on their wonderful blue ribbon committee, but I'm not a believer in blue ribbon committees. I think you need tough—really tough—enforcement. And you need to get tough on the pushers, and you have to get tough on the dealers—beyond tough—the tougher the better.

The officials here today each took an oath to defend his country or her country. As Congress considers immigration reforms, these are the most important voices for us to listen to, by far. These are the men and women that really know what's happening and that know how to keep America safe. They're real professionals. I was just with them. They're real professionals.

And again, I hope you can get at least a glimpse of that incredible room.

Secretary Nielsen. Yes, it's very impressive.

The President. That is some room with a lot of great people. That's why today we've opened this meeting to the cameras and to the media. I know you don't like to be here, but here we are together. And nobody is going to shout out any questions, I know that.

So I just—I welcome the media. I want the media to hear this, because this is a big, big problem, and it's—takes a big solution to solve a big problem. The lawmakers can also hear the truth through you. We're going for big funding, and we're going to be expanding these buildings, not only this building, but these buildings.

In their presentation today, you'll hear everyone explain the reforms that they need from Congress, including securing the border—that's also a wall. A real wall, not a little wall like some people said, "Let's just build a little wall." They have them; they don't work. You need a real wall that will work 99.9 percent. Securing the border, closing loopholes, ending chain migration, and canceling the visa lottery. I assume everyone agrees with that, right? I know you agree with it though. I know that for a fact.

These are men and women who are really charged with keeping out criminals, stopping terrorists, interdicting narcotics, and protecting our workers and our taxpayers—protecting Americans. I want to thank you all for being here. I want to thank you for the incredible job you've been doing. It's tough, and you don't get a lot of backup from Congress or from different parties.

I will tell you, the Republican Party is with you a hundred percent. We really want to get this solved. We want strong borders. We want to give you laws. We want to stop the catch-and-release nonsense that goes on.

Secretary Nielsen. Yes, sir.

The President. You catch somebody, and you release them. And you know they're bad. You look at the numbers where they're coming from, Kevin. They're coming in—they're pouring in from other—El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, all over. They're just pouring into our country. And we've stopped it, but the laws make it very tough.

If we had the right laws passed in Congress, your job would be——

Secretary Nielsen. Much easier.

The President. A hundred percent easier. [*Laughter*]

Secretary Nielsen. Much easier.

The President. I mean, it would be a whole different job. But we have jobs where, if you catch somebody, you can't do anything. We have court systems that don't work. We have everything bad, and we're going to make everything good. And that's what we're here for, and that's what we've been working on very hard. And I think with you, Secretary, we're going to get there. We're going to get there fast.

Secretary Nielsen. Yes, sir.

The President. So I just want to let you know that the Trump administration is with you folks a hundred percent. You have not been backed up properly, and everybody knows it. For political reasons, for lots of different reasons. But the Trump administration is with you. We're going to clean up our borders. We're going to have great people come into our country. They're going to come in based on merit. They're going to come in for lots of good reasons. But we're going to have great people come into our—we're going to stop what's going on. We're going to stop it fast, and we're already stopping it to an extent. But we are going to stop it.

And the big thing is, we have to stop with the drugs.

Secretary Nielsen. Yes.

The President. Because you go down to any law enforcement agency, you go down to the precincts, and you say, what percentage of your crime is drug related? And it's usually numbers like 70, 75, 80 percent. It's just a massive number.

And these countries are not our friends. You know, they—we think they're our friends and we send them massive aid. And I won't mention names right now, but I look at these countries, I look at the numbers we send them—we send them massive aid, and they're pouring drugs into our country, and they're laughing at us. So I'm not a believer in that. I want to stop the aid. I want to stop the aid. If they can't stop drugs from coming in—because they could stop them a lot easier than us. They say, "Oh, we can't control it." Oh great, we're supposed to control it.

Secretary Nielsen. Right.

The President. So we give them billions and billions of dollars, and they don't do what they're supposed to be doing. And they know that. But we're going to take a very harsh action.

So Secretary, you take over. I'd like to hear from the rest of your people.

Secretary Nielsen. Yes, thank you. So, we have just a quick—to follow up on what Kevin said and what you just said, sir—some graphics on how border walls work. That's the bottom line. We've seen it, we have evidence, we know that they work.

The President. Good.

Secretary Nielsen. We're going to build you one.

The President. Good.

Secretary Nielsen. So we're working with Congress. You've just requested a \$25 billion trust fund. We have a very specific and targeted way in which we will use that money to build a border wall system. Just not just that infrastructure, but the technology and personnel that go with it.

The President. Okay.

Secretary Nielsen. And then, to your second point, we're going to turn over to Acting Director Homan of ICE. As you know, the loopholes that Tom faces, day in and day out, and our officers do is the fact that, once we apprehend somebody, we have difficulty under the current laws and loopholes detaining them and then removing them from the country. And that's got to stop.

The President. Will this be cleared up by the legislation we're potentially working—

Secretary Nielsen. What you have requested, yes, sir.

The President. —if we can get the Democrats to approve anything, you know?

Secretary Nielsen. Yes, sir.

The President. It's pretty tough. They can't even approve citizenship, okay? They don't—they can't approve anything. But if we can get them to approve something, will all of this, which we desperately need for the people in this building and for law enforcement—will this be part of it?

Secretary Nielsen. Absolutely, yes.

The President. Because we just don't have the right laws.

Secretary Nielsen. No. We have to close these loopholes. We cannot keep the border secured without them.

The President. But it's all included. It's got to all be included, right?

Secretary Nielsen. Yes, sir. Yes, sir.

So Director Homan, would you like to tell us a bit more?

Assistant Secretary of Homeland Security and Acting Director of Immigration and Customs Enforcement Thomas D. Homan. Yes, first of all, I want to say thank you, Mr. President, for the 20,000 men and women of ICE.

The President. Thanks, Tom.

Acting Director Homan. For the American heroes sitting behind you, we thank you for letting us do our job.

A 45-year low on border crossings is not a coincidence. That just shows you that when we're allowed to enforce law, we're going to have an impact.

As the Commissioner said—

The President. So you have a 45-year low in border crossings?

Acting Director Homan. Yes, sir.

The President. That's a great number. But we're still unhappy about it, right?

Secretary Nielsen. We're going to do something about that.

The President. I'm very unhappy. I'm very unhappy. Think of it. A 45-year low in border crossings, and I'm unhappy about it. But that's impressive nevertheless. But you'll do much better. Good luck. [*Laughter*]

Acting Director Homan. So as the commissioner said—

Secretary Nielsen. Still 10,000 a day.

Acting Director Homan. —we've made a lot of progress this year. There's some things holding us up, as the Secretary—there are loopholes, there are certain judicial decisions that prevent us from doing our jobs.

[*Acting Director Homan continued his remarks, concluding as follows.*]

So if you're a child from Mexico, and you enter the country illegally, after you're screened through for trafficking, once we ascertain—the Border Patrol ascertains you're not a victim of

trafficking, they can be immediately returned to Mexico. However if you're from Central America, and you are apprehended by the men and women behind you, and you're not a victim of trafficking, we can't remove them quickly. They have a whole judicial process.

The President. Because the laws are no good, right?

Acting Director Homan. Because the——

The President. Our laws.

Acting Director Homan. Our laws need to be fixed.

The President. What about their laws where they don't take them back? Because you also have countries that won't——

Secretary Nielsen. We're going to talk about that in a little bit as well. Yes, sir.

The President. That's another problem.

Secretary Nielsen. Yes, it is.

The President. All right.

Acting Director Homan. We'll talk about that. We've made great progress this year, but what we want is changes to these loopholes so we can treat all the children the same. Because once you release a child from Central America that's going to claim asylum, most of them, once they get to court—if they get to court, if they show up at court—most of them don't get asylum, so they're released in the community, and very few of them are ever removed, because they're in the wind.

The President. What percentage show up to court?

Acting Director Homan. I can tell you that about 3.5 percent of UACs apprehended by the Border Patrol were eventually removed. So that shows you that's a huge loophole.

[*Acting Director Homan continued his remarks, concluding as follows.*]

If you're a family and want to come to the United States illegally, you'll be detained by ICE for a couple weeks, you'll get your vaccinations, you get your three squares a day, only to be released in the community. Most will not show up in court, and for those who do show up in court——

The President. And how many eventually go out?

Acting Director Homan. They all go out.

The President. No, they get out.

Acting Director Homan. The judges order we cannot detain them over 20 days. So they get released——

The President. So many of the people never leave the country?

Acting Director Homan. Absolutely.

The President. They get lost in the country, and that's it, right?

Acting Director Homan. Absolutely. So we need to address those court decisions. And——

The President. I mean, I'll just tell you for the media, this doesn't make sense at all for anybody. This was made up by people that don't know what they're doing. And this isn't like this in other countries. You try staying in Mexico. You go and do things in Mexico, they throw you out fast.

You look at other countries, they have strong controls. We have no controls. And a lot of it is Congress's fault, and we're going to get it changed.

Go ahead, Tom.

Acting Director Homan. And because of these loopholes, it continues to drive more illegal immigration. It entices more families and children to come.

The President. Yes.

Acting Director Homan. And it's just not about enforcing the law, sir, this is about saving lives. Children are dying, families are dying, they're dying at the border. The border tried over 2,000 saves last year, people that were in dire straits. People are dying.

We saw the tractor-trailers incidents. If we don't fix these loopholes, we're going to entice others to make that dangerous journey. So it's just not about law enforcement, it's about saving lives.

The second challenge I want to talk about are detention challenges. I just said, you don't want—we certainly don't want to get back to catch-and-release. However, because of these loopholes, we are at catch-and-release with—

The President. But you have it now. So how bad is it, catch-and-release? Like, forget it, right?

Acting Director Homan. For family units and UACs, it's bad. That's why we need these loopholes fixed.

As far as other detention—let's talk about detaining adults. Let's talk about detaining criminals. I'm not fan of noncooperative jurisdictions; you may have heard that. We've got jurisdictions in this country that choose politics over public safety. They will release a criminal alien back into the public. Releasing a public threat back into the public is just bad policy. And they like to—

The President. We're talking about sanctuary cities?

Acting Director Homan. Yes, sir. Sanctuary cities do a lot of things. None of them are very good. First of all, it's a public safety issue. When you release a public safety threat back in the community, they're going to reoffend. Most of them will reoffend. Anybody can Google recidivism rates and see that.

[*Acting Director Homan continued his remarks, concluding as follows.*]

And also, since we have to go down to a home or to a place of business to arrest this criminal alien that the county wouldn't let us arrest, we're going to find others. So those—again, for those jurisdictions to say we're protecting immigrant communities, number one, you're putting a danger back into the community. Number two, there's going to be more ICE officers in your community who are not allowed to work in your jail.

For these communities that want to say ICE should focus on public safety, then help me. Let me in your jail. If you're really serious about—

The President. As soon as we get the new legislation passed that you—that everybody is talking about—if it happens, because, you know, it's a big question as to whether or not it's going to happen—and we have a March 5 date, so we'll see.

Secretary Nielsen. Yes, sir.

The President. And we're dealing with both sides, but you know, could very well not happen, which is incredible. But if we do get that, will we have most of the things that you need in terms of detention, release, everything else?

Acting Director Homan. If we can have Congress act on a sanctuary city, if we can have them act on our detainer authority and make detainees legally viable—for instance, give these sheriffs the immunity, the protection; if they honor our detainees, the U.S. Government will protect them. Most of the sheriffs—I've talked to the National Sheriffs' Association, I've talked to the Major County Sheriffs' association. The police officers in this country support us. They want to honor the detainees. They just need legislation, so——

The President. See, these are things you can't even negotiate. I mean, you can't negotiate this with the Democrats——

Secretary Nielsen. No, sir.

The President. ——because this is stuff for safety. And it's not like, "Oh, gee, let's, you know, work a halfway deal." You have such bad—you have such bad procedures, you're forced to do everything that you people were taught not to do, when you think about it.

So there's not a lot of negotiation on this kind of thing.

Secretary Nielsen. No, we have to close—we have to close this.

Acting Director Homan. And two final points, sir. The last thing I'll say about these noncooperative jurisdictions: They, again, entice illegal entry. If they do not think that alien-smuggling organizations in Central America and Mexico are not using sanctuary cities as a selling point—they're saying, "Look, we can get you to San Francisco for this much money, and we'll get you to one of these places where you can even get arrested for committing a crime, and they're not going to help ICE take you into custody."

Now, I'll leave you with this one thought: This room is full of law enforcement officers that know how to fix this problem. We saw the 45-year low. We have the willpower; we have the knowledge in this room. We just need the willpower of a Congress to make some tough decision to give us what we need to fix this problem once and for all. I've been doing this for 34 years. We've got to stop kicking this can down the road and fix it.

The President. Are you maybe the closest now because the attitudes are with us? Because of this administration—I mean, I'm with you a hundred percent. Are you now closer? Because you've had some administrations wouldn't even think of this stuff.

Acting Director Homan. Absolutely. We've got an administration now and a President who will let us do our job. We're enforcing the laws enacted by Congress. We need Congress to make a few changes, close some loopholes, and we can fix this once and for all. I think the American people——

The President. But this is all being put in the legislation that what we're doing now.

Secretary Nielsen. Yes, sir. They're proposing your framework——

The President. It's one big, beautiful proposal.

Secretary Nielsen. It is.

The President. And that's it, right?

Secretary Nielsen. That's right.

The President. And we're not negotiating?

Secretary Nielsen. No. We are not. [Laughter]

The President. Not this kind of stuff. Not law enforcement, right?

Secretary Nielsen. No.

The President. Because there's nothing you can negotiate.

Acting Director Homan. Right. And I want to thank the Department of Justice—Mr. John Cronan sitting next to me, Department of Justice, have stepped up.

The President. Hi, John.

Acting Director Homan. They're working very closely with ICE to hold these jurisdictions responsible. And they're helping us with our litigations. I want to thank the Department of Justice——

The President. John, how are you doing with litigation on sanctuary cities? Because I read about it so much where, you know, everybody is suing and nobody wants the sanctuary cities except a couple of politicians that—in the local areas—they fight hard for a sanctuary city, and it's unsafe. How are you doing on——

Acting Assistant Attorney General for the Criminal Division John P. Cronan. In the Criminal Division, we haven't been dealing with civil litigation with respect to that, but we have been certainly seeing that problem. MS-13 is our top priority right now. They're—and they're getting here because they're able to take advantage of the weaknesses at our border. They're able to take advantages of prior——

The President. And you throw them out, but they come back as fast you throw them out.

Acting Assistant Attorney General Cronan. That's the danger, sir.

The President. Different ones or the same?

Acting Assistant Attorney General Cronan. We—well, we haven't gotten to the point where they've come back yet—probably yet, sir—but I can give you one good example. We had a takedown a few months ago, Operation Raging Bull—there were 214 MS-13 arrests in the United States; 198 of them were foreign nationals. Of that, only 5 had legal status in the United States. And of the 193, 64 of them had illegally crossed the border as unaccompanied children. Most of whom were then, now, adults by the time they committed the crime.

So just that one takedown, Operation Raging Bull, we saw the consequences of people being able to get here across the border through sanctuary cities or through a porous border.

The President. So what makes them so evil, more so than other gangs even? And there are some pretty bad gangs. What is it exactly? They come from a certain part of the world. What makes them so evil?

Acting Assistant Attorney General Cronan. It's a unique threat, sir. MS-13 is massive. It has about 10,000 gang members across 40 States in the United States. But it's also the most violent transnational organization——

The President. And why is that though?

Acting Assistant Attorney General Cronan. They're—it's indiscriminate killing. They are engaging in rape, robbery, extortion, murder, often just for the sake of it. It's not necessarily a gang that's connected with drug trafficking for the sake of drug—to fund it. They're committing these acts for the sake of the indiscriminate, violent, heinous killings. They're attacking their victims with chains, bats, machetes. They recruit children to be their murderers. They gang-rape young girls and sell them for sex.

It's an awful, awful thing that is a—our top priority.

The President. And because of the laws we have, we have to put up with it, right?

Acting Assistant Attorney General Cronan. Well, we're aggressively going after them, sir.

The President. No, you have to. Just do what you have to do. But in theory, because of the laws that we have—the weak and just terrible laws that we have—we have to live with this is at a much bigger pace than we would normally.

Secretary Nielsen. I mean, yes.

The President. I mean, you'd be able—Tom, you'd be able to get them out really quickly if we had the right laws.

Acting Director Homan. Yes.

Secretary Nielsen. Yes, we need to change the inadmissibility and removability to include gangs. I mean, they're—as was just described, they're only here to commit violence. They need not come into our country to do that.

Acting Director Homan. And the connection is clear. These loopholes are causing more MS-13 members to come to this country, either as UACs or as adults. But we need to close these loopholes.

The President. So let me ask you, of the 214 or so people, how many of them are good, wonderful people that can be wonderful citizens of this country someday? What would you say would be the percentage?

Acting Assistant Attorney General Cronan. I would say low, sir. They're members of a gang that operates to commit murder, and they terrorize our communities. They're holding our neighborhoods hostage.

There was a—gang violence in this country is a terrible problem. There was a town in North Carolina that had to cancel their Fourth of July parade this year because they cannot put on the parade because of threat of gang violence. It's terrorizing our neighborhoods, and our citizens are being held hostage.

The President. What about the local police? How are they doing with it?

Acting Assistant Attorney General Cronan. They're doing what they can, but the problem is the volume. When the criminals are able to get here, it's a large problem.

Now, the Department of Justice—the Attorney General—is dedicating resources to this. He has announced the surging of hundreds of new U.S. attorneys to specifically focus on violent crimes in immigration. He has sent additional prosecutors to our southwest border. They were down there on detail to focus on an emphasis on enforcing immigration and criminal laws.

The President. So we're throwing a lot of MS-13 out—and jail—but a lot of them are getting out, and they're coming back in—and different people—but they're coming back in.

Acting Assistant Attorney General Cronan. Exactly.

The President. Incredible.

Acting Assistant Attorney General Cronan. When we don't enforce our immigration laws, MS-13 is able to just reconstitute its jailed members in the U.S. or released members in the—released from the U.S. with more members who are able to cross our borders.

Secretary Nielsen. They recruit from across our borders to bring folks specifically in to join the gangs.

The President. And our Democrat friends don't understand this?

Acting Assistant Attorney General Cronan. Sir, it's a problem that can be certainly solved with—largely with this legislation. We'll still need to do our work here in terms of locking them up in the U.S. But because MS-13 is based and operating in El Salvador, and that's largely where this murderous mission is being directed by El Salvadorian prisons, it's not enough just to enforce our laws in the United States. We need to stop them from coming here.

Secretary Nielsen. And actually, sir, if we could turn it over the Deputy Secretary of State Sullivan to talk a little bit about this other challenge, which is the countries taking them back.

Deputy Secretary of State John J. Sullivan. You've mentioned it, Mr. President. Once we've caught them, we're not going to release them. We need to send them back where they came from. And that's been a problem with some countries. And that's the job at the State Department, working with DHS, to convince those countries that have been uncooperative—

The President. How many of those countries are there?

Deputy Secretary Sullivan. I'm going to turn it over to Assistant Secretary Risch. He's got the statistics of—

Assistant Secretary of State for Consular Affairs Carl C. Risch. It's a moving number, sir. It's getting better, Mr. President.

The President. Well, we've taken a much tougher stand. And you know, we give aid to a lot of these countries, and they wouldn't take anybody back. And we said, we're not giving you aid anymore—which, frankly, we probably shouldn't do anyway.

Assistant Secretary Risch. Yes, sir. We—

The President. We give aid to everybody. So how many countries are there? Who are the worst offenders?

Assistant Secretary Risch. The worst offenders, numerically—countries like China, for example—

The President. Yes?

Assistant Secretary Risch. —has a long history of not taking back their removal cases. But most recently, in September, we started a visa sanction plan with Guinea, Eritrea, Sierra Leone, and Cambodia. And we're seeing some progress there. Visa sanctions do work in these cases, sir. And we're seeing that there's people going back to these countries that would not have gone back a year or two ago.

The President. So if they don't take them back and—you know, those are unusual names, because you think in terms of South America more so than you do Asia. But if they don't take them back, we'll put sanctions on the countries. We'll put tariffs on the countries. They'll take them back so fast, your head will spin. We'll just tariff their goods coming in, and they'll take them back in 2 seconds. You have a lot of people from those countries, and they'll take them back.

We've had a very weak policy. We bring them back; they say, "We don't want them." And why should they? They've killed five people. Why would they want them? And we will do something with regard to sanctions and tariffs, where they will—your head will spin how fast they get taken back. Okay? Every country is the same.

And the other is, we give a lot of aid to some of those countries. And to those countries, we'll stop giving aid, and they will take them back instantaneously. Okay? You just have to let us know just who they are.

Assistant Secretary Risch. Yes, sir.

The President. A lot of ways to handle it. But you can only handle it economically, because otherwise—you know, you're not going to force them in. And they'll be—that's so easy to solve. It sounded difficult, but it's not. It's—that's an easy one. [Laughter]

Okay, good. So you'll work on that. John, you'll work on that.

Deputy Secretary Sullivan. Yes, sir.

Secretary Nielsen. So I think we'd like to thank the press. We appreciate you being here. We're going to stay for a few more minutes.

White House Chief of Staff John F. Kelly. Sir, at this point, we're going to get into some highly sensitive, even classified, discussion. So if the press could prepare to leave.

The President. To the press, if you could go back and tell the Democrats they really have to vote on this, because otherwise, this is going to go on for a long time, and we can't let this happen to our country. Thank you.

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Policy/Immigration Reform

Q. How are those negotiations going?

The President. I would say we want to make a deal. I think they want to use it for political purposes, for elections. I really don't—I really am not happy with the way it's going from the standpoint of the Democrats negotiating. And DACA is something that should absolutely be easy to do. And I don't think the Democrats want to take care of the DACA recipients. I don't think they want to take care.

So when you ask, "How's it going," we want to make a deal. I want to make a deal because of this stuff. We need protection in this country. We have people coming into this country—MS-13 and others—that the likes of which we've never seen come into a country. So I think that we are trying to make a deal. We're going to see. But the Democrats, I really believe, they don't want to make a deal. And think of it: They've given up on DACA, and that's supposed to be theirs. It's ours—because we're the ones that are taking care of DACA, not them. So we'll see what happens. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:09 p.m. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the audio was incomplete.

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Immigration and naturalization : Reform; Immigration and naturalization : Visa policy, U.S.; Justice, Department of : Criminal Division, Acting Assistant Attorney General for the; Justice, Department of : Sanctuary cities, efforts to combat; Law enforcement and crime : Gang violence, prevention efforts; Law enforcement and crime : Illegal immigration, deportation of criminals; Mexico : Border with U.S., infrastructure and security; State, Department of : Consular Affairs, Assistant Secretary for; State, Department of : Deputy Secretary; Virginia : President visits; Virginia : U.S. Customs and Border Protection in Sterling; White House Office : Assistants to the President :: Chief of Staff.

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