

*Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2018*

## **The President's News Conference With Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany**

*April 27, 2018*

*President Trump.* Thank you very much. Today I'm honored to welcome Chancellor Angela Merkel back to the White House. Over the past year, I have enjoyed getting to know the Chancellor very well through many productive calls, discussions, and meetings. We have a great relationship.

Chancellor, I want to congratulate you once again on your election victory, fourth term in office. It's really something. Congratulations.

We're also pleased to have our newly confirmed United States Ambassador to Germany, Richard Grenell, an outstanding man, and he's with us today. And, Richard, congratulations. Do a great job. And I know you will. Thank you.

This confirmation was long overdue. We've been waiting a long time for Richard to get his clearance, and he got it. And it's going to be special. But we have a lot of people that are awaiting approval. And the Democrats have been treating us extremely unfairly, and they're going to have to move it along.

For decades, the alliance and friendship between Germany and the United States has advanced the cause of peace, prosperity, and freedom. Today, our nations face a wide array of shared challenges and opportunities, and I am confident that we will meet them together with the same strength and resolve that has always defined the United States-German friendship.

This afternoon I want to congratulate the Republic of Korea on its historic summit with North Korea. We're encouraged by President Moon and Kim Jong Un's expressed goal of complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. I will be meeting with Kim Jong Un in the coming weeks. We look forward to that. And hopefully, it will be productive.

I want to thank Chancellor Merkel for her leadership in our campaign of maximum pressure on the North Korean regime, which has helped us to reach this important step, this moment where we are right now. It's taken a long time—many, many decades—to get here. Let's see what happens.

We seek a future of peace, prosperity, and harmony for the whole Korean Peninsula, unlocking not only a brighter future for the people of Korea, but for the people of the world. However, in pursuit of that goal, we will not repeat the mistake of past administrations. Maximum pressure will continue until denuclearization occurs. I looked forward to our meeting. It should be quite something.

In our meetings today, the Chancellor and I discussed Iran. The Iranian regime fuels violence, bloodshed, and chaos all across the Middle East. We must ensure that this murderous regime does not even get close to a nuclear weapon and that Iran ends its proliferation of dangerous missiles and its support for terrorism. No matter where you go in the Middle East, wherever there's a problem, Iran is right there.

As we eradicate what little remains of ISIS in Syria, we must also ensure that Iran does not profit from our success. To prevent this outcome, it is essential that our coalition and regional partners step up their financial and military contributions to the anti-ISIS efforts. Some of

these countries are immensely wealthy, and they're going to start paying for it and paying for this tremendous help that we've given them.

The Chancellor and I also had a productive discussion about the security of Europe and the responsibility of European nations to properly contribute to their own defense. We addressed the need to strengthen NATO and the NATO alliance by ensuring that all member states honor their commitment to spend 2 percent—and hopefully, much more—of GDP on defense.

It is essential that our NATO allies increase their financial contributions so that everyone is paying their fair share. We look forward to seeing further progress towards improved burden sharing. And a lot of people have stepped up; a lot of countries have stepped up, and they're going to have to continue to do so. A tremendous amount of additional money has been raised for NATO over the past 16 months, and I'm proud to have helped. But they have to keep going.

In this age of international crime, smuggling, terrorism, and trafficking, it is also essential that we have strong border security and immigration control. This is fundamental to national defense.

Also vital to our security and that of our allies is America's ability to maintain a strong and robust manufacturing base, which we really are doing in the United States. We have additional steel plants opening. Steel plants are expanding. Aluminum is doing great. A lot of things are happening that were never going to happen before.

That's why we must have a fair and reciprocal trading relationship with our friends and partners. We have a trade deficit in goods with the European Union of approximately—hard to believe—\$151 billion a year, including a \$50 billion annual trade deficit in autos and auto parts. I'm committed to working with Chancellor Merkel to reduce barriers for United States exports to remedy these trade imbalances and deepen our economic ties.

We also welcome the Chancellor's partnership in promoting major reforms to international organizations like the World Trade Organization—which has not treated the United States well—to protect sovereignty and ensure fairness.

The close cooperation across multiple fronts—military, intelligence, economic, academic—is critical to the defense of our civilization as we know it. And the close friendship between the German and American people enriches the lives of millions and millions of our citizens.

Chancellor, thank you again for visiting the White House. It's an honor to have you. Our alliance is strong and thriving. And together, we will overcome shared obstacles, seize upon shared opportunities, and build an incredible future for our country and our people.

Thank you very much. Thank you. Chancellor, thank you very much.

*Chancellor Merkel.* Thank you very much. I would like to thank you for the very warm reception here in the White House and for giving us this opportunity to have an exchange of views. This is my first visit after the reelection to a country outside of Europe, and I thought it was very important to underline that, for Germany, the transatlantic ties are of prime importance. We are very much aware of the fact that these transatlantic ties are, for us, of crucial—of, indeed, existential—importance. These transatlantic ties have given a great contribution to our reunification.

The first part of my life I spent on the other side of the Iron Curtain. And the fact that it was possible for our country to reunite is essentially due to the United States and their contribution. And this will be most important also for our future cooperation, cooperation that is more urgently needed than ever in view of the turbulences all over the world.

So Germany will continue to be a reliable partner in NATO, in our alliance; is a reliable partner within the European Union. All the more so, since today, we fight against nuclearization of Iran, against terrorism, against ISIS in Iraq and Syria, against terrorism in Afghanistan or in Africa. And we depend, urgently, on each other.

Today we meet at a point in time where it has become very clear that the strength of the American President—where he really saw to it that the sanctions against North Korea are abided by, are respected—has opened new possibilities, opened new ways. This first meeting between Kim Jong Un and the South Korean President Moon is a first step on a road that will, hopefully, lead into a better future. We Germans know only too well what it means after years of separation, after years of division, to have these first contacts.

But we will continue to be vigilant, to see to it that the nuclearization is stopped, of North Korea, and that a nuclear-free zone is established in—on the Korean Peninsula. We think that this is essential.

We will have to see, also, in—our fight against the Iranian attempts to become nuclear will go on. We are of the opinion that the JCPOA is a first step that has contributed to slowing down their activities in this particular respect, to also establish a better verification and monitoring process. But we also think, from a German point—perspective, that this is not sufficient in order to see to it that Iran's ambitions are curbed and they're contained.

It is most important to see that Iran, after all, is trying to exert a geopolitical influence in Syria, in Lebanon, and in Iraq. And we're—we have to see to it that this attempt at influence is curbed, is contained, and that beyond JCPOA, reliability can be established. And I think that Europe and the United States of America ought to be in lockstep on this or to work together very closely also to end the terrible bloodshed in Syria and to bring about a solution for the region as a whole.

Beyond that, and over and above that, we also addressed the task that we see ahead on defense. Germany, in 2019, is going to earmark a share of 1.3 of its GDP on defense. That has been an increase over the past few years. We haven't yet met the target where we should be, but we are getting closer to the target to the guideline that we've set out for ourselves in Wales.

On trade, I think it's most important to see that very close relations on trade exist between Germany and the European Union, on the one hand, and the United States on the other. We want fair trade. We want a trade that is in line with the multilateral trading system of a WTO.

But we also acknowledge that, for many, many years, WTO has not been able to bring about international agreements. So bilateral agreements may well replace that. That's something that we, on behalf of the European Union, already have done and have negotiated with a number of countries over the past few years. So I can well envisage such negotiations with the United States as well.

But obviously, that has to be reconciled. And I would also like to point out that Germany, on the one hand, has very close trade relations with you. The President, obviously, is not satisfied with the trade surplus; we have already been able to reduce that—our trade surplus, that is, with the United States—but we still have a long way to go.

But the United States, also due to the tax reform, again, has become a very interesting place to invest for our companies. And we can say with great pride that not only hundreds of thousands of cars are exported from Germany to the United States, but that from the U.S. to the rest of the world, hundreds of thousands of cars that are built here in the States are exported to the rest of the world with—creating American jobs, and I believe that the workers here have very good working conditions. So that, again, is another bond that ties our two countries together.

We will continue to discuss those trade issues. We will have the NATO meeting in the summer. We will meet again there. And let me say, in conclusion, that apart from the political relations that are very close and—well, we sometimes may look at issues differently. But generally around—on the basis of friendship, on partnership, we are linked by ties in the world of science, in the world of culture.

We still have the largest—host the largest number of troops. Ever since 1945, about 17 million members of the U.S. military were stationed in Germany, and a lot of them have established very close ties, very close friendships with Germans. And I'm delighted to see that now the Ambassador can very soon, when he's in Germany, work on this basis. And we're delighted that we finally have an Ambassador. Thank you.

*President Trump.* Thank you very much, Angela. Thank you very much.

All right, we'll take some questions. Blake Burman [Fox Business Network]. Yes? Blake.

### *North Korea*

*Q.* Thank you, Mr. President, Chancellor Merkel. I'll ask a couple questions of the President first. I want to ask you—I'll step over; it's crowded in here. I want to ask you about a couple comments that you made in the Oval Office earlier in which you said, about North Korea, that they played the U.S. in the past like a fiddle, but that's not going to happen to us.

Do you—as it relates to, hopefully, getting peace on the Korean Peninsula, denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula—do you feel as if you need to be the closer in that deal? Do you want to be the closer in that deal? Or do you think that's something that is shared by all of the major stakeholders, all of the world leaders within that region?

And secondly, indulge us if you might: You said that the relationship with North Korea has been strong—or one of the words you used. Have you spoken with Kim Jong Un himself? Or do you plan on speaking with him——

*President Trump.* Well, I don't want to comment on that——

*Q.* Do you plan on speaking with him before?

*President Trump.* ——but we have a very good working relationship. We're setting up a meeting. Things have changed very radically from a few months ago, you know, the name-calling and a lot of other things. We get a kick every once and a while out of the fact that I'll be watching people that failed so badly over the last 25 years explaining to me how to make a deal with North Korea. I get a big, big kick out of that.

But we are doing very well. I think that something very dramatic could happen. They're treating us with great respect. And you know, what's going on with South Korea—and I think President Moon of South Korea was very generous in saying that we helped make the Olympics a great success, because of the fact that, as you know, there was a tremendous animosity, there

was a tremendous problem going on. And all of a sudden, people started buying tickets because—whole different feeling when North said, "We'd love to go to the Olympics."

So a lot of good things are happening with respect to North Korea. President Obama told me—when I had the one meeting with him—he said: "That's your biggest problem. That's going to be the most difficult thing you have." And honestly, I wish it was handled earlier. I wish it were handled by another administration years ago. I'm not just talking about President Obama. I go back to any administration you want. But over the last 25 years, this should have been handled a long time ago, not now. This should not have been left for me to handle.

But we will handle it. We're handling it well. And hopefully, there will be peace for North Korea, South Korea, Germany—I mean, everything is included—Japan. The Chancellor has been very helpful in the maximum pressure campaign, as I said. Really, very helpful. So have many other nations.

President Xi of China has been really good at the border. Everyone is surprised at how tight he clamped down. Everyone said that he'd just talk about it, he wouldn't do it. Well, he did it, and he did it out of a relationship that we have and also out of the fact that we're negotiating trade deals, and I think that's also very important to him. Hopefully, we'll come up with something that's good for both countries.

So I think some very good things can happen with respect to North Korea. We're setting up meetings now. We're down to two countries, as to a site, and we'll let you know what that site is.

Do you have a question for the Chancellor?

Q. Just to follow up real quickly, do you feel like it's your responsibility for this to eventually get settled between North and South Korea?

*President Trump.* I think I have a responsibility. I think other Presidents should have done it. I think the responsibility has fallen on the shoulders of the President of the United States. And I think we have—I think I have a responsibility to see if I can do it. And if I can't do it, it will be a very tough time for a lot of countries and a lot of people.

It's certainly something that I hope I can do for the world. This is beyond the United States. This is a world problem, and it's something that I hope I'm able to do for the world. Okay?

Please.

Q. Thank you. And Chancellor—

*[At this point, Chancellor Merkel made brief remarks in German, and no translation was provided.]*

Q. Chancellor Merkel.

*[Chancellor Merkel made brief remarks in German, and no translation was provided.]*

Q. Sorry.

*Chancellor Merkel.* Sorry, sorry.

Q. No worries. Thank you very much. I'm just wondering if you've been given any assurances that the European Union will be exempt from steel and aluminum tariffs come

Tuesday, the May 1 deadline. Did President Trump tell you what he may or may not do?  
Thank you.

*President Trump.* Tough question.

*Chancellor Merkel.* The President will decide. That is very clear. We had an exchange of views on the current state of affairs of the negotiations and the respective assessments on where we stand on this. And the decision lies with the President.

*President Trump.* Okay?

*Chancellor Merkel.* Mr. Ross [Andreas Ross, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung ], please.

[*The reporter asked a question in English as follows.*]

### *Iran*

Q. Thank you. I have a question for the Chancellor but I'd like to start with a question on Iran for you, Mr. President.

After a long day of talks with you, President Macron went to Congress, warned of a new war in the Middle East, and asked the world and the United States to respect the sovereignty of all countries, including Iran. In the absence of a new agreement, are you prepared to use military force to rein in the nuclear program in Iran? Or do you have another plan B that is not an agreement and not military force?

*President Trump.* I don't talk about whether or not I'd use military force. That's not appropriate to be talking about. But I can tell you this: They will not be doing nuclear weapons. That I can tell you. Okay? They're not going to be doing nuclear weapons. You can bank on it.

Okay. Please.

[*The reporter asked a question in German, which was translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

Q. Madam Chancellor, only a year ago, people in Berlin were very much concerned about President Trump not being ready to show toughness against Russia. Now you've come to Washington with the concern that a new round of sanctions against the so-called oligarchs may well be detrimental to the German economy. Have you asked the President to exempt German companies from these sanctions? And are you generally worried that the United States—because the President is trying to be toughest with President Putin—may well change completely and may well be treating Russia too harshly without coordinating with you?

*Chancellor Merkel.* Well, we've discussed Ukraine, and here we worked together very closely against the illegitimate actions of Russia due to, for example, annexation of Crimea and also the situation they caused in eastern Ukraine. I'm very pleased to say that we worked very closely with the American administration in complementing the Minsk format.

And the sanctions very much are a thing of the Congress, and we worked together with the representative of the administration here also and very closely with the Treasury. We exchange views on what sort of secondary effects that may have. And looking at the conflicts we have with Russia, for example, in Syria, there is a wide degree of agreement, and no one is interested in not having good relations with Russia. But wherever there are conflicts, wherever there are certain things happening, as for example, in Ukraine, we have to call a spade a spade. And the principle of territorial integrity of a country such as Ukraine is one that needs to be upheld and that needs to be enforced.

Q. But, Madam Chancellor, the exchange, was it satisfactory on these issues between America and Europe? Is it as closely aligned as you want?

*Chancellor Merkel.* Yes. Whenever I have questions, I can ask those questions. And I believe that the exchange is there. Again, sanctions have been adopted by Congress. We pointed out to what sort of effects that has. I believe that our Finance Minister and the Treasury have talked about this yesterday when they met at the—with other Finance Ministers at the Financing for Syria conference yesterday. And whenever I have problems, I can talk to our American counterparts.

*President Trump.* Ben Kennedy, please. CBN.

*Former Secretary of Veterans Affairs Nominee Ronny L. Jackson*

Q. Thank you very much. Mr. President, two questions for you. The first one is on Ronny Jackson. It's been one day since he bowed out. I know it's only been less than 24 hours. Have you had a new nominee for the Secretary for the Department of Veteran Affairs?

And my second question is on the U.S. Embassy set to open in Jerusalem in 3 weeks. Have you decided if you do plan to attend? And also, can you confirm if Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin is leading a delegation that could include your son-in-law Jared Kushner and Ivanka Trump?

*President Trump.* Ronny Jackson—admiral, doctor—is one of the finest men that I've met over the last long period of time. High quality. High-quality family. I just met them. And I explained what happened. I explained that Washington can be a very mean place. You don't know about that, Chancellor. [*Laughter*] A nasty place.

The false accusations that were made about him by Senator Tester, from a great State—I don't think that State is going to put up with it. These were false accusations about a great man, about a man who has a son who is a top student at Annapolis, about a man that's given his life to this country and to the military. A brave man. He would have been a great leader.

To say the kind of things that he said—you had President Obama giving him an A-plus report. You had President Bush giving him an A-plus report. You have President Trump giving him an A-plus report. And to make statements of things that most people said never happened, never even happened. Calling him names was, to me, a disgrace, an absolute disgrace.

And I think it's something we learn from. I called him today. I said, in a certain way—in a very big way, you're an American hero because you've exposed the system for some horrible things. I've had it happen to me with the Russian collusion hoax. It's a hoax.

But I came into the job understanding that things happen. He didn't. He's a great doctor. He's a great admiral. He didn't really think a thing like this could happen. And I think it's a disgrace.

So I just want to comment on that. And actually, I'm glad you asked the question. I think this man has been treated—he's an American hero, and I think he's been treated very unfairly. Okay?

*Secretary of Veterans Affairs*

Q. As far as the nomination, have you put forward a new nomination yet?

*The President.* I have many people that want the position, if you can believe it, with all of this being said. We have some excellent people, some very political people, some people that a

thing like that wouldn't happen, or if it did happen, I guess they'll handle it somewhat differently.

But we have many people that want that job. We're very proud of the job we've done for the veterans. The veterans have been—we've gotten accountability approved, which is something that, for years—for years they've been trying to get. As you know, they couldn't get it approved. We got accountability so that when somebody treats our veterans badly, we can fire them so fast, almost as fast as they fire people in Germany. *[Laughter]* We'll get rid of them.

And I will tell you, we're getting choice. We're putting choice in very, very strongly. We have tremendous support in the Senate for that.

But I do—I have a lot of people that want the job. We're getting—we're doing a great job over there for the vets. And you know, that was one of the things that to me was the most important. We had tremendous support from the vets. We're getting great reports.

But getting a thing such as accountability done. We'll be soon getting choice done—meaning if a veteran stands on line and can't get to a doctor for various reasons, they're going to a private doctor, and this country is going to pay. They're not going to wait 9 weeks on line for a cure to something that could have been very easy to cure, and then they end up dying from it. So we're going to—I've very proud of what we've done.

And I will tell you, your new head of the VA is going to be very exceptional. We have some exceptional people that want to do the job. Okay?

### *U.S. Embassy in Israel*

Q. Before I get to Chancellor Merkel, I wanted to backtrack to the U.S. Embassy opening up in Jerusalem. You said in the past that you would like to go. Do you—

*President Trump.* So they came to me—it's a little bit about government. Somebody said, "Could I tell this story?" And they came to me with a proposal for a \$1 billion Embassy in Jerusalem. And the papers—Mike Pence can tell you—the papers were put before me to sign an application for more than \$1 billion to build an Embassy. I said, "What are you talking about, a billion dollars?" You know, most Embassies are, like, a single story. And they said: "Yes, sir. It's \$1 billion." And I had my name half signed, and then I noticed the figure, and I didn't—I never got to the word "Trump." *[Laughter]* I had "Donald" signed, but I never got to the word "Trump."

And I called my Ambassador, who's a great lawyer—most people in business know David Friedman; he's the Ambassador to Israel. And loves Israel. Loves our country; loves Israel too. And I said, "What's this \$1 billion?" He said, "I can build it for \$150,000." I said, "What?" He said, "I can build it for \$150,000"—the Embassy. "We have a building, we have the site. We already own the site; we own the building. I can take a corner of the building, and for \$150,000 we can fix it up, make it beautiful, open our Embassy. Instead of in 10 years from now, we can open it up in 3 months." And that's what we did.

But I said: "David, let's not go from a billion dollars to 150,000. Let's go to three, four-hundred-thousand." And that's what we did. We take a piece of the building—it's going to be beautiful. And it will be somewhat temporary, but it could be for many years—because by the time they build it the other way it's going to be many, many years. They were looking for sites; we already have a site. And we have a great site. The site is better than anything you could imagine.

But that's the way government works. They were going to spend a billion dollars, and we're going to spend much less than a half-a-million. Could have done it for much less than that, but I said, "Let's make it really nice." So that's what it is.

I may go. Very proud of it. Jerusalem has been a subject that's been promised for many years, as you know, the Embassy in Jerusalem. It's been promised for many, many years by Presidents. They all made campaign promises, and they never had the courage to carry it out. I carried it out. So I may go. It's getting ready to open.

And I do want to tell that story, though, because there are a couple of people that got to see it, including Mike, but others, where literally they were going to spend a billion dollars. And we're spending a tiny, tiny fraction of that in the hundreds of thousands of dollars instead. And it will be very nice. Maybe it will be nicer than a billion-dollar building. Okay?

For the Chancellor, please.

Q. Well, Chancellor, I wanted to ask about the Iran nuclear deal. You just heard President Trump say that Iran will not be restarting the nuclear program, "you can bank on it." Do you fear that if the U.S. backs out, that Iran will restart their nuclear program?

And also, you're the second European Union leader—or European leader to stop here at the White House this week. What improvements did you recommend to the President that needs to be changed in order to keep the U.S. in the deal?

*Chancellor Merkel.* Well, I said of my position, and that is that I believe that, obviously, this agreement is anything but perfect. It will not solve all the problems with Iran. It is one piece of the mosaic, one building block, if you like, on which we can build up this structure. And that when the United Kingdom, France, and Germany work together with the American colleagues, this was brought about. And we will now see what sort of decisions are made by our American partners.

I said that the whole of the region, obviously, is of prime importance of us to because it's not 1,000 kilometers away, as it is the case, for example, between the U.S.A. and Syria. But Syria and Iran are countries that are right on our doorstep. So that is of prime importance for us, and we will continue to be in very close talks on this.

Mrs. Dunz, please.

*European Union-U.S. Trade/North Atlantic Treaty Organization/Poland/Germany*

Q. Kristina Dunz from Rheinische Post. Madam Chancellor, you used to describe America as a destination of your, sort of, what you ever wanted to be. And now it's said in Germany, by you, that Europe actually has to take its destiny in its own hands and that you cannot rely on the United States supporting you all the time.

Have you talked with the President about this development where—or this unhappy development that—drifting apart? And should not you in many ways deliver, also, on this promise of significantly increasing the defense spending?

And just to you, Mr. President. A lot of people are irritated by the way that you fulfill this most important job that exists in the rest of the world with certain aggressive Twitter messages and so on. I want to ask you whether—and certain facts that you make. Does this mean that in the future there will be less compromise struck by the United States, less reconciliation? And how will you decide, on the first of May, when it is about a possible prolong—extension of the exemption for tariffs? What is your position on this, Mr. President? Will there be a trade war

with this big bloc, Europe? Or do you see an opportunity of actually not going into such a trade war?

*Chancellor Merkel.* Well, I think for a lot of people in Germany, but also in many other countries, people wish and love to go to the United States. We have just said there are more than 40 million people who have their roots in Germany, in Europe, here in the United States. Also, for many people in Germany, in Europe, America is a great country. And even though we may see matters differently on certain political issues, we have to address that; we have to talk about this.

But this land of freedom, this great country, obviously, still remains very attractive, and so I continue to say that. And I said, yes, Germany and Europe have to take their destiny into their own hands, because we can no longer—as we used to during the period of the cold war, during the years when Germany was divided—rely on America coming and helping us. America is still helping us, but step by step, we will simply have to increase our contribution too.

And America has been a very much engaged, very broadly engaged in parts of the world that are far away from America. And the people of America, too, have said, "Well, what's in it for us?" So the President is saying, "You ought to have some more burden sharing."

So in a way, we're maturing where we're growing out of a role where, after the Second World War, people were either happy for Germany not becoming too engaged, not too active, because during the period of national socialism, we created such incredible injustice in the world and—but this postwar period is at an end. It's more than—this postwar period is—well, that's essentially 70 years ago. So we, as Germans, have to learn to assume more responsibility. We are proud to be the second largest troop contributor in NATO.

We've done a lot over the past few years, obviously, from the President's perspective, not perhaps fast enough. But I would say, as German Chancellor, we have made important steps in the right direction, and we'll continue to do so.

We cannot rely, if conflicts are on our doorstep, for others to step in, and we ourselves don't have to give a contribution. And this contribution will have to increase over the next few years to come. That has something to do with military engagement, with defense spending, with combating and tackling root causes of flight, but also with the readiness to become more engaged in diplomacy.

Germany, for example, for the first time is part and parcel of the so-called Small Group that has just had a meeting in Paris on Syria, together with the U.S., with the U.K., with Saudi Arabia, and we want to give our contribution to this as well. It's our obligation; it's our duty. I don't think that we ought to complain about this. We have to learn as a big country, as an economically successful country. As the President says, you're economically successful, but militarily and politically, you don't wish to do so much. We have to learn to assume our role. And there are differences of opinion. We, as friends, can discuss that openly.

*President Trump.* Thank you, Chancellor. We need a reciprocal relationship, which we don't have. The United States, right now, has a trade deficit with the European Union of \$151 billion. And the Chancellor and I have discussed it today at length, and we're working on it. And we want to make it more fair and the Chancellor wants to make it more fair.

Same thing with NATO. We have a far greater burden than we should have. Other countries should be paying more. And I'm not saying Germany alone; other countries should

be paying more. I mean, we're protecting Europe, and yet we pay by far more than anybody else. A NATO is wonderful, but it helps Europe more than it helps us. And why are we paying a vast majority of the costs?

So we're working on those things. It's been unfair. And I don't blame the Chancellor and I don't blame Germany. I don't even blame the European Union. I blame the people that preceded me for allowing this to happen. There's no way we should have a trade deficit of \$151 billion.

So we're going to make it reciprocal. We're going to make it a much more fair situation. And I think, in the end, everybody is going to be very happy. I think both countries—I view this as many countries—but looking at it as one bloc will really benefit. There's tremendous potential between the European Union and the United States, and I think that's going to happen. There's also tremendous benefit to NATO when people pay what they have to be paying.

Some countries actually pay more than they're supposed to. They think the United States is—I've been told by numerous countries, Poland being one. Poland is great. I mean, they pay, actually, a little bit more than they're supposed to be paying, or have to pay, because they feel the United States is more than carrying the load, and perhaps they feel it's not fair. But it's something we very much appreciate.

But I believe that, you know, when I look at the numbers in Germany and some other countries, they may not like Donald Trump, but you have to understand, that means I'm doing a good job because I'm representing the United States. Angela is representing Germany. She's doing a fantastic job. My predecessors did not do a very good job. But we'll try and catch you. Okay? [*Laughter*] We'll try. We're going to have a reciprocal relationship, and it's going to be something that benefits all of us.

Okay? Thank you very much everybody. Thank you. Thank you. Angela, thank you very much.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 2:04 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to Chairman of the Korean Worker's Party Kim Jong Un of North Korea; former President George W. Bush; and Ben Jackson, midshipman, U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis, MD. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist organization. Chancellor Merkel referred to Minister of Finance Wolfgang Schaeuble of Germany. Reporters referred to President Emmanuel Macron of France; President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia; White House Senior Adviser Jared C. Kushner; and Assistant to the President Ivanka M. Trump. Chancellor Merkel and two reporters spoke in German, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

*Categories:* Interviews With the News Media : Joint news conferences :: Germany, Chancellor Merkel.

*Locations:* Washington, DC.

*Names:* Bush, George W.; Friedman, David M.; Grenell, Richard; Jackson, Ben; Jackson, Ronny L.; Kim Jong Un; Merkel, Angela; Moon Jae-in; Obama, Barack; Pence, Michael R.; Tester, Jonathan; Xi Jinping.

*Subjects:* Business and industry : Manufacturing industry :: Strengthening efforts; China : North Korea, role; China : President; China : Relations with U.S.; Commerce, international :

Free and fair trade; Communications : News media :: Presidential interviews; Defense and national security : Border security; Europe : European Union :: Trade policy; Europe : European Union :: Trade with U.S.; Germany : Chancellor; Germany : Relations with U.S.; Germany : Trade with U.S.; Germany : U.S. Ambassador; Government organization and employees : Accountability and transparency, strengthening efforts; Iran : Nuclear program, Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action; Iran : Nuclear weapons development; Iran : Regional involvement; Israel : U.S. Ambassador; Israel : Jerusalem, U.S. recognition as capital; Israel : U.S. Embassy, relocation to Jerusalem; North Atlantic Treaty Organization; North Korea : International diplomatic efforts; North Korea : Korean Worker's Party Chairman; North Korea : Nuclear weapons development; Russia : 2016 U.S. elections, interference; South Korea : President; Terrorism : Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist organization; Veterans : Health and medical care; Veterans Affairs, Department of : Reform efforts; Veterans Affairs, Department of : Secretary-designate; White House Office : Vice President; World Trade Organization.

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