

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2018

Remarks in an Exchange With Reporters Prior to Departure for Lynn Haven, Florida

October 15, 2018

Q. Mr. President, is King Salman—[inaudible]?

The President. So I met, number one, as you know, with Pastor Brunson. Some of you were there. And he had a fantastic weekend. He's back home, and we love the fact that he's back home. He's with his family. And he's a very happy man. He left Turkey. He is extremely thrilled. And as I said, really yesterday more than ever, that we want to thank Turkey. We want to thank President Erdogan.

I just spoke with the King of Saudi Arabia, who denies any knowledge of what took place with regard to, as he said, his Saudi Arabian citizen. I've asked—and he firmly denied that. I've asked Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to immediately get on a plane, go to Saudi Arabia, go to other places if necessary, which he probably will. But with regards to this, go to Turkey if necessary. The King told me that Turkey and Saudi Arabia are working hand in hand, very closely, on getting to the bottom of what happened. So we'll see what happens. But Mike Pompeo——

Disappearance of Saudi Journalist Jamal Khashoggi

Q. [Inaudible]

The President. Excuse me. Mike Pompeo is leaving literally within an hour or so. He's heading to Saudi Arabia. We are going to leave nothing uncovered.

With that being said, the King firmly denied any knowledge of it. He didn't really know. Maybe—I don't want to get into his mind—but it sounded to me like maybe these could have been rogue killers. Who knows? We're going to try getting to the bottom of it very soon. But his was a flat denial.

Q. [Inaudible]

The President. What?

Disappearance of Journalist Jamal Khashoggi of Saudi Arabia

Q. When he told you that, did you trust him? Did you believe him?

The President. All I can do is report what he told me. And he told me in a very firm way that they had no knowledge of it. He said it very strongly.

Turkey-U.S. Relations

Q. Will you relax sanctions against Turkey?

The President. Well, that was not part of the deal. We had no deal with Turkey. We don't make deal—any deals for hostages or prisoners. But I will tell you that I feel much differently about Turkey today than I felt about them 2 days ago. I have a very good feeling toward Turkey. Two days ago, I did not. So that helped.

Disappearance of Saudi Journalist Jamal Khashoggi

Q. Mr. President, who else could it be besides Saudi Arabia?

The President. I don't know. We're going to try to getting to the bottom of it. I can only tell you that his denial to me is—just one very, you know, relatively fast phone call, probably lasted 20 minutes—his denial to me could not have been stronger that he had no knowledge. And it sounded like he, and also the Crown Prince, had no knowledge.

Q. Mr. President, do you have any—

Disappearance of Saudi Journalist Jamal Khashoggi

Q. What did you tell him about what the cost would be if it's Saudi Arabia?

The President. We didn't talk about that. We didn't talk about that. I did say this is very important. The world is watching. The world is talking. And this is very important to get to the bottom of it. And I think he understands that very well.

He did say, very strongly, that he's dealing with Turkey; that they've come to an agreement; that they're investigating it together. And I think that's a good thing.

Senator Elizabeth A. Warren

Q. Mr. President, any reaction to Senator Elizabeth Warren releasing the results of her DNA test?

The President. No, I have no—who cares?

Q. Mr. President, you said you'd pay \$1 million—

The President. Who cares?

Q. Mr. President, you said you said you'd donate \$1 million to charity if she did that.

The President. I didn't say that. You'd better read it again.

Q. Mr. President, what is your—

Q. [*Inaudible*—do you owe her an apology?

The President. Say it? Sorry, you have a helicopter roaring in the background. Go ahead.

Disappearance of Saudi Journalist Jamal Khashoggi

Q. Did Salman provide any theory of who may have done it if it wasn't them?

The President. No, not a theory, but the denial was very strong. It wasn't like there was a question in his mind. The denial was very, very strong.

Q. Mr. President, what is your reaction—

Senator Elizabeth A. Warren/2020 Presidential Election

Q. Do you think Elizabeth Warren is running for President? Do you see her as—
[*inaudible*]?

The President. I hope she's running for President, because I think she'd be very easy. I hope that she is running. I do not think she'd be difficult at all. She'll destroy the country. She'll make our country into Venezuela.

With that being said, I don't want to say bad things about her, because I hope she would be one of the people that would get through the process. It's going to be a long process for the Democrats.

Q. Will you stop calling her Pocahontas? Will you stop calling her Pocahontas?

Sears Brands, LLC, Bankruptcy Filing

Q. What is your reaction to Sears going bankrupt? What is your reaction to Sears filing for bankruptcy?

The President. It's a shame. So Sears, Roebuck, when I was growing up, was the big deal. And it's very sad what happened. Very, very sad. When you look at that whole filing that they did last night, to me is very sad. Somebody that is of my generation, Sears, Roebuck was a big deal, so it's very sad to see.

Q. Mr. President, why do you believe General Mattis has——

The President. And I will say, with that being said, I would imagine some of those great sites that Sears has—they really have some great sites—will be put to good use. It will be a lot of jobs. Sears has been dying for many years. It's been obviously improperly run for many years, and it's a shame. Okay?

Q. Mr. President, why do you believe General Mattis is a Democrat?

Disappearance of Saudi Journalist Jamal Khashoggi

Q. Why take the arms deal off the table with Saudi Arabia?

The President. I'm not taking anything off the table. No, we're going to try and find out. I'm just explaining——

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. No, no, look—I'm just explaining, very easily, I think, what was told to me a half an hour ago. And the denial was not only a denial, it was a very firm denial. So we will check it all out. We'll get to the bottom of it, okay?

Q. Mr. President, why do you believe General Mattis is a Democrat?

North Korea

Q. [*Inaudible*]—North Korea?

The President. No, North Korea is coming along very well. Relationships are very good. I think a lot of good things will happen. It's complicated. You know, we've done things in 3 or 4 months that nobody has done in 70 years. But I think North Korea is coming along very well.

Thank you. I'll see you in Florida. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:28 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House prior to boarding Marine One. In his remarks, he referred to Andrew C. Brunson, pastor, Dirilis (Resurrection) Church in Izmir, Turkey, who was detained by Turkish authorities on October 7, 2016, and returned to the U.S. custody on October 12; Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia. A reporter referred to Secretary of Defense James N. Mattis.

Categories: Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters :: White House.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Brunson, Andrew C.; Erdogan, Recep Tayyip; Khashoggi, Jamal; Muhammad bin Salman bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud, Crown Prince; Pompeo, Michael R.; Salman bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud, King; Warren, Elizabeth A.

Subjects: North Korea : International diplomatic efforts; Saudi Arabia : Crown Prince; Saudi Arabia : King; Saudi Arabia : Relations with U.S.; Sears Brands, LLC; State, Department of : Secretary; Turkey : President; Turkey : Relations with U.S.; Turkey : U.S. citizen, release from detention.

DCPD Number: DCPD201800701.