

# Transcript: President Trump on "Face the Nation," February 3, 2019

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*The following is a transcript of an interview with President Trump airing Sunday, Feb. 3, 2019, on "Face the Nation."*

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MARGARET BRENNAN: Would you shut down the government again?

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: Well, we're going to have to see what happens on February 15th and I- I think--

MARGARET BRENNAN: You're not taking it off the table?

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: Well, I don't- I don't take anything off the table. I don't like to take things off the table. It's that alternative. It's national emergency, it's other things and you know there have been plenty national emergencies called. And this really is an invasion of our country by human traffickers. These are people that are horrible people bringing in women mostly, but bringing in women and children into our country. Human trafficking. And we're going to have a strong border. And the only way you have a strong border is you need a physical barrier. You need a wall. And anybody that says you don't, they're just playing games.

MARGARET BRENNAN: You had quite the showdown with Speaker Pelosi. What did you learn about negotiating with her?

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: Well, I think that she was very rigid - which I would expect - but I think she is very bad for our country. She knows that you need a barrier. She knows that we need border security. She wanted to win a political point. I happen to think it's very bad politics because basically she wants open borders. She doesn't mind human trafficking or she wouldn't do this because you know--

MARGARET BRENNAN: She offered you over a billion dollars for border security.

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: Excuse me?

MARGARET BRENNAN: She offered over a billion dollars for border security. She doesn't want the wall.

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: She's- she's costing the country hundreds of billions of dollars because what's happening is when you have a porous border, and when you have drugs pouring in, and when you have people dying all over the country because of people like Nancy Pelosi who don't want to give proper border security for political reasons, she's

doing a terrible disservice to our country. And on the 15th we have now set the table beautifully because everybody knows what's going on because of the shutdown. People that didn't have any idea- they didn't have a clue as to what was happening, they now know exactly what's happening. They see human trafficking. They see drugs and gangs and criminals pouring in. Now, we catch them because we're doing a great job. But if we had proper border security we wouldn't have to work so hard and we could do an even better job, and I think Nancy Pelosi is doing a terrible disservice to the people of our country. But she can--

MARGARET BRENNAN: You're still going to have to deal with her now.

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: No, she can keep playing her games, but we will win. Because we have a much better issue. On a political basis, what she's doing is- I actually think it's bad politics, but much more importantly it's very bad for our country.

MARGARET BRENNAN: I want to ask you about your intelligence leaders who were testifying on Capitol Hill this week. Did you read the report that they presented?

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: I did.

MARGARET BRENNAN: And did you - there was some conversation you had because you went on Twitter and you called them naive and told them to go back to school.

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: Well, I think--

MARGARET BRENNAN: What specifically was wrong about what they said?

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: I think- let me just say it wasn't so much a report. It was the questions and answers as the report was submitted and they were asked questions and answers. We've done an incredible job with Syria. When I took over Syria it was infested with ISIS. It was all over the place. And now you have very little ISIS and you have the caliphate almost knocked out. We will be announcing in the not too distant future 100 percent of the caliphate which is the area- the land- the area- 100. We're at 99 percent right now, we'll be at 100. When I took it over it was a disaster. I think we've done a great job with that. At the same time, at a certain point, we want to bring our people back home. If you look at Afghanistan we're going in very soon we'll be going into our 19th year spending 50 billion dollars a year. Now if you go back and look at any of my campaign speeches or rallies, I talked about it all the time.

MARGARET BRENNAN: You did. You've been talking about- and that--

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: --I want to bring people home.

MARGARET BRENNAN: But that's one of the questions here. Is because you have these strongly held convictions and people ask, "Well, why don't the facts influence those opinions, if those facts change?" And- and your director of national intelligence said ISIS still has strongholds in Iraq and Syria--

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: By the way--

MARGARET BRENNAN: --and will launch attacks from there.

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: You're going to always have pockets of something. What-- you're going to have people, like the one armed man who blew up a restaurant. You're going to have pockets. But you're not going to keep armies there because you have a few people. Or you even have fairly reasonable numbers of people. We've been there for many, many years. We were supposed to be in Syria for four months. We've been there for years. We have been in Afghanistan for 19 years. And by the way, I've been hitting very hard in Afghanistan and now we're negotiating with the Taliban. We'll see what happens, who knows--

MARGARET BRENNAN: Can you trust the Taliban? Can you actually broker a deal?

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: Look, whether we should have been there in the first place, that's first question. Second question--

MARGARET BRENNAN: That's where 9/11 was launched from.

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: --we've been there for 19 years, almost, we are fighting very well. We're fighting harder than ever before. And I think that they will- I think they're tired and, I think everybody's tired. We got to get out of these endless wars and bring our folks back home. Now, that doesn't mean we're not going to be watching with intelligence. We're going to be watching, and watching closely. North Korea--

MARGARET BRENNAN: Isn't that harder when you don't have troops on the ground?

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: Well, everything's harder. But, you know you pay a big price for troops on the ground. We're spending hundreds of billions of dollars on military. We're the policemen of the world and we don't--

MARGARET BRENNAN: Because the concern in here by your intelligence chiefs, though, is that you could in that vacuum see a resurgence of ISIS.

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: Sure.

MARGARET BRENNAN: See a resurgence of terror groups like Al-Qaeda--

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: And you know what we'll do? We'll come back if we have to. We have very fast airplanes, we have very good cargo planes. We can come back very quickly, and I'm not leaving. We have a base in Iraq and the base is a fantastic edifice. I mean I was there recently, and I couldn't believe the money that was spent on these massive runways. And these- I've rarely seen anything like it. And it's there. And we'll be there. And frankly, we're hitting the caliphate from Iraq and as we slowly withdraw from Syria. Now the other thing--

MARGARET BRENNAN: How many troops are still in Syria? When are they coming home?

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: 2,000 troops.

MARGARET BRENNAN: When are they coming home?

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: They're starting to, as we gain the remainder, the final remainder of the caliphate of the area, they'll be going to our base in Iraq, and ultimately some will be coming home. But we're going to be there and we're going to be staying--

MARGARET BRENNAN: So that's a matter of months?

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: We have to protect Israel. We have to protect other things that we have. But we're- yeah, they'll be coming back in a matter of time. Look, we're protecting the world. We're spending more money than anybody's ever spent in history, by a lot. We spent, over the last five years, close to 50 billion dollars a year in Afghanistan. That's more than most countries spend for everything including education, medical, and everything else, other than a few countries.

MARGARET BRENNAN: Is there a scenario where you would keep troops in Afghanistan? A smaller number?

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: Yes. And I'll leave intelligence there. Real intelligence, by the way. I'll leave intelligence there and if I see nests forming, I'll do something about it. But for us to be spending 51 billion dollars, like last year, or if you average the cost it's- I mean you're talking about numbers that nobody's ever heard of before.

MARGARET BRENNAN: The Senate Republicans voted, the vast majority of them said that they don't support what you're doing. That what you're doing risks national intelligence by a precipitous withdrawal from Syria and Afghanistan. Doesn't that concern you?

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: I ran against 17 Republicans. This was a big part of what I was saying, and I won very easily. I think the people out in the world- I think people in our country agree. We've been fighting for 19 years. Somebody said you were precipitously bringing to- precipitously? We've been there for 19 years. I want to fight. I want to win, and we want to bring our great troops back home. I've seen the people. I go to Walter Reed Hospital. I see what happens to people. I see with no legs and no arm- arms. And I've seen also what happens to them up here because they're in this situation, and they come back and they are totally different people-- where the wives and the fathers and the mothers say, "What has happened to my son? What has happened in some cases to my daughter?" It's a terrible thing. We've been there close to 19 years. And it's time. And we'll see what happens with the Taliban. They want peace. They're tired. Everybody's tired. We'd like to have- I don't like endless wars. This war. What we're doing is got to stop at some point.

MARGARET BRENNAN: But you- but you also campaigned saying that, you know, President Obama made a big mistake by telegraphing his military moves. You're telegraphing your retreat.

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: I'm not telegraphing anything. No, no, no. There's a difference. When President Obama pulled out of Iraq in theory we had Iraq. In other words, we had Iraq. We never had Syria because President Obama never wanted to violate the red line in the sand. So we never had Syria. I was the one that actually violated the red line when I hit Syria with 59 Tomahawk missiles, if you remember. But President Obama chose not to do that. When he chose not to do that, he showed tremendous weakness. But we didn't have Syria whereas we had Iraq. So when he did what he did in Iraq, which was a mistake. Being in Iraq was a mistake. Okay. Being in Iraq- it was a big mistake to go- one of the greatest mistakes going into the Middle East that our country has ever made. One of the greatest mistakes that we've ever made--

MARGARET BRENNAN: But you want to keep troops there now?

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: --but when it was chosen-- well, we spent a fortune on building this incredible base. We might as well keep it. And one of the reasons I want to keep it is because I want to be looking a little bit at Iran because Iran is a real problem.

MARGARET BRENNAN: Whoa, that's news. You're keeping troops in Iraq because you want to be able to strike in Iran?

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: No, because I want to be able to watch Iran. All I want to do is be able to watch. We have an unbelievable and expensive military base built in Iraq. It's perfectly situated for looking at all over different parts of the troubled Middle East rather than pulling up. And this is what a lot of people don't understand. We're going to keep watching and we're going to keep seeing and if there's trouble, if somebody is looking to do nuclear weapons or other things, we're going to know it before they do.

MARGARET BRENNAN: So you're going to trust the intelligence that you receive?

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: I am going to trust the intelligence that I'm putting there, but I will say this: my intelligence people, if they said in fact that Iran is a wonderful kindergarten, I disagree with them 100 percent. It is a vicious country that kills many people. When you talk about torture and so many other things. And- maybe they'll come back. The country is getting absolutely- when I ended the horrible Iran nuclear deal- it was a horrible deal done by President Obama and John Kerry that didn't know what the hell he was doing. When I ended that deal, Margaret, all of a sudden Iran became a different country. They became- very rapidly- right now they're a country that's in big financial trouble. Let's see what happens.

MARGARET BRENNAN: I want to move on here but I should say your intel chiefs do say Iran's abiding by that nuclear deal. I know you think it's a bad deal, but--

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: I disagree with them. I'm- I'm- by the way--

MARGARET BRENNAN: You disagree with that assessment?

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: --I have intel people, but that doesn't mean I have to agree. President Bush had intel people that said Saddam Hussein--

MARGARET BRENNAN: Sure.

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: --in Iraq had nuclear weapons- had all sorts of weapons of mass destruction. Guess what? Those intel people didn't know what the hell they were doing, and they got us tied up in a war that we should have never been in. And we've spent seven trillion dollars in the Middle East and we have lost lives--

MARGARET BRENNAN: Do you trust your national security adviser John Bolton because he worked in the Bush administration?

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: I do, and I respect John and John is not one of the people that happened to be testifying or on.

MARGARET BRENNAN: Got it.

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: And you know what I tell people- you can testify any way you want. I'm not going to stop them from testifying. They said they were mischaracterized-- maybe they were maybe they weren't, I don't really know-- but I can tell you this, I want them to have their own opinion and I want them to give me their opinion. But, when I look at Iran, I look at Iran as a nation that has caused tremendous problems.

MARGARET BRENNAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: When I came in as president of the United States, my first year, I went to the Pentagon two weeks after I came in, a short time after, and I was given a- because I wanted to know what's going on with Iran.

MARGARET BRENNAN: Right.

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: We were in many many locations in the Middle East in huge difficulty. Every single one of them was caused by the number one terrorist nation in the world which is Iran. So when my intelligence people tell me how wonderful Iran is- if you don't mind, I'm going to just go by my own counsel.

MARGARET BRENNAN: You've had a lot of change up in you administration recently too. Are you satisfied with the cabinet and the staff you have now?

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: So we have a great cabinet. I have great people. I think now we have a really great cabinet. I think Bill Barr will be a fantastic attorney general, and I think that we have- Mike Pompeo's been doing a fantastic job. We have--

MARGARET BRENNAN: He's not leaving?

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: No, I don't- I mean he tells me he wouldn't want to leave. I think that was--

MARGARET BRENNAN: Because McConnell was talking to him--

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: That was fake news.

MARGARET BRENNAN: --about running for the Senate. He said McConnell had spoken to him about running for the Senate.

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: Well, he may have spoken to him, but I think he loves being secretary of state. He's doing a fantastic job. And I asked him the question the other day, he says he's absolutely not leaving. I don't think he'd do that. And he doesn't want to be lame duck. And he's doing a fantastic job as our secretary of state. Great energy and great- a great, smart gentleman.

MARGARET BRENNAN: Cause you have an acting AG until you get Barr confirmed--

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: Yes.

MARGARET BRENNAN: An acting defense secretary. An acting chief of staff. An acting interior secretary.

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP. It's OK. It's easier to make moves when they're acting.

MARGARET BRENNAN: So you are going to shake up--

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: Some, and some not.

MARGARET BRENNAN: --positions.

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: Some are doing a fantastic job. Really- I like acting because I can move so quickly. It gives me more flexibility. But- but actually, some of the names you mentioned, they're doing a fantastic job.

MARGARET BRENNAN: How do you know when to fire someone?

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: When it's not happening. When--

MARGARET BRENNAN: What do you mean?

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: When it doesn't get done. Like with General Mattis, I wasn't happy with his service. I told him give me a letter.

MARGARET BRENNAN: He resigned.

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: He resigned because I asked him to resign. He resigned because I was very nice to him. But I gave him big budgets and he didn't do well in Afghanistan. I was not happy with the job he was doing in Afghanistan. And if you look at Syria what's happened, I went to Iraq recently, if you look at Syria, what's happened in

Syria in the last few weeks, you would see that things are going down that were not going down. That things are happening that are very good. So I was not happy with him, but I wish him well.

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Trump would have a "hard time" letting son play football

MARGARET BRENNAN: I want to ask you about your relationship with NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell. Have- have you put your differences aside?

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: I think so. I mean I- I was just one that felt very important, you can't be kneeling for the national anthem. You have to respect our flag and our country. I want that as president and I'd want that as a citizen. And I have a very good relationship. I did them a big favor in negotiating the USMCA, which is basically the replacement to NAFTA, which is one of the worst trade deals ever made. And I said to Canada, look we have a great American company known as the NFL, and they were being hurt and treated unfairly, the NFL, by Canada for a long time. And I said to Prime Minister Trudeau, who was very nice about it and really understood it, I hope you can settle the difference immediately and fast. And they did. So I did the NFL a big favor, as a great American company and they appreciated it. And Roger Goodell, this is a dispute that has gone on for years. Roger Goodell called me and he thanked me. And I appreciated that. But they haven't been kneeling and they have been respecting the flag and their ratings have been terrific ever since. And a lot of good things happened.

MARGARET BRENNAN: Talking about the- the kneeling position you've taken and the controversy around it. Do you think that the players who did kneel had a point? I mean did you- are you sensitive at all to players like Colin Kaepernick, who- who point out that the majority of victims of police violence are black?

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: Well, you know, I'm the one that had passed judicial reform. And if you look at what I did, criminal judicial reform, and what I've done- President Obama tried. They all tried. Everybody wanted to do it. And I got it done and I've been, you know, really- a lot of people in the NFL have been calling and thanking me for it.

MARGARET BRENNAN: Really?

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: They have been calling and thanking, you know, that people have been trying to get that taken care of and it's now signed into law and affects tremendous numbers of people, and very good people. I think that when you want to protest I think that's great. But I don't think you do it at the sake of our flag, at the sake of our national anthem. Absolutely.

MARGARET BRENNAN: But you are- do I understand you saying there though, that you still are sensitive though? I mean you- you understand the motivation for the protest--

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: Well I do--



MARGARET BRENNAN: Though you don't like the form of it.

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: A lot of it is having to do with reform from what I understand. Whether it's criminal justice or whatever it may be and they have different versions and everybody seemed to have a different version of it. But a lot of it had to do with that, and I took care of that. I think that people have to, at all times, respect our flag and at all times respect our net- our- our national anthem and our country. And I think there are plenty of places and times you can protest and you can do a lot. But you can't do that. That's my opinion.

MARGARET BRENNAN: In a CBS poll we just took, 63 percent of Americans say they disapprove about how you're handling issues of race in the US.

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: Well--

MARGARET BRENNAN: What do you think of that?

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: What has happened is very interesting. The economy is so good right now. You saw the jobs report just came out. Three hundred and four thousand added jobs, which is a shocker, for the month. A shocker to a lot of people. They thought it was going to be half that number. The African-Americans have the best employment numbers in the history of our country. Hispanic Americans have the best employment numbers in the history of our country. Asian-Americans the best in the history of our country. You look at women, the best in 61 years. And our employment numbers are phenomenal, the best in over 50 years. So I think I've been given a lot of credit for that. And in terms of race, a lot of people are saying well this is something very special what's happening.

MARGARET BRENNAN: So- because when colleagues of yours, even like Republican Senator Tim Scott. He said Donald Trump is not racist. But he said you're racially insensitive.

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: I have a great relationship with Tim and certainly with his state, South Carolina, and- where we do very well. And I think if you look at the numbers for African-American unemployment, best numbers they've had- literally the best numbers they've had in history. And I think they like me a lot and I like them a lot.

MARGARET BRENNAN: Would you let your son Barron play football?

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: It's very, it's very tough question. It's a very good question. If he wanted to? Yes. Would I steer him that way? No, I wouldn't.

MARGARET BRENNAN: Why?

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: I wouldn't. And he actually plays a lot of soccer. He's liking soccer. And a lot of people, including me, thought soccer would probably never make it in this country, but it really is moving forward rapidly. I- I just don't like the reports that I see

coming out having to do with football—I mean, it's a dangerous sport and I think it's- I- it's- really tough, I thought the equipment would get better, and it has. The helmets have gotten far better but it hasn't solved the problem. So, you know I- I hate to say it because I love to watch football. I think the NFL is a great product, but I really think that as far as my son- well I've heard NFL players saying they wouldn't let their sons play football. So. It's not totally unique, but I- I would have a hard time with it.

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Trump says he hasn't thought about pardoning Roger Stone

MARGARET BRENNAN: What surprised you about some of the questions that Robert Mueller asked you?

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: Well, look the Russia thing is a hoax. I have been tougher on Russia than any president, maybe ever. But than any president.

MARGARET BRENNAN: But when it comes to the investigation that the special counsel's conducting- I mean 34 people have been charged here. Seven guilty pleas --

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: Excuse me. Ok, you ready? Ok, you ready? Of the 34 people, many of them were bloggers from Moscow or they were people that had nothing to do with me, had nothing to do with what they're talking about or there were people that got caught telling a fib or telling a lie. I think it's a terrible thing that's happened to this country because this investigation is a witch hunt. It's a terrible witch hunt and it's a disgrace--

MARGARET BRENNAN: Do you think it should be made public?

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: --when you look at General Flynn where the FBI said he wasn't lying, but Robert Mueller said he was, and they took a man and destroyed his life. When you look at so many of the things that have happened- why didn't they go after Hillary Clinton for her emails? She had thirty three thousand emails that were deleted after receiving a subpoena from Congress--

MARGARET BRENNAN: And according to the special counsel--

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: Excuse me, but Margaret, why--

MARGARET BRENNAN: --they were posted on WikiLeaks and your friend Roger Stone was just indicted for his involvement there and for lying.

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: First of all, Roger Stone didn't work on the campaign, except way way at the beginning long before we're talking about. Roger is somebody that I've always liked, but a lot of people like Roger some people probably don't like Roger, but Roger Stone's somebody I've always liked. I mean Roger's a character but Roger was not- I don't know if you know this or not- Roger wasn't on my campaign except way at the beginning--

MARGARET BRENNAN: Right.

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: So, it's all- and- and yet you will ask me a question like that, wasn't involved in my campaign.

MARGARET BRENNAN: Would you pardon him?

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: I have not thought about it. It looks like he's defending himself very well. But you have to get rid of the Russia witch hunt because it is indeed. And remember--

MARGARET BRENNAN: Because you think--

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: Remember this. Remember this. There's been no president that has been tougher on Russia than Donald Trump.

MARGARET BRENNAN: Would you make the Mueller report public because you say there's nothing in there? Congress can subpoena it anyway, though.

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: Totally up to to the Attorney General.

MARGARET BRENNAN: But what do you want them to do?

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: Even the Mueller report said it had nothing to do with the campaign. When you look at some of the people and the events it had nothing to do--

MARGARET BRENNAN: You wouldn't have a problem--

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: Excuse me.

MARGARET BRENNAN: --if it became public?

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: Excuse me. That's up to the attorney general. I don't know. It depends. I have no idea what it's going to say.

MARGARET BRENNAN: Okay.

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: So far this thing's been a total witch hunt. And it doesn't implicate me in any way. There was no collusion. There was no obstruction. There was no nothing. Doesn't implicate me in any way but I think it's a disgrace.

MARGARET BRENNAN: What would make you use the U.S. military in Venezuela? What's the national security interest?

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: Well I don't want to say that. But certainly it's something that's on the- it's an option.

MARGARET BRENNAN: Would you personally negotiate with Nicolás Maduro to convince him to exit?

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: Well he is requested a meeting and I've turned it down because we're very far along in the process. You have a young and energetic gentleman

but you have other people within that same group that have been very very - if you talk about democracy - it's really democracy in action.

MARGARET BRENNAN: When did he request a meeting?

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: We're going to see what happened. A number of months ago he wanted to meet.

MARGARET BRENNAN: But now because you're at that crisis point--

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: Well now we'd have to see.

MARGARET BRENNAN: Would you negotiate that?

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: I would say this. I decided at the time, "no" because so many really horrible things have been happening in Venezuela when you look at that country. That was the wealthiest country of all in that part of the world which is a very important part of the world. And now you look at the poverty and you look at the anguish and you look at the crime and you look at all of the things happening. So, I think the process is playing out - very very big tremendous protests.

MARGARET BRENNAN: North Korea. When and where are you going to meet Kim Jong Un?

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: I won't tell you yet, but you'll be finding out probably State of the Union or shortly before. But the meeting is set. He's looking forward to it. I'm looking forward to it. We've made tremendous progress. If you remember, before I became president, it looked like we were going to war with North Korea. Now we have a very good relationship. The hostages are back. Okay, the remains are starting to come back. The remains of our Korean War veterans--

MARGARET BRENNAN: But your intelligence chief testified this week that Kim Jong Un is still very unlikely to give up his nuclear--

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: Well that's what--

MARGARET BRENNAN: --weapons program.

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: That's what the intelligence chief thinks, and I think--

MARGARET BRENNAN: Why is he wrong?

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: --there's a good possibility of that too. But there's also a very good chance that we will make a deal. I think he's also tired of going through what he's going through. He has a chance to have North Korea be a tremendous economic behemoth. It has a chance to be one of the great economic countries in the world. He can't do that with nuclear weapons and he can't do that on the path they're on now. I like him. I get along with him great. We have a fantastic chemistry. We have had tremendous correspondence that some people have seen and can't even believe it. They think it's

historic. And we'll see what happens. Now that doesn't mean we're going to make a deal. But certainly I think we have a very good chance of making a deal. And one of the reasons is because North Korea has a chance being located between Russia, China, and South Korea. What a location- I'm in the real estate business- what a location. They have a chance to be an economic powerhouse.

MARGARET BRENNAN: You're going to keep U.S. troops there, in South Korea?

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: Yeah, I mean we haven't talked about anything else. Maybe someday. I mean who knows. But you know it's very expensive to keep troops there. You do know that. We have 40,000 troops in South Korea, it's very expensive. But I have no plans, I've never even discussed removing them.

MARGARET BRENNAN: I want to quickly get to China. The last time you spoke with FACE THE NATION you were one hundred days into office and you said you would accept a less than perfect trade deal with China, if it meant they'd be helpful with North Korea. Do you stand by that?

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: Well, yes but I think we're in a different position now.

MARGARET BRENNAN: What do you mean?

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: We've put very massive tariffs on China. China is paying a big price and it's hurt China's economy very badly. I want them to make a fair deal. They have been very helpful, especially at the beginning when I first came in with North Korea. They have stopped goods from going in. They have stopped a lot of things from going in through the border. Because as you know they have a border just like we have a border with Mexico, where crime is way up by the way, way up, and you have to remember that. But we have a border with- they have a border with North Korea.

MARGARET BRENNAN: Right.

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: They have been very vigilant. Are they the same now? Probably a little bit less so. But North Korea is absolutely talking. And I think North Korea wants to make a deal. We are making a deal. It looks like we're doing very well with making a deal with China. I can tell you this, no two leaders of this country and China have ever been closer than I am with President Xi. We have a good chance to make a deal. I don't know that we're going to make one, but we have a good chance. And if it is a deal it's going to be a real deal. It's not going to be a stopgap.

MARGARET BRENNAN: Sir, I hear your helicopters. I'm being told to wrap. I appreciate you being generous with your time.

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: Thank you very much, Margaret.

MARGARET BRENNAN: Thank you.

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: Thank you.

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