

POLITICS

# Transcript and Video: Trump News Conference

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*President Trump on Thursday announced his new nominee for labor secretary, Alexander Acosta, during a news conference at the White House. Following is a partial transcript of that event, as prepared by the Federal News Service.*

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**TRUMP:** Thank you very much.

I just wanted to begin by mentioning that the nominee for secretary of the Department of Labor will be Mr. Alex Acosta. He has a law degree from Harvard Law School, was a great student; former clerk for Justice Samuel Alito. And he has had a tremendous career. He's a member and has been a member of the National Labor Relations Board, and has been through Senate confirmation three times, confirmed; did very, very well.

And so Alex, I've wished him the best. We just spoke. And he's going to be — I think he'll be a tremendous secretary of labor.

And also as you probably heard just a little while ago, Mick Mulvaney, former congressman, has just been approved weeks late, I have to say that, weeks, weeks late, Office of Management and Budget. And he will be I think a fantastic addition.

Paul Singer just left. As you know, Paul was very much involved with the anti-Trump or as they say, “never Trump.” And Paul just left and he’s given us his total support. And it’s all about unification. We’re unifying the party and hopefully we’re going to be able to unify the country. It’s very important to me. I’ve been talking about that for a long time. It’s very, very important to me.

So I want to thank Paul Singer for being here and for coming up to the office. He was a very strong opponent, and now he’s a very strong ally. And I appreciate that.

I think I’ll say a few words, and then we’ll take some questions. And I had this time. We’ve been negotiating a lot of different transactions to save money on contracts that were terrible, including airplane contracts that were out of control and late and terrible; just absolutely catastrophic in terms of what was happening. And we’ve done some really good work. We’re very proud of that.

And then right after that, you prepare yourselves, we’ll do some questions, unless you have enough questions. That’s always a possibility.

I’m here today to update the American people on the incredible progress that has been made in the last four weeks since my inauguration. We have made incredible progress. I don’t think there’s ever been a president elected who in this short period of time has done what we’ve done.

A new Rasmussen poll, in fact — because the people get it — much of the media doesn’t get it. They actually get it, but they don’t write it. Let’s put it that way. But a new Rasmussen poll just came out just a very short while ago, and it has our approval rating at 55 percent and going up. The stock market has hit record numbers, as you know. And there has been a tremendous surge of optimism in the business world, which is — to me means something much different than it used to. It used to mean, “Oh, that’s good.” Now it means, “That’s good for jobs.” Very different.

Plants and factories are already starting to move back into the United States, and big league — Ford, General Motors, so many of them. I’m making this presentation directly to the American people, with the media present, which is an honor to have you. This morning, because many of our nation’s reporters and folks will not tell you the truth, and will not treat the wonderful people of our country with

the respect that they deserve. And I hope going forward we can be a little bit — a little bit different, and maybe get along a little bit better, if that's possible. Maybe it's not, and that's OK, too.

**TRUMP:** Unfortunately, much of the media in Washington, D.C., along with New York, Los Angeles in particular, speaks not for the people, but for the special interests and for those profiting off a very, very obviously broken system. The press has become so dishonest that if we don't talk about, we are doing a tremendous disservice to the American people. Tremendous disservice. We have to talk to find out what's going on, because the press honestly is out of control. The level of dishonesty is out of control.

I ran for president to present the citizens of our country. I am here to change the broken system so it serves their families and their communities well. I am talking — and really talking on this very entrenched power structure, and what we're doing is we're talking about the power structure; we're talking about its entrenchment. As a result, the media is going through what they have to go through too often times distort - not all the time - and some of the media is fantastic, I have to say - they're honest and fantastic.

But much of it is not a - the distortion — and we'll talk about it, you'll be able to ask me questions about it. But we're not going to let it happen, because I'm here again, to take my message straight to the people. As you know, our administration inherited many problems across government and across the economy. To be honest, I inherited a mess. It's a mess. At home and abroad, a mess. Jobs are pouring out of the country; you see what's going on with all of the companies leaving our country, going to Mexico and other places, low pay, low wages, mass instability overseas, no matter where you look. The middle east is a disaster. North Korea - we'll take care of it folks; we're going to take care of it all. I just want to let you know, I inherited a mess.

Beginning on day one, our administration went to work to tackle these challenges. On foreign affairs, we've already begun enormously productive talks with many foreign leaders, much of it you've covered, to move forward towards stability, security and peace in the most troubled regions of the world, which there are many.

We have had great conversations with the United Kingdom, and meetings. Israel, Mexico, Japan, China and Canada, really, really productive conversations. I would say far more productive than you would understand.

We've even developed a new council with Canada to promote women's business leaders and entrepreneurs. It's very important to me, very important to my daughter Ivanka. I have directed our defense community headed by our great general, now Secretary Mattis. He's over there now working very hard to submit a plan for the defeat of ISIS, a group that celebrates the murder and torture of innocent people in large sections of the world. It used to be a small group, now it's in large sections of the world.

They've spread like cancer. ISIS has spread like cancer - another mess I inherited. And we have imposed new sanctions on the nation of Iran, whose totally taken advantage of our previous administration, and they're the world's top sponsor of terrorism, and we're not going to stop until that problem is properly solved. And it's not properly solved now, it's one of the worst agreements I've ever seen drawn by anybody. I've ordered plan to begin building for the massive rebuilding of the United States military. Had great support from the Senate, I've had great from Congress, generally.

We've pursued this rebuilding in the hopes that we will never have to use this military, and I will tell you that is my - I would be so happy if we never had to use it. But our country will never have had a military like the military we're about to build and rebuild. We have the greatest people on earth in our military, but they don't have the right equipment and their equipment is old. I used it; I talked about it at every stop. Depleted, it's depleted - it won't be depleted for long. And I think one of the reason I'm standing here instead of other people is that frankly, I talked about we have to have a strong military.

We have to have a strong law enforcement also. So we do not go abroad in the search of war, we really are searching for peace, but its peace through strength. At home, we have begun the monumental task of returning the government back to the people on a scale not seen in many, many years. In each of these actions, I'm keeping

my promises to the American people. These are campaign promises. Some people are so surprised that we're having strong borders.

Well, that's what I've been talking about for a year and a half, strong borders. They're so surprised, oh, he having strong borders, well that's what I've been talking about to the press and to everybody else. One promise after another after years of politicians lying to you to get elected. They lied to the American people in order to get elected. Some of the things I'm doing probably aren't popular but they're necessary for security and for other reasons.

And then coming to Washington and pursuing their own interests which is more important to many politicians. I'm here following through on what I pledged to do. That's all I'm doing. I put it out before the American people, got 306 electoral college votes. I wasn't supposed to get 222. They said there's no way to get 222, 230's impossible.

270 which you need, that was laughable. We got 306 because people came out and voted like they've never seen before so that's the way it goes. I guess it was the biggest electoral college win since Ronald Reagan. In other words, the media's trying to attack our administration because they know we are following through on pledges that we made and they're not happy about it for whatever reason.

And - but a lot of people are happy about it. In fact, I'll be in Melbourne, Florida five o'clock on Saturday and I heard - just heard that the crowds are massive that want to be there. I turn on the T.V., open the newspapers and I see stories of chaos. Chaos. Yet it is the exact opposite. This administration is running like a fine-tuned machine, despite the fact that I can't get my cabinet approved.

And they're outstanding people like Senator Dan Coats who's there, one of the most respected men of the Senate. He can't get approved. How do you not approve him? He's been a colleague - highly respected. Brilliant guy, great guy, everybody knows it. We're waiting for approval. So we have a wonderful group of people that's working very hard, that's being very much misrepresented about and we can't let that happen.

So, if the Democrats who have - all you have to do is look at where they are right now. The only thing they can do is delay because they screwed things up royally, believe me. Let me list to you some of the things that we've done in just a short period of time. I just got here. And I got here with no cabinet. Again, each of these actions is a promise I made to the American people.

I'll go over just some of them and we have a lot happening next week and in the weeks - in the weeks coming. We've withdrawn from the job-killing disaster known as Trans Pacific Partnership. We're going to make trade deals but we're going to have one on one deals, bilateral. We're going to have one on one deals.

We've directed the elimination of regulations that undermine manufacturing and call for expedited approval of the permits needed for America and American infrastructure and that means plant, equipment, roads, bridges, factories. People take 10, 15, 20 years to get disapproved for a factory. They go in for a permit, it's many, many years. And then at the end of the process — they spend 10s of millions of dollars on nonsense and at the end of the process, they get rejected.

Now, they may be rejected with me but it's going to be a quick rejection. Not going to take years. But mostly it's going to be an acceptance. We want plants built and we want factories built and we want the jobs. We don't want the jobs going to other countries. We've imposed a hiring freeze on non-essential federal workers. We've imposed a temporary moratorium on new federal regulations.

We've issued a game-changing new rule that says for each one new regulation, two old regulations must be eliminated. Makes sense. Nobody's ever seen regulations like we have. You go to other countries and you look at indexes (ph) they have and you say "let me see your regulations" and they're fraction, just a tiny fraction of what we have. And I want regulations because I want safety, I want environmental - all environmental situations to be taken properly care of. It's very important to me. But you don't need four or five or six regulations to take care of the same thing.

We've stood up for the men and women of law enforcement, directing federal agencies to ensure they are protected from crimes of violence. We've directed the creation of a task force for reducing violent crime in America, including the

horrendous situation — take a look at Chicago and others, taking place right now in our inner cities. Horrible.

We've ordered the Department of Homeland Security and Justice to coordinate on a plan to destroy criminal cartels coming into the United States with drugs. We're becoming a drug infested nation. Drugs are becoming cheaper than candy bars. We are not going to let it happen any longer.

We've undertaken the most substantial border security measures in a generation to keep our nation and our tax dollars safe. And are now in the process of beginning to build a promised wall on the southern border, met with general — now Secretary Kelly yesterday and we're starting that process. And the wall is going to be a great wall and it's going to be a wall negotiated by me. The price is going to come down just like it has on everything else I've negotiated for the government. And we are going to have a wall that works, not gonna have a wall like they have now which is either non-existent or a joke.

We've ordered a crackdown on sanctuary cities that refuse to comply with federal law and that harbor criminal aliens, and we have ordered an end to the policy of catch and release on the border. No more release. No matter who you are, release. We have begun a nationwide effort to remove criminal aliens, gang members, drug dealers and others who pose a threat to public safety. We are saving American lives every single day.

The court system has not made it easy for us. And are even creating a new office in Homeland Security dedicated to the forgotten American victims of illegal immigrant violence, which there are many. We have taken decisive action to keep radical Islamic terrorists out of our country. No parts are necessary and constitutional actions were blocked by judges, in my opinion, incorrect, and unsafe ruling. Our administration is working night and day to keep you safe, including reporters safe. And is vigorously defending this lawful order.

I will not back down from defending our country. I got elected on defense of our country. I keep my campaign promises, and our citizens will be very happy when they see the result. They already are, I can tell you that. Extreme vetting will be put in place and it already is in place in many places.

In fact, we had to go quicker than we thought because of the bad decision we received from a circuit that has been overturned at a record number. I have heard 80 percent, I find that hard to believe, that is just a number I heard, that they are overturned 80 percent of the time. I think that circuit is — that circuit is in chaos and that circuit is frankly in turmoil. But we are appealing that, and we are going further.

We're issuing a new executive action next week that will comprehensively protect our country. So we'll be going along the one path and hopefully winning that, at the same time we will be issuing a new and very comprehensive order to protect our people. That will be done sometime next week, toward the beginning or middle at the latest part. We have also taken steps to begin construction of the Keystone Pipeline and Dakota Access Pipelines. Thousands and thousands of jobs, and put new buy American measures in place to require American steel for American pipelines. In other words, they build a pipeline in this country, and we use the powers of government to make that pipeline happen, we want them to use American steel. And they are willing to do that, but nobody ever asked before I came along. Even this order was drawn and they didn't say that.

**TRUMP:** And I'm reading the order, I'm saying, why aren't we using American steel? And they said, that's a good idea, we put it in. To drain the swamp of corruption in Washington, D.C., I've started by imposing a five-year lobbying ban on White House officials and a lifetime ban on lobbying for a foreign government.

We've begun preparing to repeal and replace Obamacare. Obamacare is a disaster, folks. It is a disaster. I know you can say, oh, Obamacare. I mean, they fill up our alleys with people that you wonder how they get there, but they are not the Republican people our that representatives are representing.

So we've begun preparing to repeal and replace Obamacare, and are deep in the midst of negotiations on a very historic tax reform to bring our jobs back, to bring our jobs back to this country. Big league. It's already happening. But big league.

I've also worked to install a cabinet over the delays and obstruction of Senate Democrats. You've seen what they've done over the last long number of years. That will be one of the great cabinets ever assembled in American history.



You look at Rex Tillerson. He's out there negotiating right now. General Mattis I mentioned before, General Kelly. We have great, great people. Mick is with us now. We have great people.

Among their responsibilities will be ending the bleeding of jobs from our country and negotiating fair trade deals for our citizens.

Now look, fair trade. Not free, fair. If a country is taking advantage of us, not going to let that happen anymore. Every country takes advantage of us almost. I may be able to find a couple that don't. But for the most part, that would be a very tough job for me to do.

Jobs have already started to surge. Since my election, Ford announced it will abandon its plans to build a new factory in Mexico, and will instead invest \$700 million in Michigan, creating many, many jobs.

Fiat Chrysler announced it will invest \$1 billion in Ohio and Michigan, creating 2,000 new American jobs. They were with me a week ago. You know you were here.

General Motors likewise committed to invest billions of dollars in its American manufacturing operation, keeping many jobs here that were going to leave. And if I didn't get elected, believe me, they would have left. And these jobs and these things that I'm announcing would never have come here.

Intel just announced that it will move ahead with a new plant in Arizona that probably was never going to move ahead with. And that will result in at least 10,000 American jobs.

Walmart announced it will create 10,000 jobs in the United States just this year because of our various plans and initiatives. There will be many, many more, many more, these are a few that we're naming.

Other countries have been taking advantage of us for decades — decades, and decades, and decades, folks. And we're not going to let that happen anymore. Not going to let it happen.

And one more thing, I have kept my promise to the American people by nominating a justice of the United States Supreme Court, Judge Neil Gorsuch, who is from my list of 20, and who will be a true defender of our laws and our Constitution, highly respected, should get the votes from the Democrats. You may not see that. But he'll get there one way or the other. But he should get there the old-fashioned way, and he should get those votes.

This last month has represented an unprecedented degree of action on behalf of the great citizens of our country. Again, I say it. There has never been a presidency that's done so much in such a short period of time. And we have not even started the big work yet. That starts early next week.

Some very big things are going to be announced next week. So we are just getting started. We will be giving a speech, as I said, in Melbourne, Florida, at 5:00 p.m. I hope to see you there.

And with that, I just say, God bless America, and let's take some questions.

Mara (ph), Mara (ph), go ahead. You were cut off pretty violently at our last news conference.

**QUESTION:** (OFF-MIKE)

**TRUMP:** Mike Flynn is a fine person, and I asked for his resignation. He respectfully gave it. He is a man who there was a certain amount of information given to Vice President Pence, who is with us today. And I was not happy with the way that information was given.

He didn't have to do that, because what he did wasn't wrong — what he did in terms of the information he saw. What was wrong was the way that other people, including yourselves in this room, were given that information, because that was classified information that was given illegally. That's the real problem.

And, you know, you can talk all you want about Russia, which was all a, you know, fake news, fabricated deal, to try and make up for the loss of the Democrats and the press plays right into it. In fact, I saw a couple of the people that were

supposedly involved with all of this — that they know nothing about it; they weren't in Russia; they never made a phone call to Russia; they never received a phone call.

It's all fake news. It's all fake news. The nice thing is, I see it starting to turn, where people are now looking at the illegal — I think it's very important — the illegal, giving out classified information. It was — and let me just tell you, it was given out like so much.

I'll give you an example. I called, as you know, Mexico. It was a very, very confidential, classified call. But I called Mexico. And in calling Mexico, I figured, oh, well that's — I spoke to the president of Mexico; I had a good call. All of a sudden, it's out there for the world to see. It's supposed to be secret. It's supposed to be either confidential or classified, in that case.

Same thing with Australia. All of a sudden, people are finding out exactly what took place. The same thing happened with respect to General Flynn. Everybody saw this. And I'm saying — the first thing I thought of when I heard about it is: How does the press get this information that's classified? How do they do it?

You know why? Because it's an illegal process and the press should be ashamed of themselves. But more importantly, the people that gave out the information to the press should be ashamed of themselves, really ashamed.

Yes, go ahead.

**QUESTION:** (OFF-MIKE)

**TRUMP:** Because when I looked at the information, I said, "I don't think he did anything wrong; if anything, he did something right." He was coming into office. He looked at the information. He said, "Huh, that's fine." That's what they're supposed to do. They're supposed to — he didn't just call Russia. He called and spoke to both ways, I think there were 30-some-odd countries. He's doing the job.

You know, he was doing his job. The thing is, he didn't tell our vice president properly, and then he said he didn't remember. So either way, it wasn't very satisfactory to me. And I have somebody that I think will be outstanding for the position. And that also helps, I think, in the making of my decision.

But he didn't tell the vice president of the United States the facts. And then he didn't remember. And that just wasn't acceptable to me.

Yes?

**QUESTION:** (inaudible) clarification here. During your campaign, did anyone from your team (inaudible) Russian government or Russian intelligence? And if so, what was the nature of those conversations (inaudible)? **TRUMP:** The failing New York Times wrote a big, long front-page story yesterday. And it was very much discredited, as you know. It was — it's a joke. And the people mentioned in the story, I notice they were on television today saying they never even spoke to Russia. They weren't even a part, really — I mean, they were such a minor part. They — I hadn't spoken to them.

I think the one person — I don't think I've ever spoken to him. I don't think I've ever met him. And he actually said he was a very low-level member of I think a committee for a short period of time. I don't think I ever met him. Now, it's possible that I walked into a room and he was sitting there, but I don't think I ever met him. I didn't talk to him ever. And he thought it was a joke.

The other person said he never spoke to Russia; never received a call. Look at his phone records, et cetera, et cetera. And the other person, people knew that he represented various countries, but I don't think he represented Russia, but knew that he represented various countries. That's what he does. I mean, people know that.

That's Mr. Manafort, who's — by the way, who's by the way a respected man. He's a respected man. But I think he represented the Ukraine or Ukraine government or somebody, but everybody — people knew that. Everybody knew that.

So, these people — and he said that he has absolutely nothing to do and never has with Russia. And he said that very forcefully. I saw his statement. He said it very forcefully. Most of the papers don't print it because that's not good for their stories.

**TRUMP:** So the three people that they talked about all totally deny it. And I can tell you, speaking for myself, I own nothing in Russia. I have no loans in Russia.

I don't have any deals in Russia. President Putin called me up very nicely to congratulate me on the win of the election.

He then, called me up extremely nicely to congratulate me on the inauguration, which was terrific. But so did many other leaders, almost all other leaders from almost all of the country. So that's the extent.

Russia is fake news. Russia — this is fake news put out by the media. The real news is the fact that people, probably from the Obama administration because they're there, because we have our new people going in place, right now.

As you know, Mike Pompeo has — has now taken control of the CIA, James Comey at FBI, Dan Coats is waiting to be approved, I mean he is a senator and a highly respected one and he's still waiting to be approved. But our new people are going in.

And just while you're at it, because you mentioned this, Wall Street Journal did a story today that was almost as disgraceful as the failing New York Time's story, yesterday. And it talked about — these are (ph) front page.

So director of national intelligence just put out, acting a statement, any suggestion that the United States intelligence community, this was just given to us, is withholding information and not providing the best possible intelligence to the president and his national security team is not true.

So they took this front page story out of The Wall Street Journal top and they just wrote the story that its not true. And I'll tell you something, I'll be honest, because I sort of enjoy this back and forth that I guess I have all my life but I've never seen more dishonest media than frankly, the political media. I thought the financial media was much better, much more honest.

But I will say that, I never get phone calls from the media. How did they write a story like that in The Wall Street Journal without asking me or how did they write a story in The New York Times, put it on front page?

That was like the story they wrote about the women and me, front page, big massive story. And it was nasty and then they called, they said we never said that, we

like Mr. Trump. They called up my office, we like Mr. Trump, we never said that.

And it was totally — they totally misrepresented those very wonderful women, I have to tell you, totally misrepresented. I said give us the retraction. They never gave us a retraction and frankly, I then went on to other things.

OK, go ahead.

**QUESTION:** (OFF-MIKE) said today that you have big intellectual margins (inaudible) 300 or more (ph), or 350 (ph) electoral (ph) votes. President Obama about 365 (OFF-MIKE).

(CROSSTALK)

**TRUMP:** Yeah.

**QUESTION:** Obama (OFF-MIKE) 426 on (OFF-MIKE). So why should Americans...

(CROSSTALK)

**TRUMP:** ...I'm skipping that information, I don't know, I was just given (ph) we had a very, very big margin.

**QUESTION:** (OFF-MIKE) why should Americans trust you (OFF-MIKE) the information (OFF-MIKE)?

**TRUMP:** Well, I don't know, I was given that information. I was given — I actually, I've seen that information around. But it was a very substantial victory, do you agree with that? OK thank you, that's...

(CROSSTALK)

**TRUMP:** Go ahead Sir, yes?

**QUESTION:** Can you tell us in determining that Lieutenant General Flynn did — whether there was no wrongdoing in your mind, what evidence was weighed? Did you ask for transcripts of these telephone intercepts with Russian officials, particularly the Ambassador Sergey Kislyak, who he was communicating with?

What— what evidence did you weigh to determine that there was no wrongdoing? Further to that, Sir, you said on a couple of locations this morning, you are going to aggressively pursue the source of these leaks.

**TRUMP:** We are.

**QUESTION:** Can we ask what you're going to do and also, we've heard about a — a review of the intelligence community headed up by Steven Feinberg, what can you tell us about that?

**TRUMP:** Well, first of all about that, we now have Dan Coats, hopefully soon, Mike Pompeo and James Comey and they're in position so I hope that we'll be able to straighten that out without using anybody else.

The gentleman you mentioned is a very talented man, very successful man and he's offered his services and you know, it's something we may take advantage of. But I don't think we need that at all because of the fact that you know, I think that we are gonna be able to straighten it out very easily on its own.

As far as the general's concerned, when I first heard about it, I said huh, that doesn't sound wrong. My counsel came, Don McGahn, White House Counsel, and he told me and I asked him, he can speak very well for himself. He said he doesn't think anything is wrong, you know, really didn't think.

It was really, what happened after that but he didn't think anything was done wrong. I didn't either because I waited a period of time and I started to think about it, I said "well I don't see" — to me, he was doing the job.

The information was provided by — who I don't know, Sally Yates. And I was a little surprised because I said "doesn't sound like he did anything wrong there." But he did something wrong with respect to the vice president and I thought that was not acceptable. As far as — as far as the actual making the call, fact I've watched various programs and I've read various articles where he was just doing his job.

That was very normal. You know, first everybody got excited because they thought he did something wrong. After they thought about it, it turned out he was

just doing his job. So — and I do. And by the way, with all of that being said, I do think he's a fine man.

**QUESTION:** Sir, if I could, on the leaks — on the leaks, sir...

**TRUMP:** ...Go ahead. Finish off then I'll get you.

**QUESTION:** I'm sorry. What will you do on the leaks? You've said twice today...

**TRUMP:** ...Yes, we're looking at them very — very, very serious. I've gone to all of the folks in charge of the various agencies and we're — I've actually called the Justice Department to look into the leaks. Those are criminal leaks. They're put out by people either in agencies — I think you'll see it stopping because now we have our people in. You know, again, we don't have our people in because we can't get them approved by the Senate.

We just had Jeff Sessions approved. Injustice, as an example (ph). So, we are looking into that very seriously. It's a criminal act. You know what I say, when I — when I was called out on Mexico, I was shocked because all this equipment, all this incredible phone equipment — when I was called out on Mexico, I was — honestly, I was really, really surprised.

But I said “you know, it doesn't make sense. That won't happen” but that wasn't that important a call, it was fine, I could show it to the world and he could show it to the world, the president who's a very fine man, by the way. Same thing with Australia. I said “that's terrible that it was leaked” but it wasn't that important. But then I said to myself “what happens when I'm dealing with the problem of North Korea?”

What happens when I'm dealing with the problems in the Middle East? Are you folks going to be reporting all of that very, very confidential information, very important, very — you know, I mean at the highest level? Are you going to be reporting about that too? So, I don't want classified information getting out to the public and in a way that was almost a test.

So I'm dealing with Mexico, I'm dealing with Argentina, we were dealing on this case with Mike Flynn. All this information gets put into the “Washington Post” and



gets put into the “New York Times” and I’m saying “what’s going to happen when I’m dealing on the Middle East? What’s going to happen when I’m dealing with really, really important subjects like North Korea?”

We got to stop it. That’s why it’s a criminal penalty.

**QUESTION:** I just want to get you to clarify this very important point. Can you say definitively that nobody on your campaign had any contacts with the Russians during the campaign? And on the leaks, is it fake news or are these real leaks?

**TRUMP:** Well the leaks are real. You’re the one that wrote about them and reported them, I mean the leaks are real. You know what they said, you saw it and the leaks are absolutely real. The news is fake because so much of the news is fake. So one thing that I felt it was very important to do — and I hope we can correct it. Because there’s nobody I have more respect for — well, maybe a little bit but the reporters, good reporters.

It’s very important to me and especially in this position. It’s very important. I don’t mind bad stories. I can handle a bad story better than anybody as long as it’s true and, you know, over a course of time, I’ll make mistakes and you’ll write badly and I’m OK with that. But I’m not OK when it is fake. I mean, I watch CNN, it’s so much anger and hatred and just the hatred.

I don’t watch it any more because it’s very good — he’s saying no. It’s OK, Jim (ph). It’s OK, Jim (ph), you’ll have your chance. But I watch others too. You’re not the only one so don’t feel badly. But I think it should be straight. I think it should be — I think it would be frankly more interesting. I know how good everybody’s ratings are right now but I think that actually — I think that’d actually be better.

People — I mean, you have a lower approval rate than Congress. I think that’s right. I don’t know, Peter (ph), is that one right? Because you know I think they have lower — I heard lower than Congress. But honestly, the public would appreciate it, I’d appreciate it — again, I don’t mind bad stories when it’s true but we have an administration where the Democrats are making it very difficult.

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