



PRESS BRIEFINGS

Press Briefing by Press Secretary Sarah Sanders and National Security Officials

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James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

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SANDERS: Good afternoon. Since the beginning of his administration, President Trump has implemented a whole-of-government approach to safeguard our nation's elections. The President has made it clear that his administration will not tolerate foreign interference in our elections from any nation-state or other dangerous actor.

Last year, the President signed an executive order to strengthen and review the cybersecurity of our nation and its critical infrastructure. Last week, the President chaired a meeting of his National Security Council to address ongoing threats. He asked the officials standing next to me to brief the American people on the work being done to protect the integrity of our elections.

Efforts are underway to provide cybersecurity assistance to state and local authorities, and actions to investigate, prosecute, and hold accountable those who illegally attempt to interfere in our political and electoral process.

To address these matters further, I want to welcome Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats, FBI Director Christopher Wray, Secretary of Homeland Security Kirstjen Nielsen, Director of the National Security Agency General Paul Nakasone, and National Security Advisor Ambassador John Bolton to make some comments and take questions on this topic.

As you all know, we've addressed what occurred during the 2016 election numerous times and rather extensively. The purpose of today's briefing is about what we are doing now and in the future to protect the integrity of our elections moving forward, and we ask that you stay on that topic.

In order to help this run smoothly, we'd also ask that you direct your questions to a specific person. And with that, I'll turn it over to Ambassador Bolton to open up and make some comments.

AMBASSADOR BOLTON: Well, thank you very much, Sarah. What we'd like to address today is election security in the 2018 election and in the future. The President has made it very clear, I think, what his priority is. We've had obviously a number of inquiries from Congress on this, including a letter to me, the past couple days from five senators, signed by Senator Schumer and four others.

I have responded to that letter today. We've made copies available to you. And it forms a kind of framework for the briefing that the four heads of operating department and agencies are going to give you here today. They are the ones who are implementing and operationalizing the policy that we have developed. There are other agencies involved, but these are the four primary ones.

And I think it's important that we address the question of the President's involvement in this, his leadership, his determination to prevent Russian and other foreign influence in elections. We meet on this constantly, the senior staff here at the White House. We meet with the heads of the different agencies involved and we discuss it quite regularly.

In my tenure as National Security Advisor — less than two months — we've already had two full National Security Council meetings chaired by the President and, as I say, countless other discussions as well.

Since January 2017, the President has taken decisive action to defend our election systems from meddling and interference. This includes measures to heighten the security and resilience of election systems and processes to confront Russian and other foreign malign influence in the United States, to confront such aggression through international action, and to reinforce a strong sanctions regime.

Now, as you know, elections are administered by state and local governments, so the federal role is to assist them. We'll be addressing that through the comments of the heads of the operating agencies.

I might also say, by way of introduction, that many federal government actions to protect elections in the United States, such as those implemented by the intelligence community or law enforcement agencies, are necessarily sensitive and highly classified. We do not wish to make the efforts of our adversaries any easier through injudicious public disclosures. Nonetheless, we have offered to do before, and continue to offer, briefings to members of Congress in secure facilities.

So what I'd like to do here, as Sarah said, is turn the briefing over to the people whose agencies have this responsibility. We'll start off with Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats. He'll be followed by the Secretary of Homeland Security, Kirstjen Nielsen. She'll be followed by the Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Christopher Wray, and then finally, the Director of the National Security Agency, General Paul Nakasone.

So, Dan.

DIRECTOR COATS: Well, as Director of National Intelligence, I would like the American people to know that the intelligence community and all of its agencies are postured to identify threats of all kinds against the United States. The President has specifically directed us to make the matter of election meddling and securing our election process a top priority. And we have done that, and are doing that, and will continue to do so.

We have incorporated the lessons learned from the 2016 election, and implemented a broad spectrum of actions to share more information across the federal government, as well as with state and local governments, and also with the public and the private sector. The intelligence community continues to be concerned about the threats of upcoming U.S. elections, both the midterms and the presidential elections of 2020.

In regards to Russian involvement in the midterm elections, we continue to see a pervasive messaging campaign by Russia to try to weaken and divide the United States. These efforts are not exclusive to this election or future elections, but certainly cover issues relevant to the election.

We also know the Russians tried to hack into and steal information from candidates and government officials alike. We are aware that Russia is not the only country that has an interest in trying to influence our domestic political environment. We know there are others who have the capability and may be considering influence activities. As such, we will continue to monitor and warn of any such efforts.

I am committed to making sure that the intelligence community is working together in integrating across organizations and missions, and seeking greater transparency with the public. The ODNI has instituted a broad spectrum of actions covering collection, analysis, reporting, education, and partnerships all designed to provide the best threat assessments to federal, state, and local officials, as well as to the public and private sector when necessary.

For example, my office leads the interagency working group — now meeting weekly, as a push towards November — with the Department of Justice, FBI, Department of Homeland Security, the CIA, and NSA inclusive of regional, cyber, and counterintelligence experts, all focused on ensuring election security and integration of our efforts.

The intelligence community's focus right now is persistent support to the FBI, to the Department of Homeland Security, and other agencies in their election responsibilities. And my office is ensuring these organizations receive timely and proactive intelligence community support.

SECRETARY NIELSEN: Well, good afternoon. Thank you all for joining us. I want to start by briefly mentioning that, on Tuesday, DHS hosted the first national cybersecurity summit. This brought together government, industry leaders, and academia to discuss opportunities to join forces to counter threats to our nation's critical infrastructure.

I want to thank all of those who joined us from academia, government, and the private sector; all who participated; and those who signed up to concrete actions to confront cybersecurity challenges.

Across every critical infrastructure sector, from energy to financial services, to transportation, to communication, and so many others, a single attack can have widespread and cascading consequences. I look forward to working with the nation's leading minds in the digital realm as we stand up the National Risk Management Center.

But it's not just risk to our prosperity, privacy, and infrastructure we have to worry about, and that's why we're here today. Our democracy itself is in the crosshairs. Free and fair elections are the cornerstone of our democracy, and it has become clear that they are the target of our adversaries, who seek, as the DNI just said, to sow discord and undermine our way of life.

I fully share the intelligence community and the ODNI's assessments of past efforts and those today to interfere with our election and of the current threat. Our adversaries have shown they have the willingness and capability to interfere in our elections.

DHS has and continues to work closely with state and local election officials throughout the country by offering a range of services to help identify weaknesses in their election systems. Whether it's offering no-cost, voluntary technical assistance or sharing best practices for securing online voter registration databases, or providing technical advice on ransomware and destructive malware, our department stands ready to provide tailored support based on each jurisdiction's unique needs. This is yet another example where one size does not fit all.

I am pleased to inform you that, to date, all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and over 900 local governments have partnered with DHS in order to bolster the resilience of the nation's election infrastructure. Various states also have organic capabilities, and are engaging with the private sector and academia to improve the security of elections.

Election infrastructure is not a destination. It requires aggressive and ongoing vigilance. Everyone must play their role to ensure that every vote is counted, and is counted correctly — all of us up here today, members of Congress, state and local election officials, and the public.

As all of us up here today gain new insights into potential adversaries and campaigns, we are committed to providing our partners with the government's best intelligence and information available. The progress we have made is real, and the nation's elections are more resilient today because of the work we are all doing. But we must continue to ensure that our democracy is protected.

Thank you for being here. And I'll turn it over to Director Wray.

DIRECTOR WRAY: Good afternoon, everybody. Last fall, after I — shortly after I became Director, I stood up a new foreign influence taskforce at the FBI, which was designed to identify and

counteract the full range of malign foreign influence operations targeting our democratic institutions and our values.

The taskforce now brings together, across the waterfront, of FBI expertise who are talking counterintelligence, cyber, criminal, and even counterterrorism designed to root out and respond to foreign influence operations.

For their part, our adversaries' influence operations have encompassed a wide range of activities. So just like we have a multidisciplinary response, that's because the threat is multidisciplinary.

So just a few examples of some of the things we've seen over the past: targeting U.S. officials and other U.S. persons through traditional intelligence tradecraft; criminal efforts to suppress voting and provide illegal campaign financing; cyberattacks against voting infrastructure, along with computer intrusions targeting elected officials and others; and a whole slew of other kinds of influence, like both overtly and covertly manipulating news stories, spreading disinformation, leveraging economic resources, and escalating divisive issues.

But it's important to understand this is not just an election cycle threat. Our adversaries are trying to undermine our country on a persistent and regular basis, whether it's election season or not.

There's a clear distinction between, on the one hand, activities that threaten the security and integrity of our election systems, and, on the other hand, the broader threat of influence operations designed to manipulate and influence our voters and their opinions.

With our partners, we're trying to counteract both threats. We have three pillars to our operational strategy. The first pillar is our investigations and our operations. And for a variety of reasons, which I hope are obvious, including operational sensitivities — I'm not going to be able to describe the full extent of those efforts, but I will tell you that our foreign influence taskforce works with FBI personnel in all 56 FBI field offices. And even as we speak, we've got open investigations with a foreign influence nexus spanning field offices — FBI field offices across the country. So make no mistake, the scope of this foreign influence threat is both broad and deep.

The second pillar — I said there were three pillars — the second is focused on information sharing and intelligence sharing. We're working closely with our partners in the intelligence community

and in the federal government, as well as with our state and local partners, to establish a common operating picture.

Just last week, as an example, we disseminated a list to our state and local law enforcement partners of various foreign influence indicators for them to be on the lookout for — things like malicious cyber activity, social abnormalities, and foreign propaganda activities. The idea is to marshal additional eyes and ears in the fight.

We're also working with our international partners to exchange intelligence and strategies for combatting the threat. Because this is, after all, a shared threat with our allies.

The third pillar of our approach is based on our strong relationships with the private sector. Technology companies have a frontline responsibility to secure their own networks, products, and platforms. But we're doing our part by providing actionable intelligence to better enable them to address abuse of their platforms by foreign actors.

So this year, we've met with top social media companies and technology companies several times. We've given them classify briefings. We've shared specific threat indicators and account information, and a variety of other pieces of information so that they can better monitor their own platforms.

The reality is, it's going to take all of us working together to hold the field, because this threat is not going away. As I have said consistently: Russia attempted to interfere with the last election, and continues to engage in malign influence operations to this day.

This is a threat we need to take extremely seriously, and to tackle and respond to with fierce determination and focus. And together, with our partners, both those here and some of the other partners we've talked about, I'm confident that we can protect the integrity of our democratic institutions and maintain public confidence in our electoral process.

Thank you.

GENERAL NAKASONE: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for joining us this afternoon. I appreciate the leadership and support from the President, the Secretary of Defense, the Director of National Intelligence.

I believe our mandate is clear. As part of its mission to defend the nation, the Department of Defense is providing intelligence, information support, and technical expertise to the Department of Homeland Security for use by state and local officials to prevent foreign interference in our elections.

This is a vital mission for us and the nation. It draws on our deep experience and expertise in continuing work on this area. Our support has been ongoing and will continue through the midterm elections. We are also providing intelligence and information leads to the Federal Bureau of Investigation on foreign adversaries who are attempting to sow discord and division within the American public. This information is shared with appropriate entities to alert them to malicious cyber actors.

U.S. Cyber Command and the National Security Agency are tracking a wide range of foreign cyber adversaries, and are prepared to conduct operations against those actors attempting to undermine our nation's midterm elections.

These type of operations are sensitive and require confidentiality for success. I won't discuss the specifics, except to state that our forces are well trained, ready, and very capable. I have complete confidence in the forces under my command. We will work in conjunction with other elements of our government to ensure we bring the full power of our nation to bear on any foreign power that attempts to interfere in our democratic processes. I'll turn it back over to the moderator.

SANDERS: Thank you. As I said at the beginning, if we could stay on topic. And also, if you could, when asking a question, direct it to a specific person. And as always, after we finish this part of the briefing, I'll be back to answer other questions on news of the day.

John, go ahead.

Q Thank you, Sarah. Director Coats, if I could direct a question to you?

DIRECTOR COATS: Sure.

Q Let me take you back, if I could, to Helsinki. The President seemed to indicate that he may believe Vladimir Putin, when he says he doesn't — didn't have any influence in the 2016 election. What is your belief about the Russian government involvement in meddling in 2016? And if, as you

say, Russia continues to try to influence our electoral process, does that mean that nothing much came of the meeting with Putin? Or is it other-than-government actors who are involved here?

DIRECTOR COATS: Well, in relationship to the 2016 election — of course, none of us were in office at that particular time — but both the President, the Vice President, and I think everyone on this stage has acknowledged the fact that the ICA was a correct assessment of what happened in 2016.

We have subsequently made the determination to make this a top priority, that it doesn't happen again. And we're throwing everything at it. And we will have and will be discussing that here today.

Relative to my discussions with the President on whatever issue it is, those — I do not go public with that. I don't think that's the right — the proper thing to do. So our focus here today is simply to tell the American people: We acknowledge the threat, it is real, it is continuing, and we're doing everything we can to have a legitimate election that the American people can have trust in.

In addition to that, it goes beyond the elections. It goes to Russia's intent to undermine our democratic values, drive a wedge between our allies, and do a number of other nefarious things. And we are looking at that also.

Today we are here to talk about the elections coming up and what we're doing in ensuring the American people we're going to have a legitimate —

Q If I could just clarify, because both you and Director Wray said that Russia continues to try and meddle in our elections —

DIRECTOR COATS: They do.

Q — and influence voters. Are we talking about rogue Russian individuals or are we talking about the Kremlin?

DIRECTOR COATS: I'm thinking you can — both. And even add to that. Russia has used numerous ways in which they want to influence through media — social media, through bots, through actors that they hire through proxies. All of the above and potentially more. I can't go into any deep, deep details on what is classified. But it is pervasive. It is ongoing with the intent to achieve their intent, and that is drive a wedge and undermine our democratic values.

SANDERS: Toluse.

Q Thank you. I have a question for Director Wray. Thank you. Special Counsel Robert Mueller has indicted more than 20 Russian officials based on work by the FBI for meddling in the 2016 elections.

Now the President has tweeted that that investigation by the Special Counsel is a hoax and should be shut down. I know you've said that you don't believe it is a hoax. But why would the American people believe what you're saying about the FBI when the President says that the investigation by the Special Counsel is a hoax, and when the Press Secretary, yesterday, said that there was a lot of corruption within the FBI? Do you have any response to those statements coming from the White House?

DIRECTOR WRAY: Well, I can assure the American people that the men and women of the FBI, starting from the Director all the way on down, are going to follow our oaths and do our jobs.

SANDERS: Saagar.

Q Thank you, Sarah. I have a question for Director Coats. Director Coats, how would you characterize the current efforts — Russian efforts — to meddle in the 2018 election relative to 2016? Is it more intense? Do you see those efforts focused on a particular party? And, in general, is the pace of those operations in any way relative to 2014, 2012? Or is it more intense?

DIRECTOR COATS: Relative to what we have seen for the midterm elections, it is not the kind of robust campaign that we assessed in the 2016 election. We know that, through decades, Russia has tried to use its propaganda and methods to sow discord in America. However, they stepped up their game big time in 2016. We have not seen that kind of robust effort from them so far.

As I mentioned publicly sometime — just a few weeks ago, we're only one keyboard click away from finding out something that we don't — haven't seen up to this particular point in time. But right now, we have not seen that.

Q To follow up sir, do you see it directed to any particular party? In its current 2018 efforts, is there any particular party that is benefitting from current 2018 Russian efforts?

DIRECTOR COATS: What we see is the Russians are looking for every opportunity, regardless of party, regardless of whether or not it applies to the election, to continue their pervasive efforts to undermine our fundamental values.

SANDERS: Jeff. Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Sarah. Also for Director Coats. In the run-up to the —

DIRECTOR COATS: I'm trying to get off here. (Laughter.)

Q — and perhaps Ambassador Bolton could weigh in this as well. But in the run-up to the Helsinki Summit, U.S. officials, ambassadors to NATO, ambassadors to Russia said that the President would raise the issue of malign activity with President Putin. But he didn't discuss that, at least, at the press conference.

You're saying, today, that the President has directed you to make the issue of election meddling a priority. How do you explain the disconnect between what you are saying — his advisors — and what the President has said about this issue?

DIRECTOR COATS: I'm not in a position to either understand fully or talk about what happened at Helsinki. I'll turn it over to the National Security Director, here, to address that question.

AMBASSADOR BOLTON: The issue was discussed. And, in fact, President Putin said — I thought at the press conference, but certainly in the expanded bilateral meeting when the two leaders got together with their senior advisors — President Putin said the first issue that President Trump raised was election meddling.

Q I guess the question is, at the press conference, the President didn't highlight any of the malign activities that you have and that his advisors have. And so, should Americans believe that he is listening to your advice, or that he is going his own way when he's having meetings like he did with the President of Russia?

AMBASSADOR BOLTON: I think the President has made it abundantly clear to everybody who has responsibility in this area that he cares deeply about it and that he expects them to do their jobs to their fullest ability and that he supports them fully.

SANDERS: Blake.

Q Thank you, Sarah. I believe this is either for Director Coats or Director Wray. I'll let either of you choose. Since social media was brought up, there is a recent case with Facebook, how they just shut down some 32 accounts believed, potentially, to be from Russia.

Can you give us an idea, is that a large amount? Is that a — just kind of the tip of the iceberg? And then, generally speaking, with these social media companies — Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram — how much have they progressed, or have they not progressed, and what you would like to see in terms of progression from 2016 and identifying the threat?

DIRECTOR WRAY: So first, I'm not going to discuss any specific ongoing investigation. But what I will tell you is that activity of the sort you're describing is a good reflection of the fact that we have to have a public-private partnership in this particular threat. And that's why, when I talked about our three pillars of the FBI's foreign influence taskforce, we're spending so much of our effort trying to engage with the social media and technology companies, because there is a very important role for them to play in terms of monitoring and, in effect, policing their own platforms.

So what we have to have happen, which has started happening in a way that's much more robust — much more robust than in before the 2016 election — we're sharing with them actionable intelligence in a way that wasn't happening before. We understand better what they need; they're sharing information back with us based on what they find. There are things that they can do on their platforms voluntarily, in terms of terms of use and things like that that the government doesn't have a role in.

But, in turn, we learn things from them and we can use that to have our investigations be more effective. So I do think progress is being made. We got to keep getting better at it. We got to keep staying on the balls of our feet, but I think that's what we're seeing.

SANDERS: Jennifer.

Q Ambassador Bolton, in your letter you talk about ordering the closure of the consulates in San Francisco and Seattle; these are two tech hubs. What happened there that led you to do that?

AMBASSADOR BOLTON: Well, I'm not going to discuss the background of that decision, which actually occurred before I came to this job, but the purpose of expelling the Russian individuals that were expelled was to send a signal to Russia that their conduct in conducting a chemical weapons attack in Great Britain was unacceptable. And this was a mode of retaliation designed to show that we will not tolerate that kind of activity on the territory of the United States or any of our allies. And we expelled a lot of the people who we think had knowledge of it or had other activities in the United States that we considered unacceptable.

SANDERS: Mike Shear.

Q This, I guess, would be for maybe Secretary Nielsen or Mr. Wray. These meddling campaigns seem to fall into two broad categories: the, sort of, information campaigns, which challenge the information upon which American use to make their determinations, and then the more physical interferences into the machinery of voting; the tabulation of voting, the voter roles, the machinery that the states run.

Can you guys describe what you're seeing specifically in the run-up to this coming election? In both of those areas, do you worry more about one than the other? Do you have — are there specific threats that maybe you can't even talk about but that you can say there have been specific threats in both of those categories? And how should Americans process that where we're going to go to the polls in a few months? Should people be confident that when they pull the lever, they're secure?

DIRECTOR WRAY: Well, I think we've said this fairly consistently, that in the context of 2018, we are not yet seeing the same kind of efforts to specifically target election infrastructure — voter registration databases, in particular.

What we are seeing are the malign influence operations — in effect, information warfare that we talked about. And that didn't really — that's a 24/7, 365 days-a-year phenomenon that doesn't turn, necessarily, on whether or not we're in the middle of an election season or not.

But, as Director Coats said, any moment is just a moment before, you know, the dial can be turned up one, much as we saw in 2016. Again, not in terms of affecting the vote count, but in terms of potential penetration of voter registration databases or something like that. And that, in turn, can be a vehicle for them to try to sow discord or undermine confidence. And we have to make sure we're pushing back on it, which is what we're doing.

SECRETARY NIELSEN: So just to add, so the way that we're splitting it, we're all partnering together, but your question just shows a little bit of the division of labor. So DHS is focused on the election infrastructure in support of state and locals that have the primary responsibility. And then we support the FBI's efforts in countering foreign influence.

But with respect to the infrastructure piece, we had seen a willingness and a capability on the part of the Russians, and so we are working very closely with state and locals to ensure that we're prepared this time round.

Part of that is encouraging states to have auditability. So to get to that one part of your question, whatever happens, we want to assure Americans the day after that their vote was counted and it was counted correctly.

So regardless of what might happen, we will be prepared, but we also want to make sure we have that audibility.

SANDERS: (Inaudible.)

Q Secretary Nielsen, would a government shutdown on October 1st affect any of these efforts?

SECRETARY NIELSEN: So what we have done, as you know, is — in 2017, DHS designated election infrastructure a critical infrastructure subsector. So we prioritize efforts, so any state that requests a vulnerability assessment, a hunt team, best practices, hygiene scans, et cetera, we will continue to prioritize within our budget.

So, thank you.

SANDERS: We'll take one last question.

Q Sarah, this is for the Director and for the General. Can you unpack a little bit more about what you said there? You said there was — a question for the Director and a question for the General, separately. Can you give us a better sense of who specifically has been targeted? We know at least two senators have said that they've been targeted by hacking or by people impersonating government officials. Is it members of the Senate, members of the House? Is it Democratic and Republican campaigns?

And then a separate question for the General.

DIRECTOR COATS: We follow a procedure that's been agreed on some time ago, in terms of — when we see this type of information, it is processed through the leadership of the respective house or chamber, Senate chamber, and then disseminated down to the individual member who was targeted. So we have taken that action that is in place, but I'm not in a position right now to release those names.

Q And would you support legislation imposing sanctions on Russia now that you're saying they have, in fact, interfered, or attempted to interfere?

DIRECTOR COATS: Well, we already have some of the — a lot of sanctions in place. And I would support any efforts that we can, collectively put together, to send a signal to Russia that there is a cost — a price to pay for what they're doing. And if we want to have any kind of relationship whatsoever in dealing with things of mutual interest, the Russians have to stop doing what they're doing, or it's simply not going to happen.

Q General, have you been ordered at all to — or authorized to conduct any offensive cyber operations in response to this?

GENERAL NAKASONE: So my guidance and the direction from the President and the Secretary of Defense is very clear: We're not going to accept meddling in the elections. And it's very unambiguous.

SANDERS: Thank you all very much. We really appreciate you being here today.

We'll take a couple more questions on other topics today.

Jill, go ahead.

Q Thank you. I want to ask about the President's tweet on North Korea. He was addressing Kim Jong Un. And he said, quote, "I look forward to seeing you soon." Are there plans in place right now, any discussion, about a second meeting? And also, he said he received a letter from Kim. What did the letter say? And did it address any of the reports that appear to show that Kim is not actually working towards denuclearization?

SANDERS: That's a lot of questions rolled into one. I'll try to address each one. And if I miss something, I'm sure you guys will point it out.

He did receive a letter. I believe he received it on August 1st. There is not a second meeting that is currently locked in or finalized. Certainly open to that discussion. But there isn't a meeting planned.

We have responded to Chairman Kim's letter; the President has. And that letter will be delivered shortly. Beyond that, I can't get into any further details.

Q Can you say whether he addressed the concerns about potentially building new nuclear sites?

SANDERS: I can say that the letters addressed their commitment from their joint statement that was made at the Singapore summit. And they're going to continue working together towards complete and total denuclearization.

Q Did the President's letter specifically address that?

SANDERS: Again, I can't go any further than what I just told you.

Q Ivanka Trump made two statements this morning at odds with positions of her father. She said the media are not the enemy of the people, and also called family separation at the border a low point. But what does the President think of the statements?

SANDERS: Certainly the President himself has stated that he doesn't like the idea of family separation. I don't think anybody does. We also don't like the idea of open borders. We don't like the idea of allowing people into our country if we don't know who they are, where they're going, and why they're coming.

The President wants to secure our borders, which is why he has asked Congress to fix the law. We haven't been unclear about what our position is here. We want to secure the borders. We want to change the law. It's Congress's job to do that. We'd like them, particularly Democrats, to stop playing political games and step up and do their jobs.

Q And on the press being an enemy of the people or not being?

SANDERS: The President is rightfully frustrated. Ninety percent of the coverage on him is negative, despite the fact that the economy is booming, ISIS is on the run, and American leadership is being reasserted around the world.

Just this week, the media refused to cover his remarks in Florida, highlighting efforts on workforce development. In fact, the pooler for the press said that there was no news made, despite the fact that the governor of the state joined with dozens of businesses across the state of Florida to announce thousands of new jobs.

That may not be news in Washington, D.C., but I can assure you that it's news in the state of Florida, that people that didn't have a job before this President took office have better opportunity and the opportunity to have a job moving forward. That's actually real news and something that people in the state of Florida and across this country appreciate. And that was totally ignored.

Not only that — before, a journalist on CNN claimed that the President hadn't taken questions in over a week, despite the fact that same journalist did a live shot from the two-and-two press conference that the President had with the Prime Minister of Italy just moments after making that accusation.

With this sort of misinformation and lack of interest that's so pervasive in the media, it's completely understandable for the President to be frustrated.

Jon Decker. Sorry, Jon Decker, go ahead.

Q Thanks a lot, Sarah. I wanted to ask you about the conference call that took place yesterday, involving U.S.-China trade relations. Is there a timeline as to when, or if, the President may pull the trigger and impose harsher sanctions on China, harsher tariffs on China?

SANDERS: We're continuing to monitor that process. And when we have an announcement on that, we'll certainly let you know.

Jonathan.

Q Is the goal at the end of the day —

SANDERS: Sorry —

Q Really quickly. Is the goal at the end of the day to get China back to the negotiating table the way they were at the negotiating table with American trade officials just a few months ago?

SANDERS: The goal at the end of the day is to end the unfair trade practices that China has engaged in for decades and that the administrations before this President have ignored.

Jonathan.

Q Returning to the question of election security, the President has said other people also may have been involved in the efforts to interfere with the 2016 election. To any of the people that we saw up here, has there been any evidence from the intelligence community that there were others, besides Russia, that were involved in election meddling?

SANDERS: Certainly we know there are others, and we know that there are others that are considering making attempts in 2018, which is what our focus is moving forward. As you know, none of us were here in 2016, but we're here now. And the individuals that were standing up here just moments ago, the focus and the full weight of the government, asked by the President and directed by the President, is to protect the election infrastructure in 2018 and moving forward, and that's exactly what we're going to do.

Q But who were the others that were involved in interference in 2016?

SANDERS: I can't get into specific details. But our intelligence shows that there are a number of others that are looking at and considering engaging, particularly in 2018.

Q And he also said that they're trying to help Democrats. He suggested that the Russians would be trying to help Democrats in the midterm elections. Has there been any evidence whatsoever that Democrats are — that Russians are trying to help Democrats in the 2018 election?

SANDERS: Well, I think you can see just from what took place over — in the Facebook. I know Director Wray wasn't at liberty to speak about the specifics, and I can't get into a lot them. But I can tell you that a number of them were anti-President Trump. And that certainly isn't helping Republicans.

Jon. Oh, I'm sorry, I did — I called on you before. Sorry. Go ahead, Blake.

Q I wanted you to respond, if you could, to the CAFE Standards rule that was proposed by the administration today. The 20 states' attorneys general have already said that they would sue this administration, and this is part of their complaint. They say, "Freezing or weakening these standards put the health of our children, seniors, and communities at risk." It also "increases the rising cost of climate change for our states." The administration's response would be what?

SANDERS: That the reporting that we're reversing Obama-era fuel efficiency standards and preempting the tougher California standards is simply false. What the EPA released yesterday was a notice of proposed rulemaking, not a final rule. The notice lays out a series of options for how to go forward with CAFE Standards, and the notice asks for comments on the range of options. We're simply opening it up for a comment period, and we'll make a final decision at the end of that.

Q (Inaudible) 10 to 25 percent?

SANDERS: I'm sorry?

Q On the move on tariffs, potentially, from 10 to 25 percent, what was the thing that made the President say this is why I want to do it?

SANDERS: Again, the President has been clear he's going to hold China's feet to the fire, and he wants to stop the unfair trade practices.

Emerald.

Q Sarah, since you attacked our news organization, can I get a question from you before this —

SANDERS: Emerald, go ahead. I'll come to you next, Jim.

Q Okay, thank you.

Q Going back to election security, the other night in Tampa, the President mentioned voter IDs for elections. Moving forward with election security, is the administration looking at proposing a voter ID law, or ID law, or pushing a voter ID law?

SANDERS: I'm sorry, what was the last part of your question? There's a lot of feedback, so I'm having a hard time hearing in the back.

Q Sorry. Is the administration, as part of this election security push, also looking to do a voter ID law to try to push something like that through Congress?

SANDERS: Look, we're looking to do everything we can at this point to protect the 2018 elections, the integrity of those elections. And moving on, beyond 2018 to 2020 and after, we haven't made a final decision, but certainly looking at every option available to us.

It's not unreasonable — if I return something to a department store, if I have to cash a check, I have to show my ID in order to do those things — it's not outrageous that if you're going to vote to decide on who the leaders of the local communities, your state, and the federal government are going to be, that you would be asked to show an ID.

Jim.

Q I just wanted to follow up on Sara's question from NPR. She asked you about Ivanka Trump's statement that the press is not the enemy of the people. And she asked you whether or not the press is the enemy of the people.

You read off a laundry list of your concerns about the press, and things that you feel like are misrepresented, but you did not say that the press is not the enemy of the people. And I think it would be a good thing if you were to say, right here, at this briefing, that the press, the people who are gathered in this room right now, doing their jobs every day, asking questions of officials like the ones you brought forward earlier, are not the enemy of the people. I think we deserve that.

SANDERS: If the President has made his position known, I also think it's ironic —

Q Would you mind telling us, Sarah, if you don't —

SANDERS: I'm trying to answer your question. I politely waited, and I even called on you despite the fact that you interrupted me while calling on your colleague.

Q Well, you attacked our news organization —

SANDERS: I said it's ironic —

Q — which is why I interrupted.

SANDERS: I'm trying —

Q But if you finish, if you would not mind letting me have a follow-up, that would be fine.

SANDERS: It's ironic, Jim, that not only you and the media attack the President for his rhetoric when they frequently lower the level of conversation in this country. Repeatedly — repeatedly — the media resorts to personal attacks without any content other than to incite anger.

The media has attacked me personally on a number of occasions, including your own network; said I should be harassed as a life sentence; that I should be choked. ICE officials are not welcome in their place of worship, and personal information is shared on the Internet. When I was hosted by the Correspondents' Association, of which almost all of you are members of, you brought a comedian up to attack my appearance and called me a traitor to my own gender.

Q We didn't try to do that, Sarah.

SANDERS: In fact, as I know — as far as I know, I'm the first Press Secretary in the history of the United States that's required Secret Service protection.

Q Tell that to the five dead people in Annapolis.

Q Brian, let her finish.

SANDERS: The media continues to ratchet up the verbal assault against the President and everyone in this administration, and certainly we have a role to play, but the media has a role to play for the discourse in this country, as well.

Q And, Sarah, if you don't mind — hold on, if I may follow up. If I may follow up —

Q (Inaudible.)

Q — excuse me. You did not say, in the course of those remarks that you just made, that the press is not the enemy of the people. Are we to take it, from what you just said — we all get put through the wringer, we all get put in the meat grinder in this town, and you're no exception. And I'm sorry that that happened to you. I wish that that had not happened.

But for the sake of this room, the people who are in this room, this democracy, this country, all the people around the world are watching what you're saying, Sarah. And the White House, for the United States of America, the President of the United States should not refer to us as the enemy of the people. His own daughter acknowledges that, and all I'm asking you to do, Sarah, is to acknowledge that right now and right here.

SANDERS: I appreciate your passion; I share it. I've addressed this question. I've addressed my personal feelings. I'm here to speak on behalf of the President, and he's made his comments clear.

Go ahead.

Q On another matter — the National Archives told the Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman today that they probably aren't going to be able to finish up the document collection regarding Brett Kavanaugh until October. That's obviously later than the timetable I know you guys and Senate Republicans are hoping for. Any comment on that, or any potential assistance that the White House can give the Archives in accelerating that?

SANDERS: Certainly we want to be as helpful as possible in turning over as many documents. Several senators have stated there will be up to an over a million pages of documents to review, including over 300 judicial opinions. His documents as Staff Secretary tell us the least about his judicial thinking than the million pages from his other work, including his judicial opinions.

We want a thorough evaluation. We've asked for that. But we don't want a taxpayer-funded fishing expedition. We want to continue to be cooperative, and that's exactly what we're going to do.

I'll take a last question. Jordan.

Q Thanks. Thanks, Sarah. I want to follow up on the third part of Jill's questions from earlier on North Korea. We're nearing now the two-month mark from the Singapore summit. So is the President satisfied with the progress North Korea is making towards denuclearization?

SANDERS: The President won't be completely satisfied until all of Korea has been denuclearized. We're going to continue moving forward. We've seen steps of progress and continued cooperation. We're incredibly grateful and thankful for the remains of the servicemembers that were returned yesterday. And we're going to continue to work with North Korea.

I think that's a great place to close out. Thanks so much, guys. Have a good day.

END

2:00 P.M. EDT