

Trump Phone call Transcript

JANUARY 27, 2017, FROM 9:35 TO 10:28 A.M. EST.



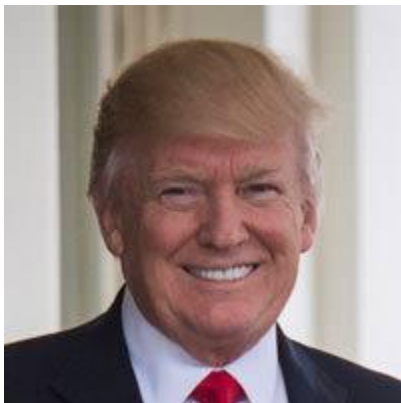
TRUMP

Hello, good morning.



PEÑA NIETO

Mr. President, good morning.



TRUMP

How are you, Mr. President?



PEÑA NIETO

I am good. How are you? It is good to speak with you. Let me switch to Spanish so I will be more comfortable.



TRUMP

Yes, that would be fine, Enrique.



PEÑA NIETO

President Trump, I am very glad to hear from you and I know we have had a point of difference that has complicated the situation. Let me tell you clearly what I think is now happening in the route of reaching an agreement between our two nations. The first thing I want to say is that I highly appreciate the openness of your team and the willingness

of your team to work to open a new framework between our two countries.



TRUMP

Thank you.



PEÑA NIETO

Yes, and I want to also thank you personally for what you said last Wednesday on the importance of Mexico to have a strong economy, and also the responsibility our administration has accepted to stop illegal trafficking of weapons and money coming into Mexico. However, we have found an issue here that marks differences and this is nothing new, Mr. President. I think that since your visit we have spoken about this and this is what I want to talk about, this difference. Let me tell you, Mr. President, this is not a personal difference. It has nothing to do with you personally, Mr. President. But it is an unthinkable that I cannot ignore this because we find this completely unacceptable for Mexicans to pay for the wall that you are thinking of building. I understand, Mr. President, the small political margin that you have now in terms of everything you said that you established throughout your campaign. But I would also like to make you understand, President Trump, the lack of margin I have as President

of Mexico to accept this situation. And this has been, unfortunately, the critical point that has not allowed us to move forward in the building of the relationship between our two countries. I propose, Mr. President, for you to allow us to look for ways to save these differences. For both our governments, this could constitute a win-win situation. I understand the position of your government on this issue, and I respect it. But I also ask for full consideration and respect for the position of my administration, and the position of the Mexican society at large. Let us look for ways to save this political issue so that we can remove this difficulty and so that we can also be creative on this, Mr. President. I am certain that other conversations and discussions that we have had – this route of the dialogue that we are having, especially related to the economy and trade and security – are highly promising in our relationship. I believe we are on the path of overcoming the differences that we have, if this is what we decide to agree on. And I think we can continue in this attitude, the way I think of it, which is a constructive attitude to continue moving forward in a positive manner with friendship as well. That is my position, Mr. President.



TRUMP

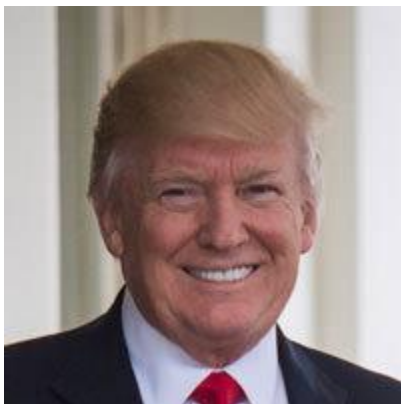
Thank you very much, Enrique. I appreciate that. I thought that was beautifully stated. And certainly, as to the relationship and friendship, I consider you a friend. I met you the one time and I studied you. You are a very hard person to study, because you are sending out messages that are important to the Mexican people. I consider you a friend and I consider Luis, the person working with you, a very smart man. To be very honest with you, I did not want to have a meeting. I did not want to meet with Luis, I did not want to meet with Mexico, I did not want to meet with anybody. It was only because of a very good relationship that Jared Kushner has with Luis that these two decided to meet and

discuss, but I was not really in favor for that meeting. I felt that we should do a much simpler solution, and that solution was tariffs at the border, because the United States has a trade deficit with Mexico of \$60 billion. And the United States will not have those deficits anymore. We do not mind a small deficit, and we do not mind a little time to get there. But we cannot do this and we cannot sustain like this. We will not be the United States anymore. And we cannot listen to this. I was voted on the basis that we are losing so much money to Mexico in terms of jobs, factories, and plants moving to Mexico. We cannot do this anymore and I have to tell you it is not sustainable. And interpreter, I think Enrique understands everything I said, unless you, Enrique, feel you want an interpretation for this, please continue to go forward, is that okay?



PEÑA NIETO

Yes, I will be okay.



TRUMP

Because I have been with him – he speaks better English than me – so we will just go on. What I want is fair tariffs at the border, and I want to be fair because I want a great relationship with Mexico. In the latest election, I won with a large percentage of Hispanic voters. I do not

know if you heard, but with Cuba, I had 84 percent, with the Cuban-American vote. But overall generally, I had well over 30 percent and everyone was shocked to see this. I understand the community and they understand me, and I have a great respect for the Mexican people. But I did not want Jared to meet with Luis. I just wanted to very simply – and with a high level of precision – we put on a border tariff so that products coming in from Mexico to the United States would be taxed at a rate to be determined. But you know, it could be 10 percent or 15 percent or it could be 35 percent for some products that, for example, are jobs ripped from their foundation and moved to Mexico. Most would be in the 10 to 15 percent range. That would make us very even with Mexico and it would make a lot of sense. Now, Mexico may in turn try to do something like that to us. Since we have such a deficit, it gives us the advantage. In addition, I was going to very strongly say this to Mexico and other countries – that everything is reciprocal. So if Mexico adds a tax, we will add a tax.

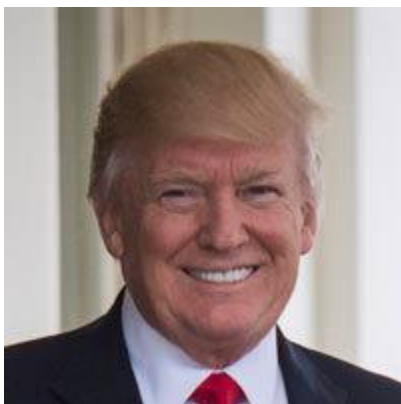
We have a country that has been led by people who have no business understanding. We are living off the success of the past – off the fat of the past – and we cannot continue to do this. So anything another country imposes on us, we would automatically impose a tax on them, so it would not be very wise for them to do the taxing. So I did not want to have the meeting, I just wanted to go along with the very reasonable tax plan we were drawing up for Mexico, and that is honestly where I am right now. When I heard about the meeting, I was happy about it, beyond the fact that I hoped we would remain friendly with you. I was not at all disappointed in the meeting, because Mexico, honestly, through smarter leadership, more cunning leadership – and you are in that category very much so – the very smart leadership in Mexico has taken advantage of the United States. The people of the United States know this. In Ohio, they are having rallies for Trump right now because Trump has taken a hard stance on Mexico. We lost a lot of factories in Ohio and Michigan and I won these states – some of these states have not been won in 38 years by a Republican and I won them very easily. So they are dancing in the streets. You probably have the same thing where they are dancing in your streets also, but in reverse. I just want to put a border tax on, relax, and then we do not have to have meetings. That being said, if you want to have meetings

and you continue to have meetings, I am willing to wait. Jared feels so strongly that you and he will be able to work out a deal – meeting with Luis and his team – but I am very happy to not to have any more meetings and just put a border tax on, like everybody else does. Right now, every nation in the world is charging us what we are not putting on anyone. We have been led by people who really hurt our country. We will not let it go on anymore. With that being said, if you guys want to continue the talks or if you do not want to continue the talks, it is okay, but I would only like to know your thinking on it because I am willing to go either way.



PEÑA NIETO

Yes, Mr. President. The proposal that you are making is completely new, vis-à-vis the conversations our two teams have been having. But I have gathered this from the position that you have taken in terms of trade. I think we have the route to continue having balanced trade between both nations. And frankly, to tell you the truth Mr. President, I feel quite surprised about this new proposal that you are making because it is different from the discussion that both of our teams have been holding —



TRUMP

Enrique, if I can interrupt – this is not a new proposal. This is what I have been saying for a year and a half on the campaign trail. I have been telling this to every group of 50,000 people or 25,000 people – because no one got people in their rallies as big as I did. But I have been saying I wanted to tax people that treated us unfairly at the border, and Mexico is treating us unfairly. Now, this is different from what Luis and Jared have been talking about. But this was not a new proposal – this is the old proposal. This was the proposal I wanted. But they say they can come up with some other idea, and that is fine if they want to try it out. But I got elected on this proposal – this won me the election, along with military and healthcare. So this is not a new proposal this is been here for a year and half.



PEÑA NIETO

Yes, I do understand what you are saying, Mr. President. On this public proposal, I understand it is not new but what I am getting at is that it is new in terms of the type of dialogue we have been having. I would insist very specifically, Mr. President, for us to find a route towards the dialogue to find a balance in our trade. I think that what you have said has weaknesses, as you said, regarding the lack of modernization. I think we can continue working towards building the construction of a new framework to continue our trade relationship among the three countries that are part of NAFTA.



TRUMP

Well, Canada is no problem – do not worry about Canada, do not even think about them. That is a separate thing and they are fine and we have had a very fair relationship with Canada. It has been much more balanced and much more fair. So we do not have to worry about Canada, we do not even think about them.



PEÑA NIETO

I am saying this because it is an asset to have the three partners of NAFTA. Mr. President, let us talk about the Mexico-United States relationship. We can still build a very fair agreement so that we can increase and strengthen competitiveness between our two nations. Let me be precise, Mr. President – I appreciate the attitude of friendship that you have towards me and towards Mexico. And I am not at all trying to take advantage based on this friendship. I am sure we can have the dialogue and the agreement that is the best route to build a more robust and fairer agreement between both nations.

I would appeal to you, Mr. President, for us to allow room to look for a new solution between our two countries. Let me be very specific on one matter – any issue that alters the economic situation in Mexico, I

think, it also constitutes a potential risk for the United States, especially in terms of migration issues, Mr. President. Let me tell you that the best virtual wall that I think we can build between our two countries is to make sure that both countries have economic development. And it is exactly on this issue that we have been talking about a more fair trade relationship between our two countries, so we can build this type of framework for that relationship. I leave this for your consideration, Mr. President. The will of my government is not to have points of difference with you, but rather points of agreement and for the good relationship between our two nations to be translated into economic trade migration and security benefits for both of our countries, our societies, and our administrations. And this is for your consideration, President Trump, if you truly think we can stay on this path and I believe this is more promising for our nations.



TRUMP

Okay, well thank you very much, Enrique. I just wanted to mention that when you talk about people coming across the border – because times will be tough and times will be good – that when times are tough, that is why we have a wall, because we do not want people to come across the border. We do not want them coming across. We have enough people coming across, we want to stop it cold. General Kelly is one of the most respected generals in the entire military system and he is a very fair man, but he is a very tough man. And we have the drug lords in Mexico that are knocking the hell out of our country. They are sending drugs to Chicago, Los Angeles, and to New York. Up in New Hampshire – I won New Hampshire because New Hampshire is a drug-infested den – is coming from the southern border. So we have a lot of problems with Mexico farther than the economic problem. We are becoming a drug-addicted nation and most the drugs are coming

from Mexico or certainly from the southern border. But I will say this – you have that problem too. You have some pretty tough hombres in Mexico that you may need help with, and we are willing to help you with that big-league. But they have to be knocked out and you have not done a good job of knocking them out. We have a massive drug problem where kids are becoming addicted to drugs because drugs are being sold for less money than candy because there is so much of it. So we have to work together to knock that out. And I know this is a tough group of people, and maybe your military is afraid of them, but our military is not afraid of them, and we will help you with that 100 percent because it is out of control – totally out of control.

Now getting back to the taxes for second, I have been given as President tremendous taxation powers for trade and for other reasons – far greater than anybody understands. The powers of taxation are tremendous for the President of the United States and if you study that you will see what I mean. That is why I did not want to have the meeting, I just wanted to tax the border. With all that being said, I would love if you want to reinstitute the meetings between Luis and a staff that I will assemble in the United States. Our Secretary of Commerce, Mr. Ross, will be approved very soon and we have a great team of people – Gary Cohen and lots of others – we have lots of great talent. And talent that wants things to happen. They are dealmakers, they are not obstructionist. We have some of them, but so do you of course. With that being said, if you would like to try and work a deal, that is okay. But if we cannot work a deal, I want to tell you we are going to put a very substantial tax on the border coming into the United States because, honestly, we will not want your products unless your products are going to be taxed. I do not want the products and lesser tax. And what that will mean is factories and plants will start to be built in the United States because the taxes will be too high in Mexico. I do not want to do that if we can work out a deal, so Jared Kushner and Luis can have the teams work out the deal. The only thing I will ask you though is on the wall, you and I both have a political problem. My people stand up and say, “Mexico will pay for the wall” and your people probably say something in a similar but slightly different language. But the fact is we are both in a little bit of a political bind because I have to have Mexico pay for the wall – I have

to. I have been talking about it for a two year period, and the reason I say they are going to pay for the wall is because Mexico has made a fortune out of the stupidity of U.S. trade representatives. They are beating us at trade and they are beating us at the border, and they are killing us with drugs. Now I know you are not involved with that, but regardless of who is making all the money, billions and billions and billions – some people say more – is being made on drug trafficking that is coming through Mexico. Some people say that the business of drug trafficking is bigger than the business of taking our factory jobs. So what I would like to recommend is – if we are going to have continued dialogue – we will work out the wall. They are going to say, “who is going to pay for the wall, Mr. President?” to both of us, and we should both say, “we will work it out.” It will work out in the formula somehow. As opposed to you saying, “we will not pay” and me saying, “we will not pay.”

Because you and I are both at a point now where we are both saying we are not to pay for the wall. From a political standpoint, that is what we will say. We cannot say that anymore because if you are going to say that Mexico is not going to pay for the wall, then I do not want to meet with you guys anymore because I cannot live with that. I am willing to say that we will work it out, but that means it will come out in the wash and that is okay. But you cannot say anymore that the United States is going to pay for the wall. I am just going to say that we are working it out. Believe it or not, this is the least important thing that we are talking about, but politically this might be the most important talk about. But in terms of dollars – or pesos – it is the least important thing. I know how to build very inexpensively, so it will be much lower than these numbers I am being presented with, and it will be a better wall and it will look nice. And it will do the job.

You know, you look at Israel – Israel has a wall and everyone said do not build a wall, walls do not work – 99.9 percent of people trying to come across that wall cannot get across and more. Bibi Netanyahu told me the wall works. We have also hired at least 15,000 more men and women on the border – patrolling the border very carefully. We just cannot play the game of stupidity anymore. I would love to continue talking. When Jared said, “the deal is off,” I was glad. Jared has a great

feeling for the plan, though I know it would be politically much more popular in Mexico and, I think, it will be much less popular for me, to be honest. I think the most popular thing for me would just to put a tariff on the border. But I am willing to see if they can finish up a plan. From what I hear, they have great discussions and it looks good. I guess they have to wait 90 days – there might be a statutory period or something like that and that might be too bad. But that is okay, so we will get Congress involved and let them work through the statutory period. If you want to do that, Enrique, I am good with doing that. And I want to reiterate, you and I will always be friends do not worry.



PEÑA NIETO

In terms of security, Mr. President, it is clear that organized crime is just as much our enemy as it is the enemy of your administration.



TRUMP

Enrique, you and I have to knock it out – you and I have to knock the hell out of them. Listen, I know how tough these guys are – our military will knock them out like you never thought of, we will work to help you knock them out because your country does not want that. Your citizens are being killed all over the place, your police officers are

being shot in the head, and your children are being killed. And we will knock them out.



PEÑA NIETO

I fully agree that we should work together. And let me tell you that a lot of what is happening in terms of traffickers in Mexico is being largely supported by the illegal amounts of money and weapons coming from the United States. And this has led Mexico to fight against criminal gangs with the participation of the military and the entire army of Mexico. And this has taken many lives within the military and all the elements that are committed in this fight. But they are criminal groups that are well-armed, especially with weapons coming from the United States illegally into Mexico. I fully agree that both governments can work together to knock out and to do away fully with these criminal gangs.

And on the other issue, Mr. President, on trade I think we are moving forward in a very positive fashion, especially through the dialogue both of our teams are holding. You have a very big mark on our back, Mr. President, regarding who pays for the wall. This is what I suggest, Mr. President – let us stop talking about the wall. I have recognized the right of any government to protect its borders as it deems necessary and convenient. But my position has been and will continue to be very firm saying that Mexico cannot pay for that wall.



TRUMP

But you cannot say that to the press. The press is going to go with that and I cannot live with that. You cannot say that to the press because I cannot negotiate under those circumstances.



PEÑA NIETO

I understand you well, Mr. President. I understand this critical point and I understand the critical political position that this constitutes for your country and for you, Mr. President. Let us look for a creative way to jump over this obstacle. It does not mean that this is not an important issue – this is an important issue. However, this is why we should walk on the path that we began, because when we start talking about the wall it prevents us from talking about other important issues that we must discuss. I clearly understand what this issue constitutes for you in the United States. And for Mexico, it is also an issue that goes beyond the economic situation because this is an issue related to the dignity of Mexico and goes to the national pride of my country. Let us for now stop talking about the wall. Let us look for a creative way to solve this issue, for this to serve both are your government, my government, and both of our societies. Let us leave this topic – let us put it aside and let us find a creative way of looking into this issue.

And let us move forward on other issues that I think are positive for both of our countries. That would be my position, Mr. President.



TRUMP

Okay, Enrique, that is fine and I think it is fair. I do not bring up the wall but when the press brings up the wall, I will say, “let us see how it is going – let us see how it is working out with Mexico.” Because from an economic issue, it is the least important thing we were talking about, but psychologically, it means something so let us just say “we will work it out.” And if you want to do that, then we will go back to the negotiation table with Jared and Luis. And I am sure they can work something out that is good for both nations, and obviously that would be a positive thing. And I am sort of in this bad position because the deal that they are making is not nearly as good as the deal I could impose tomorrow – in fact this afternoon. I do not have to go back to Congress or to the Senate. I do not need the vote of 400 people. I have the powers to do all of this, and I came to the office this morning and I met with a group of people – we had a plan to just go into what I wanted to do for two years. But I know what you are saying, it is something that is good for you. It is very important for you to understand this – I want the best solution also for Mexico. I do not just want a great solution for the United States. And what I am talking about is not a good solution for Mexico – it is a great solution for the United States, which is a tariff on everything coming into our country. Now, that is the best solution economically for the United States, but I feel very strongly that it is important that as our neighbor, we have a strong relationship – the stronger the better.

Now, the reason I do like an agreement is I want Mexico to be a strong and happy country. I think I can do that. And we can get close enough

to have a decent deal for the United States but at the same time have a good deal for Mexico. So I am okay with that. The thing I need you to understand is that right now we have a \$60 billion trade deficit. That is unsustainable. And do not feel lonely because we are going to be having talks with China also. China is beyond what is happened with that whole thing, and you will be very happy because that will be good for you – believe me. We are going to treat them fairly and we want a good relationship with China. But with Mexico, you are our neighbor and I want to do what is good for Mexico. That is very important [to] me. With that being said, if you think it is appropriate, I will let Jared Kushner, Wilbur Ross, and all the different people that are involved – Wilbur will be confirmed as Secretary of Commerce any moment now – to get with your team and they can knock something out that will be a fabulous agreement. It will look good for both of us. I will say with you representing Mexico and me representing the United States we will have a good agreement and we will almost become the fathers of our country – almost not quite okay? Please go away from this conversation understanding it is not my first choice, but what I want is to have a good and strong neighbor in Mexico.



PEÑA NIETO

And we have to generate jobs, and we have to be stronger and we have to be growing. I share that position with you.



TRUMP

It is you and I against the world, Enrique, do not forget.



PEÑA NIETO

The spirit of my government, in the position of my administration, is for things to go well for the United States and for things to go well for your government, because this is the only way that we can continue working together, and that is really my honest position. Let us stop talking about who pays for the wall, talking about the wall in general, because I think there is a more creative way we can start looking for a solution. And it is the way we can remove the big block in our path. And let us now start talking about creative ways on how this wall is going to be paid because I fully understand that it is your sovereign right to talk about this, because you are protecting your southern border. But this cannot be the strongest thing in our path that keeps us from having a dialogue, and keeps us from having economic development.



TRUMP

That is very good, I agree with you 100 percent. Enrique, if you want, I have the Prime Minister of Great Britain coming in in a little while. If you want, you can put out a statement saying that we had a great conversation and our teams are going to continue to talk and just say we will not discuss the wall. We will discuss other things but we had a conversation. Now, there are some time delays that are imposed. I guess the 90-day period or a similar timeframe. Let me confirm with some of my people here. Well, Jared and Luis know what the timelines are, so why don't they work out a mutual statement? So, Enrique, if it is okay with you, Jared and Luis will work out a mutual statement that we can put out together.



PEÑA NIETO

Yes, Mr. President. I fully agree with you on Jared and Luis working together on this.



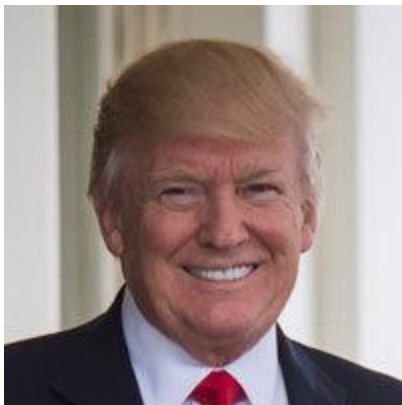
TRUMP

Good. I want you to be so popular that your people will call for a constitutional amendment in Mexico so that you can run again for another six years.



PEÑA NIETO

You are very kind, Mr. President. And really, the only thing I am interested in for both of our nations to do well – for your government, for you, and for us to truly have a relationship with friendship and a very constructive relationship, Mr. Trump.



TRUMP

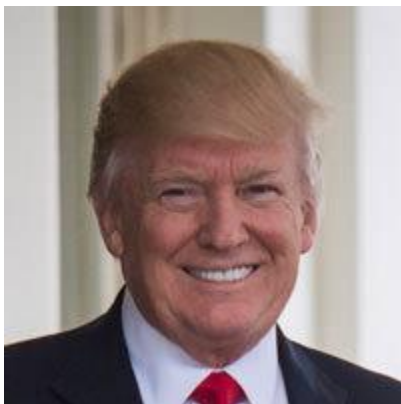
You know, we should put that in the statement. Your words are so beautiful. Those are beautiful words and I do not think I can speak

that beautifully, okay? It would be great to put those words at the end of the statement. Really nice though.



PEÑA NIETO

We will do so, Mr. President, and we will let Jared and Luis define the statement with a positive and constructive view that we both have. I know that we want to build a friendship between both of us and to work for the betterment of our societies. So, let us move on that position and let us look twice at what is obstructing us and move forward on a path to build together. Let us have Luis and Jared work on a statement. Thank you for your time and your views. I know this is a long conversation, which I appreciate.



TRUMP

Well, it is my honor and we will have a great success. I will explain to Jared everything and they should talk soon. I appreciate all of your time, too, Enrique, and I look forward to seeing you soon. I feel confident with those two, plus their teams, will get something done that will be great for both countries.



PEÑA NIETO

I am sure that will happen, Mr. President. Thank you so much. I look forward also to see you very soon. Thank you.



TRUMP

Thank you. Goodbye.

## END OF CALL

Peña Nieto is a fluent English speaker but switches to Spanish in formal settings. Trump continues to use Peña Nieto's first name throughout the conversation — a total of 13 times.

While announcing his border wall executive order, Trump said, "We also understand that a strong and healthy economy in Mexico is very good for the United States — very, very good."

Peña Nieto could be referring to Trump's visit to Mexico on Aug. 31. Trump, then the Republican presidential candidate, held a joint news conference with Pena Nieto and said the two didn't discuss who would pay for the proposed border wall.

Luis Videgaray is Mexico's foreign minister.

Videgaray and Kushner worked together to soften Trump's words during his border wall speech.

This figure is out of context. The deficit is high because of increasing U.S. trade with Mexico. Economists generally agree that a high trade deficit coupled with high numbers of imports and exports is a good thing.

As a result of the North American Free Trade Agreement, the United States, Canada and Mexico constitute an economically integrated market, especially for the auto industry. Auto parts and vehicles produced in each country freely flow over the borders, without tariffs or other restrictions, as thousands of part suppliers serve the automakers that build the vehicles. Factories built in Mexico may actually free up production in the United States, so it's not a zero-sum game.

This is a false claim. Trump did as well as Mitt Romney and worse than John McCain; Hillary Clinton lost some votes to third-party candidates, and therefore she did worse than Barack Obama.

Ohio and Michigan actually have lost many auto industry jobs to other states, not countries. Factories have also closed because of automation and because American workers have become more productive, so fewer workers are needed to make the same number of goods. Trump swept Ohio with the help of white middle-class voters but won by a razor-thin 0.2 percentage points in Michigan. In 2015, Trump called Mexico "the new China" during a visit to Flint, Mich. "They're taking our factories, and they're rebuilding these massive plants in Mexico," Trump said.

Peña Nieto is probably saying this because trade was not discussed in any formal settings and Trump was referencing campaign promises.

Trump often boasted of the crowd size at his rallies but has also inflated these numbers. The highest turnout would have probably been in Mobile, Ala., where an estimated 30,000 people attended. Other candidates also had large turnouts. The campaign of Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) said its rally in Portland attracted 28,000 people, and the next day 27,500 came to an event in Los Angeles.

Trump tapped retired Gen. John F. Kelly in December to head DHS. Kelly was picked in part because of his border expertise as the former head of U.S. Southern Command. New Hampshire has been particularly hard hit by heroin and prescription drug abuse. The state also has the highest synthetic opioid death rate in the country. Trump has previously said the state has an "unbelievable" heroin problem, adding: "You know where that stuff comes from." Trump won the New Hampshire Republican primary, but it was actually Clinton who was declared the winner of New Hampshire in the presidential race — six days after she lost the election.

Congress delegated some tariff and trade powers to the president, but the president's actions may be challenged in court.

The U.S. has a smaller trade deficit with Canada than it does with Mexico, although Trump has also clashed with with Canada over softwood lumber tariffs. In April, Trump said that "Canada's been very rough on the United States."

Even before Trump was elected, a Pew research study found that more Mexicans are leaving the United States than migrating to America.

Billionaire investor Wilbur Ross was confirmed as the commerce secretary on Feb. 27. Investment banker Gary Cohn is Trump's chief economic adviser and director of the National Economic Council.

Trump previously said the wall would cost \$8 billion, but the Department of Homeland Security estimates it would cost \$21.6 billion.

Bibi is the nickname of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Only one-tenth (33 miles) of the Israeli barrier with Palestinian territories is a 25-foot-tall concrete wall. The other 90 percent is a six-foot-high electronic fence.

Trump had to inform Congress first on his intention of negotiating any trade deal, including NAFTA. The process requires a 90-day consultation period. In May, the administration negotiated a deal with China softening trade barriers on beef, poultry and natural gas, among other industries. More recently, the administration has been threatening to investigate Chinese trade practices. Trump hosted British Prime Minister Theresa May at the White House on the same day as his conversation with Peña Nieto. The president of Mexico is limited to a single term in office for six years. Peña Nieto's approval rating is lower than Trump's.



## Conversation with Australian Prime Minister Turnbull

Turnbull, a member of Australia's conservative Liberal Party, took over as prime minister in 2015. During the phone call, Trump and Turnbull discuss an Obama-era agreement in which the United States will vet and take refugees who have been imprisoned after trying to enter Australia by boat.

Timeline



Donald Trump is inaugurated.

Friday  
Jan. 20

Trump hosts Britain's Prime Minister Theresa May. Trump issues entry ban.  
Call with Peña Nieto.

Friday  
Jan. 27

Trump also holds calls with Japan Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, French President François Hollande, Russian President Vladimir Putin and German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

Call with Turnbull.

Saturday  
Jan. 28

The [two-sentence readout of the conversation from the White House](#) states both leaders “emphasized the enduring strength and closeness of the U.S.-Australia relationship,” but the full transcript below shows a heated 24-minute conversation in which Trump vents about his accepting refugees a day after he signed an entry ban.

## Highlights

1. Trump tells Turnbull that accepting the refugees “will make us look awfully bad.”



2. Turnbull tries to explain to Trump that the refugee deal is consistent with the travel ban



3. Turnbull tells Trump that the deal is “really, really important” to Australia.



4. Trump says the refugee deal is “going to kill me.”



5. Trump calls the agreement a “stupid deal” that will make him “look terrible.”



6. Trump tells Turnbull “I have had it” and ends the call.



JANUARY 28, 2017 FROM 5:05 TO 5:29 P.M. EST.



TURNBULL

Good evening.



TRUMP

Mr. Prime Minister, how are you?



TURNBULL

I am doing very well.



TRUMP

And I guess our friend Greg Norman, he is doing very well?



TURNBULL

He is a great mutual friend yes.



TRUMP

Well you say hello to him. He is a very good friend. By the way thank you very much for taking the call. I really appreciate it. It is really nice.



TURNBULL

Thank you very much. Everything is going very well. I want to congratulate you and Mike Pence on being sworn in now. I have spoken to you both now as you know. I know we are both looking to make our relationship which is very strong and intimate, stronger than ever – which I believe we can do.



TRUMP

Good.



TURNBULL

I believe you and I have similar backgrounds, unusual for politicians, more businessman but I look forward to working together.



TRUMP

That is exactly right. We do have similar backgrounds and it seems to be working in this climate – it is a crazy climate. Let me tell you this, it is an evil time but it is a complex time because we do not have uniforms standing in front of us. Instead, we have people in disguise. It is brutal. This ISIS thing – it is something we are going to devote a lot of energy to it. I think we are going to be very successful.



TURNBULL

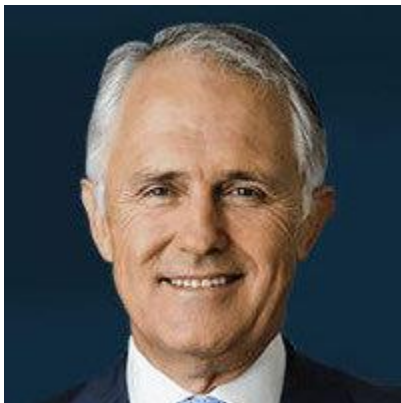
Absolutely. We have, as you know, taken a very strong line on national security and border protection here and when I was speaking with Jared Kushner just the other day and one of your immigration advisors in the White House we reflected on how our policies have helped to inform your approach. We are very much of the same mind. It is very interesting to know how you prioritize the minorities in your Executive Order. This is exactly what we have done with the program to bring in 12,000 Syrian refugees, 90% of which will be Christians. It will be quite deliberate and the position I have taken – I have been very open about it – is that it is a tragic fact of life that when the situation in the Middle East settles down – the people that are going to be most unlikely to have a continuing home are those Christian

minorities. We have seen that in Iraq and so from our point of view, as a final destination for refugees, that is why we prioritize. It is not a sectarian thing. It is recognition of the practical political realities. We have a similar perspective in that respect.



TRUMP

Do you know four years ago Malcom, I was with a man who does this for a living. He was telling me, before the migration, that if you were a Christian from Syria, you had no chance of coming to the United States. Zero. They were the ones being persecuted. When I say persecuted, I mean their heads were being chopped off. If you were a Muslim we have nothing against Muslims, but if you were a Muslim you were not persecuted at least to the extent – but if you were a Muslim from Syria that was the number one place to get into the United States from. That was the easiest thing. But if you were a Christian from Syria you have no chance of getting into the United States. I just thought it was an incredible statistic. Totally true – and you have seen the same thing. It is incredible.



TURNBULL

Well, yes. Mr. President, can I return to the issue of the resettlement agreement that we had with the Obama administration with respect

to some people on Nauru and Manus Island. I have written to you about this and Mike Pence and General Flynn spoke with Julie Bishop and my National Security Advisor yesterday. This is a very big issue for us, particularly domestically, and I do understand you are inclined to a different point of view than the Vice President.



TRUMP

Well, actually I just called for a total ban on Syria and from many different countries from where there is terror, and extreme vetting for everyone else – and somebody told me yesterday that close to 2,000 people are coming who are really probably troublesome. And I am saying, boy that will make us look awfully bad. Here I am calling for a ban where I am not letting anybody in and we take 2,000 people. Really it looks like 2,000 people that Australia does not want and I do not blame you by the way, but the United States has become like a dumping ground. You know Malcom, anybody that has a problem – you remember the Mariel boat lift, where Castro let everyone out of prison and Jimmy Carter accepted them with open arms. These were brutal people. Nobody said Castro was stupid, but now what are we talking about is 2,000 people that are actually imprisoned and that would actually come into the United States. I heard about this – I have to say I love Australia; I love the people of Australia. I have so many friends from Australia, but I said – geez that is a big ask, especially in light of the fact that we are so heavily in favor, not in favor, but we have no choice but to stop things. We have to stop. We have allowed so many people into our country that should not be here. We have our San Bernardino's, we have had the World Trade Center come down because of people that should not have been in our country, and now we are supposed to take 2,000. It sends such a bad signal. You have no idea. It is such a bad thing.



TURNBULL

Can you hear me out Mr. President?



TRUMP

Yeah, go ahead.



TURNBULL

Yes, the agreement, which the Vice President just called the Foreign Minister about less than 24 hours ago and said your Administration would be continuing, does not require you to take 2,000 people. It does not require you to take any. It requires, in return, for us to do a number of things for the United States – this is a big deal, I think we should respect deals.



TRUMP

Who made the deal? Obama?



TURNBULL

Yes, but let me describe what it is. I think it is quite consistent. I think you can comply with it. It is absolutely consistent with your Executive Order so please just hear me out. The obligation is for the United States to look and examine and take up to and only if they so choose – 1,250 to 2,000. Every individual is subject to your vetting. You can decide to take them or to not take them after vetting. You can decide to take 1,000 or 100. It is entirely up to you. The obligation is to only go through the process. So that is the first thing. Secondly, the people – none of these people are from the conflict zone. They are basically economic refugees from Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. That is the vast bulk of them. They have been under our supervision for over three years now and we know exactly everything about them.



TRUMP

Why haven't you let them out? Why have you not let them into your society?



TURNBULL

Okay, I will explain why. It is not because they are bad people. It is because in order to stop people smugglers, we had to deprive them of the product. So we said if you try to come to Australia by boat, even if we think you are the best person in the world, even if you are a Noble [sic] Prize winning genius, we will not let you in. Because the problem with the people —



TRUMP

That is a good idea. We should do that too. You are worse than I am.



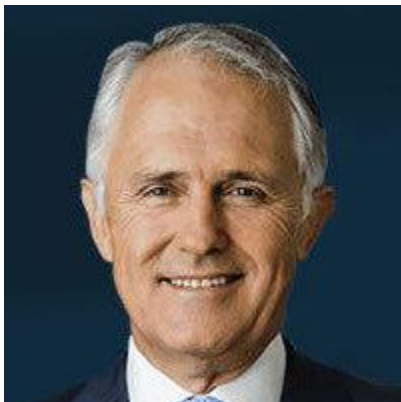
TURNBULL

This is our experience.



TRUMP

Because you do not want to destroy your country. Look at what has happened in Germany. Look at what is happening in these countries. These people are crazy to let this happen. I spoke to Merkel today, and believe me, she wishes she did not do it. Germany is a mess because of what happened.



TURNBULL

I agree with you, letting one million Syrians walk into their country. It was one of the big factors in the Brexit vote, frankly.



TRUMP

Well, there could be two million people coming in Germany. Two million people. Can you believe it? It will never be the same.



TURNBULL

I stood up at the UN in September and set up what our immigration policy was. I said that you cannot maintain popular support for immigration policy, multiculturalism, unless you can control your borders. The bottom line is that we got here. I am asking you as a very good friend. This is a big deal. It is really, really important to us that we maintain it. It does not oblige you to take one person that you do not want. As I have said, your homeland officials have visited and they have already interviewed these people. You can decide. It is at your discretion. So you have the wording in the Executive Order that enables the Secretary of Homeland Security and the Secretary of State to admit people on a case by case basis in order to conform with an existing agreement. I do believe that you will never find a better friend to the United States than Australia. I say this to you sincerely that it is in the mutual interest of the United States to say, “yes, we can conform with that deal – we are not obliged to take anybody we do not want, we will go through extreme vetting” and that way you are seen to show the

respect that a trusted ally wants and deserves. We will then hold up our end of the bargain by taking in our country 31 [inaudible] that you need to move on from.



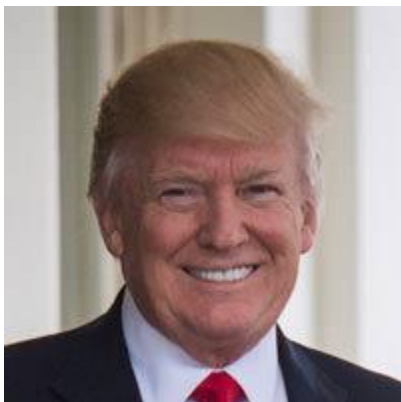
TRUMP

Malcom [sic], why is this so important? I do not understand. This is going to kill me. I am the world's greatest person that does not want to let people into the country. And now I am agreeing to take 2,000 people and I agree I can vet them, but that puts me in a bad position. It makes me look so bad and I have only been here a week.



TURNBULL

With great respect, that is not right – It is not 2,000.



TRUMP

Well, it is close. I have also heard like 5,000 as well.



TURNBULL

The given number in the agreement is 1,250 and it is entirely a matter of your vetting. I think that what you could say is that the Australian government is consistent with the principles set out in the Executive Order.



TRUMP

No, I do not want say that. I will just have to say that unfortunately I will have to live with what was said by Obama. I will say I hate it. Look, I spoke to Putin, Merkel, Abe of Japan, to France today, and this was my most unpleasant call because I will be honest with you. I hate taking these people. I guarantee you they are bad. That is why they are in prison right now. They are not going to be wonderful people who go on to work for the local milk people.



TURNBULL

I would not be so sure about that. They are basically —



TRUMP

Well, maybe you should let them out of prison. I am doing this because Obama made a bad deal. I am not doing this because it fits into my Executive Order. I am taking 2,000 people from Australia who are in prison and the day before I signed an Executive Order saying that we are not taking anybody in. We are not taking anybody in, those days are over.



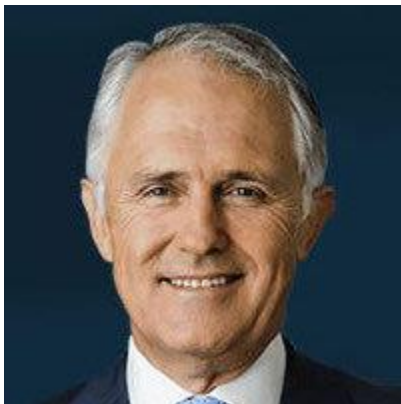
TURNBULL

But can I say to you, there is nothing more important in business or politics than a deal is a deal. Look, you and I have a lot of mutual friends.



TRUMP

Look, I do not know how you got them to sign a deal like this, but that is how they lost the election. They said I had no way to 270 and I got 306. That is why they lost the election, because of stupid deals like this. You have brokered many a stupid deal in business and I respect you, but I guarantee that you broke many a stupid deal. This is a stupid deal. This deal will make me look terrible.



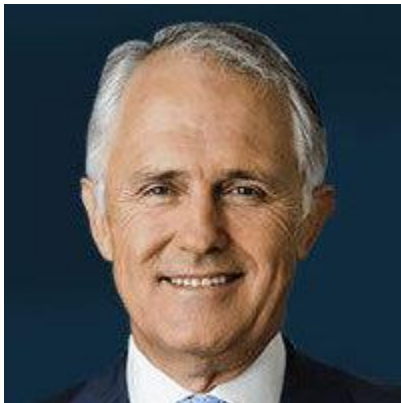
TURNBULL

Mr. President, I think this will make you look like a man who stands by the commitments of the United States. It shows that you are a committed —



TRUMP

Okay, this shows me to be a dope. I am not like this but, if I have to do it, I will do it but I do not like this at all. I will be honest with you. Not even a little bit. I think it is ridiculous and Obama should have never signed it. The only reason I will take them is because I have to honor a deal signed by my predecessor and it was a rotten deal. I say that it was a stupid deal like all the other deals that this country signed. You have to see what I am doing. I am unlocking deals that were made by people, these people were incompetent. I am not going to say that it fits within the realm of my Executive Order. We are going to allow 2,000 prisoners to come into our country and it is within the realm of my Executive Order? If that is the case my Executive Order does not mean anything Malcom [sic]. I look like a dope. The only way that I can do this is to say that my predecessor made a deal and I have no option then to honor the deal. I hate having to do it, but I am still going to vet them very closely. Suppose I vet them closely and I do not take any?



TURNBULL

That is the point I have been trying to make.



TRUMP

How does that help you?



TURNBULL

Well, we assume that we will act in good faith.



TRUMP

Does anybody know who these people are? Who are they? Where do they come from? Are they going to become the Boston bomber in five years? Or two years? Who are these people?



TURNBULL

Let me explain. We know exactly who they are. They have been on Nauru or Manus for over three years and the only reason we cannot let them into Australia is because of our commitment to not allow people to come by boat. Otherwise we would have let them in. If they had arrived by airplane and with a tourist visa then they would be here.



TRUMP

Malcom [sic], but they are arrived on a boat?



TURNBULL

Correct, we have stopped the boats.



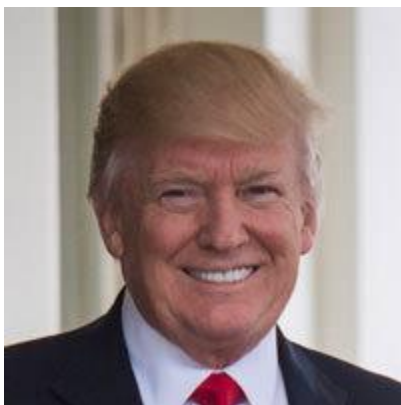
TRUMP

Give them to the United States. We are like a dumping ground for the rest of the world. I have been here for a period of time, I just want this to stop. I look so foolish doing this. It [sic] know it is good for you but it is bad for me. It is horrible for me. This is what I am trying to stop. I do not want to have more San Bernardino's or World Trade Centers. I could name 30 others, but I do not have enough time.



TURNBULL

These guys are not in that league. They are economic refugees.



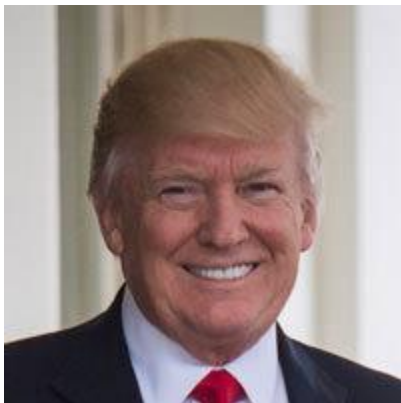
TRUMP

Okay, good. Can Australia give me a guarantee that if we have any problems – you know that is what they said about the Boston bombers. They said they were wonderful young men.



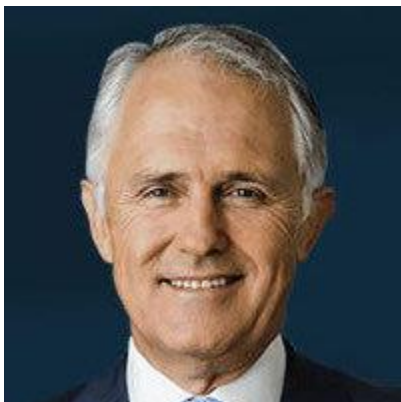
TURNBULL

They were Russians. They were not from any of these countries.



TRUMP

They were from wherever they were.



TURNBULL

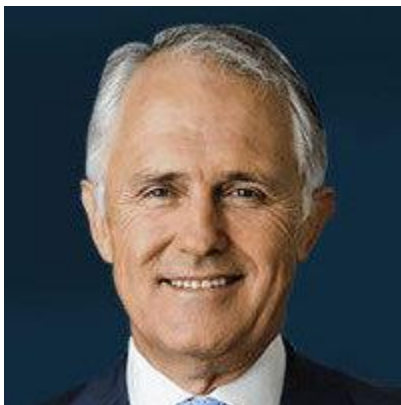
Please, if we can agree to stick to the deal, you have complete discretion in terms of a security assessment. The numbers are not 2,000 but 1,250 to start. Basically, we are taking people from the

previous administration that they were very keen on getting out of the United States. We will take more. We will take anyone that you want us to take. The only people that we do not take are people who come by boat. So we would rather take a not very attractive guy that help you out then to take a Noble [sic] Peace Prize winner that comes by boat. That is the point.



TRUMP

What is the thing with boats? Why do you discriminate against boats? No, I know, they come from certain regions. I get it.



TURNBULL

No, let me explain why. The problem with the boats it that you are basically outsourcing your immigration program to people smugglers and also you get thousands of people drowning at sea. So what we say is, we will decide which people get to come to Australia who are refugees, economic migrants, businessmen, whatever. We decide. That is our decision. We are a generous multicultural immigration nation like the United States but the government decides, the people's representatives decides. So that is the point. I am a highly transactional businessman like you and I know the deal has to work for both sides. Now Obama thought this deal worked for him and he

drove a hard bargain with us – that it was agreed with Obama more than a year ago in the Oval Office, long before the election. The principles of the deal were agreed to.



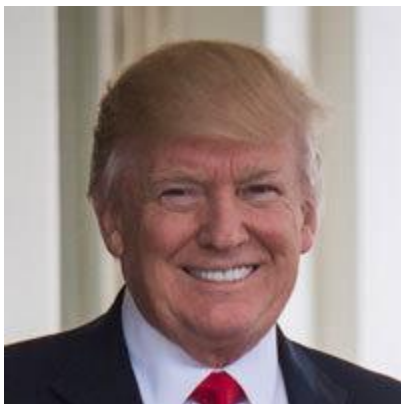
TRUMP

I do not know what he got out of it. We never get anything out of it – START Treaty, the Iran deal. I do not know where they find these people to make these stupid deals. I am going to get killed on this thing.



TURNBULL

You will not.



TRUMP

Yes, I will be seen as a weak and ineffective leader in my first week by these people. This is a killer.



TURNBULL

You can certainly say that it was not a deal that you would have done, but you are going to stick with it.



TRUMP

I have no choice to say that about it. Malcom [sic], I am going to say that I have no choice but to honor my predecessor's deal. I think it is a horrible deal, a disgusting deal that I would have never made. It is an embarrassment to the United States of America and you can say it just the way I said it. I will say it just that way. As far as I am concerned that is enough Malcom [sic]. I have had it. I have been making these calls all day and this is the most unpleasant call all day. Putin was a pleasant call. This is ridiculous.



TURNBULL

Do you want to talk about Syria and DPRK?



TRUMP

[inaudible] this is crazy.



TURNBULL

Thank you for your commitment. It is very important to us.



TRUMP

It is important to you and it is embarrassing to me. It is an embarrassment to me, but at least I got you off the hook. So you put me back on the hook.



TURNBULL

You can count on me. I will be there again and again.



TRUMP

I hope so. Okay, thank you Malcolm.



Okay, thank you.  
END OF CALL

TURNBULL