

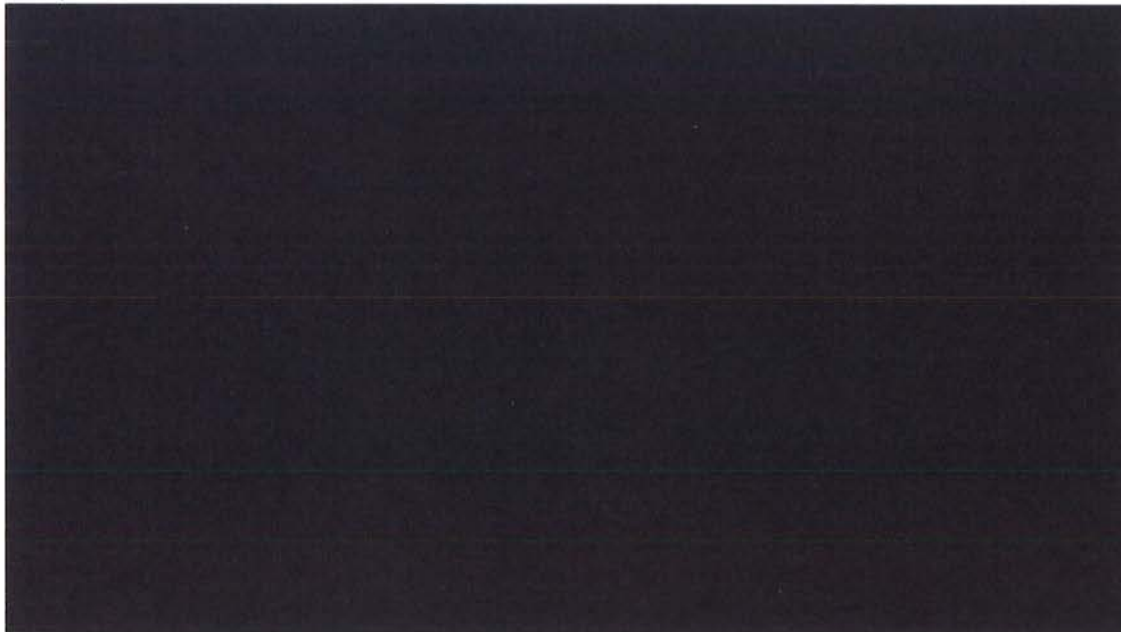


TRANSCRIPT: ABC News anchor David Muir interviews President Trump

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By **ABC NEWS**

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WATCH | Trump: 'I Can Be the Most Presidential Person Ever' Other Than Lincoln



On Wednesday, Jan. 25, 2017, ABC News "World News Tonight" anchor David Muir interviewed President [Donald Trump](#) in the White House. The following is a transcript of the interview:



DAVID MUIR: Mr. President, it's an honor to be here at the White House.



PRESIDENT TRUMP: Thank you very much, David.

DAVID MUIR: Let me ask you, has the magnitude of this job hit you yet?

PRESIDENT TRUMP: It has periodically hit me. And it is a tremendous magnitude. And where you really see it is when you're talking to the generals about problems in the world. And we do have problems in the world. Big problems. The business also hits because the -- the size of it. The size.

I was with the Ford yesterday. And with [General Motors](#) yesterday. The top representatives, great people. And they're gonna do some tremendous work in the United States. They're gonna build plants back in the United States. But when you see the size, even as a businessman, the size of the investment that these big companies are gonna make, it hits you even in that regard. But we're gonna bring jobs back to America, like I promised on the campaign trail.

DAVID MUIR: And we're gonna get to it all right here.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Good.

DAVID MUIR: Mr. President, I want to start -- we're five days in. And your campaign promises. I know today you plan on signing the order to build the wall.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Correct.

DAVID MUIR: Are you going to direct U.S. funds to pay for this wall? Will American taxpayers pay for the wall?

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Ultimately it'll come out of what's happening with Mexico. We're gonna be starting those negotiations relatively soon. And we will be in a form reimbursed by Mexico which I will say ...

DAVID MUIR: So, they'll pay us back?

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Yeah, absolutely, 100 percent.

DAVID MUIR: So, the American taxpayer will pay for the wall at first?

PRESIDENT TRUMP: All it is, is we'll be reimbursed at a later date from whatever transaction we make from Mexico. Now, I could wait a year and I could hold off the wall. But I wanna build the wall. We have to build the wall. We have to stop drugs from pouring in. We have to stop people from just pouring into our country. We have no idea where they're from. And I campaigned on the wall. And it's very important. But that wall will cost us nothing.

DAVID MUIR: But you talked -- often about Mexico paying for the wall. And you, again, say they'll pay us back. Mexico's president said in recent days that Mexico absolutely will not pay, adding that, "It goes against our dignity as a country and our dignity as Mexicans." He says ...

(OVERTALK)

PRESIDENT TRUMP: David, he has to say that. He has to say that. But I'm just telling you there will be a payment. It will be in a form, perhaps a complicated form. And you have to understand what I'm doing is good for the United States. It's also going to be good for Mexico.

We wanna have a very stable, very solid Mexico. Even more solid than it is right now. And they need it also. Lots of things are coming across Mexico that they don't want. I think it's going to be a good thing for both countries. And I think the relationship will be better than ever before.

You know, when we had a prisoner in Mexico, as you know, two years ago, that we were trying to get out. And Mexico was not helping us, I will tell you, those days are over. I think we're gonna end up with a much better relationship with Mexico. We will have the wall and in a very serious form Mexico will pay for the wall.

DAVID MUIR: What are you gonna say to some of your supporters who might say, "Wait a minute, I thought Mexico was going to pay for this right at the start."

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Well, I'd say very simply that they are going to pay for it. I never said they're gonna pay from the start. I said Mexico will pay for the wall. But what I will tell my supporters is, "Would you like me to wait two years or three years before I make this deal?" Because we have to make a deal on NAFTA. We have to make a new trade deal with Mexico because we're getting clobbered.

We have a \$60-billion trade deficit. So, if you want, I can wait two years and then we can do it nice and easily. I wanna start the wall immediately. Every supporter I have -- I have had so many people calling and tweeting and -- and writing letters saying they're so happy about it. I wanna start the wall. We will be reimbursed for the wall.

DAVID MUIR: When does construction begin?

PRESIDENT TRUMP: As soon as we can. As soon as we can physically do it. We're ...

DAVID MUIR: Within months?

PRESIDENT TRUMP: I would say in months. Yeah, I would say in months. Certainly planning is starting immediately.

DAVID MUIR: People feel ...

(OVERTALK)

PRESIDENT TRUMP: We'll be having some really good, really solid plans within a short period of time.

DAVID MUIR: When people learn of the news of this wall today there are gonna be a lot of people listening to this. And I wanna ask about undocumented immigrants who are here -- in this country. Right now they're protected as so-called dreamers -- the children who were brought here, as you know, by their parents. Should they be worried -- that they could be deported? And is there anything you can say to assure them right now that they'll be allowed to stay?

PRESIDENT TRUMP: They shouldn't be very worried. They are here illegally. They shouldn't be very worried. I do have a big heart. We're going to take care of everybody. We're going to have a very strong border. We're gonna have a very solid border. Where you have great people that are here that have done a good job, they should be far less worried. We'll be coming out with policy on that over the next period of four weeks.

DAVID MUIR: But Mr. President, will they be allowed to stay?

PRESIDENT TRUMP: I'm gonna tell you over the next four weeks. But I will tell you, we're looking at this, the whole immigration situation, we're looking at it with great heart. Now we have criminals that are here. We have really bad people that are here. Those people have to be worried 'cause they're getting out. We're gonna get them out. We're gonna get 'em out fast. General Kelly is -- I've given that as his number one priority.

DAVID MUIR: Senator Jeff Sessions, your pick for attorney general, as you know during his confirmation hearing said that ending DACA, this is President Obama's policy protecting the dreamers -- that, "Ending it certainly would be constitutional." That you could end the protection of these dreamers. Is that a possibility?

PRESIDENT TRUMP: We're gonna be talking with -- attorney general. He will soon be the attorney general. He's done fantastically well. We're all very proud of him. I thought he was treated very, very unfairly. He's a brilliant man and he's a very good man. He'll do a fantastic job. I'll be speaking to him as soon as he's affirmed.

DAVID MUIR: So, it's a possibility.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: We will be talking to the attorney general.

DAVID MUIR: I wanna ask you about something you said this week right here at the White House. You brought in congressional leaders to the White House. You spoke at length about the presidential election with them -- telling them that you lost the popular vote because of millions of illegal votes, 3 to 5 million illegal votes. That would be the biggest electoral fraud in American history. Where is the evidence of that?

PRESIDENT TRUMP: So, let me tell you first of all, it was so misrepresented. That was supposed to be a confidential meeting. And you weren't supposed to go out and talk to the press as soon as you -- but the Democrats viewed it not as a confidential meeting.

DAVID MUIR: But you have tweeted ...

(OVERTALK)

DAVID MUIR: ... about the millions of illegals ...

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Sure. And I do -- and I'm very ...

(OVERTALK)

PRESIDENT TRUMP: ... and I mean it. But just so you -- it was supposed to be a confidential meeting. They turned it into not a con... Number two, the conversation lasted for about a minute. They made it -- somebody said it was, like, 25 percent of the ... It wasn't. It was hardly even discussed.

I said it. And I said it strongly because what's going on with voter fraud is horrible. That's number one. Number two, I would've won the popular vote if I was campaigning for the popular vote. I would've gone to California where I didn't go at

all. I would've gone to New York where I didn't campaign at all.

I would've gone to a couple of places that I didn't go to. And I would've won that much easier than winning the electoral college. But as you know, the electoral college is all that matters. It doesn't make any difference. So, I would've won very, very easily. But it's a different form of winning. You would campaign much differently. You would have a totally different campaign. So, but ...

(OVERTALK)

PRESIDENT TRUMP: ... you're just asking a question. I would've easily won the popular vote, much easier, in my opinion, than winning the electoral college. I ended up going to 19 different states. I went to the state of Maine four times for one. I needed one.

I went to M-- I got it, by the way. But it turned out I didn't need it because we ended up winning by a massive amount, 306. I needed 270. We got 306. You and everybody said, "There's no way you get to 270." I mean, your network said and almost everybody said, "There's no way you can get to ..." So, I went to Maine four times. I went to various places. And that's the beauty of the electoral college. With that being said, if you look at voter registration, you look at the dead people that are registered to vote who vote, you look at people that are registered in two states, you look at all of these different things that are happening with registration. You take a look at those registration for -- you're gonna s-- find -- and we're gonna do an investigation on it.

DAVID MUIR: But 3 to 5 million illegal votes?

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Well, we're gonna find out. But it could very well be that much. Absolutely.

DAVID MUIR: But ...

PRESIDENT TRUMP: But we're gonna find out.

(OVERTALK)

PRESIDENT TRUMP: In fact, I heard one of the other side, they were saying it's not 3 to 5. It's not 3 to 5. I said, "Well, Mr. Trump is talking about registration, tell--" He said, "You know we don't wanna talk about registration." They don't wanna talk about registration.

You have people that are registered who are dead, who are illegals, who are in two states. You have people registered in two states. They're registered in a New York and a New Jersey. They vote twice. There are millions of votes, in my opinion. Now ...

DAVID MUIR: But again ...

PRESIDENT TRUMP: I'm doing an ...

(OVERTALK)

PRESIDENT TRUMP: ... investigation. David, David, David ...

DAVID MUIR: You're now, you're now president of the United States when you say ...

(OVERTALK)

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Of course, and I want the voting process to be legitimate.

DAVID MUIR: But what I'm asking ...

PRESIDENT TRUMP: The people that ...

DAVID MUIR: ... what I'm asking that -- when you say in your opinion millions of illegal votes, that is something that is extremely fundamental to our functioning democracy, a fair and free election.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Sure. Sure. Sure.

DAVID MUIR: You say you're gonna launch an investigation.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Sure, done.

DAVID MUIR: What you have presented so far has been debunked. It's been called ...

(OVERTALK)

DAVID MUIR: ... false.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: No, it hasn't. Take a look at the Pew reports.

DAVID MUIR: I called the author of the Pew report last night. And he told me that they found no evidence of voter ...

(OVERTALK)

DAVID MUIR: ... fraud.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Really? Then why did he write the report?

DAVID MUIR: He said no evidence of voter fraud.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Excuse me, then why did he write the report?

(OVERTALK)

PRESIDENT TRUMP: According to Pew report, then he's -- then he's groveling again. You know, I always talk about the reporters that grovel when they wanna write something that you wanna hear but not necessarily millions of people wanna hear or have to hear.

DAVID MUIR: So, you've launched an investigation?

PRESIDENT TRUMP: We're gonna launch an investigation to find out. And then the next time -- and I will say this, of those votes cast, none of 'em come to me. None of 'em come to me. They would all be for the other side. None of 'em come to me. But when you look at the people that are registered: dead, illegal and two states and some cases maybe three states -- we have a lot to look into.

DAVID MUIR: House Speaker Paul Ryan has said, "I have seen no evidence. I have made this very, very clear." Senator Lindsey Graham saying, "It's the most inappropriate thing for a president to say without proof. He seems obsessed with the idea that he could not have possibly lost the popular vote without cheating and fraud." I wanna ask you about something bigger here. Does it matter more now ...

PRESIDENT TRUMP: There's nothing bigger. There's nothing bigger.

DAVID MUIR: But it is important because ...

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Let me just tell you, you know what's important, millions of people agree with me when I say that if you would've looked on one of the other networks and all of the people that were calling in they're saying, "We agree with Mr. Trump. We agree." They're very smart people.

The people that voted for me -- lots of people are saying they saw things happen. I heard stories also. But you're not talking about millions. But it's a small little segment. I will tell you, it's a good thing that we're doing because at the end we're gonna have an idea as to what's going on. Now, you're telling me Pew report has all of a sudden changed. But you have other reports and you have other statements. You take a look at the registrations, how many dead people are there? Take a look at the registrations as to the other things that I already presented.

DAVID MUIR: And you're saying ...

(OVERTALK)

PRESIDENT TRUMP: And you're gonna find ...

DAVID MUIR: ... those people who are on the rolls voted, that there are millions of illegal votes?

PRESIDENT TRUMP: I didn't say there are millions. But I think there could very well be millions of people. That's right.

DAVID MUIR: You tweeted though ...

PRESIDENT TRUMP: And I also say this ...

DAVID MUIR: ... you tweeted, "If you deduct the millions of people who voted illegally, I won the popular vote."

PRESIDENT TRUMP: David, and I also say this, if I was going for the popular vote I would've won easily. But I would've been in California and New York. I wouldn't have been in Maine. I wouldn't have been in Iowa. I wouldn't have been in Nebraska and all of those states that I had to win in order to win this. I would've been in New York, I would've been in California. I never even went there.

DAVID MUIR: Let me just ask you, you did win. You're the president. You're sitting ...

PRESIDENT TRUMP: That's true.

DAVID MUIR: ... across from me right now.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: That's true.

DAVID MUIR: Do you think that your words matter more now?

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Yes, very much.

DAVID MUIR: Do you think that that talking about millions of illegal votes is dangerous to this country without presenting the evidence?

PRESIDENT TRUMP: No, not at all.

(OVERTALK)

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Not at all because many people feel the same way that I do. And ...

DAVID MUIR: You don't think it undermines your credibility if there's no evidence?

(OVERTALK)

PRESIDENT TRUMP: No, not at all because they didn't come to me. Believe me. Those were Hillary votes. And if you look at it they all voted for Hillary. They all voted for Hillary. They didn't vote for me. I don't believe I got one. Okay, these are people that voted for Hillary Clinton. And if they didn't vote, it would've been different in the popular.

Now, you have to understand I -- I focused on those four or five states that I had to win. Maybe she didn't. She should've gone to Michigan. She thought she had it in the bag. She should've gone to Wisconsin, she thought she had it because you're talking about 38 years of, you know, Democrat wins. But they didn't. I went to Michigan, I went to Wisconsin. I went to Pennsylvania all the time. I went to all of the states that are -- Florida and North Carolina. That's all I focused on.

DAVID MUIR: Mr. President, it does strike me though that we're relitigating the presidential campaign, the election ...

(OVERTALK)

PRESIDENT TRUMP: No, no. We're looking at it for the next time. No, no, you have to understand, I had a tremendous victory, one of the great victories ever. In

terms of counties I think the most ever or just about the most ever. When you look at a map it's all red. Red meaning us, Republicans.

One of the greatest victories ever. But, again, I ran for the electoral college. I didn't run for the popular vote. What I'm saying is if there are these problems that many people agree with me that there might be. Look, Barack Obama -- if you look back - - eight years ago when he first ran -- he was running for office in Chicago for we needed Chicago vote.

And he was laughing at the system because he knew all of those votes were going to him. You look at Philadelphia, you look at what's going on in Philadelphia. But take a look at the tape of Barack Obama who wrote me, by the way, a very beautiful letter in the drawer of the desk. Very beautiful. And I appreciate it. But look at what he said, it's on tape. Look at what he said about voting in Chicago eight years ago. It's not changed. It hasn't changed, believe me. Chicago, look what's going on in Chicago. It's only gotten worse.

But he was smiling and laughing about the vote in Chicago. Now, once he became president he didn't do that. All of a sudden it became this is the foundation of our country. So, here's the point, you have a lot of stuff going on possibly. I say probably. But possibly. We're gonna get to the bottom of it.

And then we're gonna make sure it doesn't happen again. If people are registered wrongly, if illegals are registered to vote, which they are, if dead people are registered to vote and voting, which they do. There are some. I don't know how many. We're gonna try finding that out and the other categories that we talk about, double states where they're -- registered in two states, we're gonna get to the bottom of it because we have to stop it. Because I agree, so important. But the other side is trying to downplay this. Now, I'll say this -- I think that if that didn't happen, first of all, would -- would be a great thing if it didn't happen. But I believe it did happen. And I believe a part of the vote would've been much different.

DAVID MUIR: And you believe millions of illegal votes ...

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Well, we're gonna find out.

DAVID MUIR: Let me ask you this ...

PRESIDENT TRUMP: We're gonna find out. And -- and, by the way, when I say you're gonna find out. You can never really find, you know, there are gonna be -- no matter what numbers we come up with there are gonna be lots of people that did things that we're not going to find out about. But we will find out because we need a better system where that can't happen.

DAVID MUIR: Mr. President, I just have one more question on this. And it's -- it's bigger picture. You took some heat after your visit to the CIA in front of that hallowed wall, 117 stars -- of those lost at the CIA. You talked about other things. But you also talked about crowd size at the inauguration, about the size of your rallies, about covers on Time magazine. And I just wanna ask you when does all of that matter just a little less? When do you let it roll off your back now that you're the president?

(OVERTALK)

PRESIDENT TRUMP: OK, so I'm glad you asked. So, I went to the CIA, my first step. I have great respect for the people in intelligence and CIA. I'm -- I don't have a lot of respect for, in particular one of the leaders. But that's okay. But I have a lot of respect for the people in the CIA.

That speech was a home run. That speech, if you look at Fox, OK, I'll mention you - - we see what Fox said. They said it was one of the great speeches. They showed the people applauding and screaming and -- and they were all CIA. There was -- somebody was asking Sean -- "Well, were they Trump people that were put--" we don't have Trump people. They were CIA people.

That location was given to me. Mike Pence went up before me, paid great homage to the wall. I then went up, paid great homage to the wall. I then spoke to the crowd. I got a standing ovation. In fact, they said it was the biggest standing ovation since Peyton Manning had won the Super Bowl and they said it was equal. I got a standing ovation. It lasted for a long period of time. What you do is take -- take out

your tape -- you probably ran it live. I know when I do good speeches. I know when I do bad speeches. That speech was a total home run. They loved it. I could've ...

(OVERTALK)

PRESIDENT TRUMP: ... gotten ...

DAVID MUIR: You would give the same speech if you went back ...

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Absolutely.

DAVID MUIR: ... in front of that wall?

PRESIDENT TRUMP: People loved it. They loved it. They gave me a standing ovation for a long period of time. They never even sat down, most of them, during the speech. There was love in the room. You and other networks covered it very inaccurately. I hate to say this to you and you probably won't put it on but turn on Fox and see how it was covered. And see how people respond to that speech.

That speech was a good speech. And you and a couple of other networks tried to downplay that speech. And it was very, very unfortunate that you did. The people of the CIA loved the speech. If I was going to take a vote in that room, there were, like, 300, 350 people, over 1,000 wanted to be there but they couldn't. They were all CIA people. I would say I would've gotten 350 to nothing in that room. That's what the vote would've been. That speech was a big hit, a big success -- success. And then I came back and I watched you on television and a couple of others.

DAVID MUIR: Not me personally.

(OVERTALK)

PRESIDENT TRUMP: And they tried to demean. Excuse me?

DAVID MUIR: Not me personally.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Not you personally but your network -- and they tried to demean the speech. And I know when things are good or bad. A poll just came out on my inauguration speech which was extraordinary that people loved it. Loved and liked. And it was an extraordinary poll.

DAVID MUIR: I guess that's what I'm getting at. You talked about the poll, the people loving your inaugural speech and the size of your ...

PRESIDENT TRUMP: No, because you bring it up.

DAVID MUIR: I'm asking, well, on day one you ...

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Well, you just brought it up. I didn't bring it up. I didn't wanna -- talk about the inauguration speech. But I think I did a very good job and people really liked it. You saw the poll. Just came out this morning. You bring it up. I didn't bring it up.

DAVID MUIR: So, polls and crowd size and covers on Time, those still matter now that you're here as president.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Well, you keep bringing it up. I had a massive amount of people here. They were showing pictures that were very unflattering, as unflattering -- from certain angles -- that were taken early and lots of other things. I'll show you a picture later if you'd like of a massive crowd.

In terms of a total audience including television and everything else that you have we had supposedly the biggest crowd in history. The audience watching the show. And I think you would even agree to that. They say I had the biggest crowd in the history of inaugural speeches. I'm honored by that. But I didn't bring it up. You just brought it up.

DAVID MUIR: See, I -- I'm not interested in the inaugural crowd size. I think the American people can look at images side by side and decide for themselves. I am curious about the first full day here at the White House, choosing to send the press secretary out into the briefing room, summoning reporters to talk about the

inaugural crowd size. Does that send a message to the American people that that's -- that's more important than some of the very pressing issues?

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Part of my whole victory was that the men and women of this country who have been forgotten will never be forgotten again. Part of that is when they try and demean me unfairly 'cause we had a massive crowd of people. We had a crowd -- I looked over that sea of people and I said to myself, "Wow."

And I've seen crowds before. Big, big crowds. That was some crowd. When I looked at the numbers that happened to come in from all of the various sources, we had the biggest audience in the history of inaugural speeches. I said the men and women that I was talking to who came out and voted will never be forgotten again. Therefore I won't allow you or other people like you to demean that crowd and to demean the people that came to Washington, D.C., from faraway places because they like me. But more importantly they like what I'm saying.

DAVID MUIR: I just wanna say I didn't demean anyone who was in that crowd. We did coverage for hours ...

(OVERTALK)

PRESIDENT TRUMP: No, I think you're demeaning by talking the way you're talking. I think you're demeaning. And that's why I think a lot of people turned on you and turned on a lot of other people. And that's why you have a 17 percent approval rating, which is pretty bad.

DAVID MUIR: Mr. Trump, let's talk about many of the things that have happened this week. Chicago. Last night you tweeted about the murder rate in Chicago saying, "If Chicago doesn't fix the horrible carnage going on I will send in the feds."

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Right.

DAVID MUIR: You will send in the feds? What do you mean by that?

PRESIDENT TRUMP: It's carnage. You know, in my speech I got tremendous --

from certain people the word carnage. It is carnage. It's horrible carnage. This is Afghanistan -- is not like what's happening in Chicago. People are being shot left and right. Thousands of people over a period -- over a short period of time.

This year, which has just started, is worse than last year, which was a catastrophe. They're not doing the job. Now if they want help, I would love to help them. I will send in what we have to send in. Maybe they're not gonna have to be so politically correct. Maybe they're being overly political correct. Maybe there's something going on. But you can't have those killings going on in Chicago. Chicago is like a war zone. Chicago is worse than some of the people that you report in some of the places that you report about every night ...

DAVID MUIR: So, I will send ...

PRESIDENT TRUMP: ... in the Middle East.

DAVID MUIR: ... you mentioned federal assistance. There's federal assistance and then there's sending in the feds. I'm just curious would you take action on your own?

PRESIDENT TRUMP: I want them to fix the problem. You can't have thousands of people being shot in a city, in a country that I happen to be president of. Maybe it's okay if somebody else is president. I want them to fix the problem. They have a problem that's very easily fixable.

They're gonna have to get tougher and stronger and smarter. But they gotta fix the problem. I don't want to have thousands of people shot in a city where essentially I'm the president. I love Chicago. I know Chicago. And Chicago is a great city, can be a great city.

DAVID MUIR: And if they're unable to fix it?

(OVERTALK)

PRESIDENT TRUMP: It can't be a great city. Excuse me. It can't be a great city if

people are shot walking down the street for a loaf of bread. Can't be a great city.

DAVID MUIR: And if they are unable to fix it, that's when you would send in the feds?

(OVERTALK)

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Well, so far they have been unable. It's been going on for years. And I wasn't president. So, look, when President Obama was there two weeks ago making a speech, very nice speech. Two people were shot and killed during his speech. You can't have that.

DAVID MUIR: Let me ask ...

PRESIDENT TRUMP: They weren't shot at the speech. But they were shot in the city of Chicago during his speech. What -- what's going on? So, all I'm saying is to the mayor who came up to my office recently -- I say, "You have to smarten up and you have to toughen up because you can't let that happen. That's a war zone."

DAVID MUIR: So, this is an "or else." This is a warning?

PRESIDENT TRUMP: I want them to straighten out the problem. It's a big problem.

DAVID MUIR: Let me ask you about a new report that you were poised to lift a ban on so-called CIA black sites of prisons around the world that have been used in the past. Is that true?

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Well, I'll be talking about that in about two hours. So, you'll be there and you'll be able to see it for yourself.

DAVID MUIR: Are you gonna lift the ban?

PRESIDENT TRUMP: You're gonna see in about two hours.

DAVID MUIR: The last president, President Obama, said the U.S. does not torture. Will you say that?

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Well, I have a general who I have great respect for, General Mattis, who said -- I was a little surprised -- who said he's not a believer in torture. As you know, Mr. Pompeo was just approved, affirmed by the Senate. He's a fantastic guy, he's gonna be the head of the CIA.

And you have somebody fabulous as opposed to the character that just got out who didn't -- was not fabulous at all. And he will I think do a great job. And he is -- you know, I haven't gone into great detail. But I will tell you I have spoken to others in intelligence. And they are big believers in, as an example, waterboarding.

DAVID MUIR: You did tell me ...

(OVERTALK)

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Because they say it does work. It does work.

DAVID MUIR: Mr. President, you ...

(OVERTALK)

DAVID MUIR: Mr. President, you told me during one of the debates that you would bring back waterboarding and a hell of a lot worse.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: I would do ...

(OVERTALK)

PRESIDENT TRUMP: I would do -- I wanna keep our country safe. I wanna keep our country safe.

DAVID MUIR: What does that mean?

PRESIDENT TRUMP: When they're shooting -- when they're chopping off the heads of our people and other people, when they're chopping off the heads of people because they happen to be a Christian in the Middle East, when ISIS is doing things that nobody has ever heard of since Medieval times, would I feel strongly about waterboarding?

As far as I'm concerned we have to fight fire with fire. Now, with that being said I'm going with General Mattis. I'm going with my secretary because I think Pompeo's gonna be phenomenal. I'm gonna go with what they say. But I have spoken as recently as 24 hours ago with people at the highest level of intelligence. And I asked them the question, "Does it work? Does torture work?" And the answer was, "Yes, absolutely."

DAVID MUIR: You're now the president. Do you want waterboarding?

PRESIDENT TRUMP: I don't want people to chop off the citizens or anybody's heads in the Middle East. Okay? Because they're Christian or Muslim or anything else. I don't want -- look, you are old enough to have seen a time that was much different. You never saw heads chopped off until a few years ago.

Now they chop 'em off and they put 'em on camera and they send 'em all over the world. So we have that and we're not allowed to do anything. We're not playing on an even field. I will say this, I will rely on Pompeo and Mattis and my group. And if they don't wanna do, that's fine. If they do wanna do, then I will work for that end.

I wanna do everything within the bounds of what you're allowed to do legally. But do I feel it works? Absolutely I feel it works. Have I spoken to people at the top levels and people that have seen it work? I haven't seen it work. But I think it works. Have I spoken to people that feel strongly about it? Absolutely.

DAVID MUIR: So, you'd be okay with it as ...

PRESIDENT TRUMP: I wanna keep ...

DAVID MUIR: ... president?

PRESIDENT TRUMP: ... no, I wanna -- I will rely on General Mattis. And I'm gonna rely on those two people and others. And if they don't wanna do it, it's 100 percent okay with me. Do I think it works? Absolutely.

DAVID MUIR: Mr. President, I wanna ask you about refugees. You're about to sign a sweeping executive action to suspend immigration to this country.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Right.

DAVID MUIR: Who are we talking about? Is this the Muslim ban?

PRESIDENT TRUMP: We're talking about -- no it's not the Muslim ban. But it's countries that have tremendous terror. It's countries that we're going to be spelling out in a little while in the same speech. And it's countries that people are going to come in and cause us tremendous problems. Our country has enough problems without allowing people to come in who, in many cases or in some cases, are looking to do tremendous destruction.

(OVERTALK)

PRESIDENT TRUMP: You look at what's happening ...

DAVID MUIR: Which countries are we talking about?

PRESIDENT TRUMP: ... you'll be hearing about it in two hours because I have a whole list. You'll be very thrilled. You're looking at people that come in, in many cases, in some cases with evil intentions. I don't want that. They're ISIS. They're coming under false pretense. I don't want that.

I'm gonna be the president of a safe country. We have enough problems. Now I'll absolutely do safe zones in Syria for the people. I think that Europe has made a tremendous mistake by allowing these millions of people to go into Germany and various other countries. And all you have to do is take a look. It's -- it's a disaster

what's happening over there.

I don't want that to happen here. Now with that being said, President Obama and Hillary Clinton have, and Kerry have allowed tens of thousands of people into our country. The FBI is now investigating more people than ever before having to do with terror. They -- and it's from the group of people that came in. So look, look, our country has a lot of problems. Believe me. I know what the problems are even better than you do. They're deep problems, they're serious problems. We don't need more.

DAVID MUIR: Let me ask you about some of the countries that won't be on the list, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia. Why are we going to allow people to come into this country ...

PRESIDENT TRUMP: You're going to see -- you're going to see. We're going to have extreme vetting in all cases. And I mean extreme. And we're not letting people in if we think there's even a little chance of some problem.

DAVID MUIR: Are you at all ...

(OVERTALK)

PRESIDENT TRUMP: We are excluding certain countries. But for other countries we're gonna have extreme vetting. It's going to be very hard to come in. Right now it's very easy to come in. It's gonna be very, very hard. I don't want terror in this country. You look at what happened in San Bernardino. You look at what happened all over. You look at what happened in the World Trade Center. Okay, I mean, take that as an example.

DAVID MUIR: Are you at all ...

(OVERTALK)

DAVID MUIR: ... concerned -- are you at all concerned it's going to cause more anger among Muslims ...

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Anger?

DAVID MUIR: ... the world?

PRESIDENT TRUMP: There's plenty of anger right now. How can you have more?

DAVID MUIR: You don't think it'll ...

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Look, David ...

DAVID MUIR: ... exacerbate the problem?

PRESIDENT TRUMP: ... David, I mean, I know you're a sophisticated guy. The world is a mess. The world is as angry as it gets. What? You think this is gonna cause a little more anger? The world is an angry place. All of this has happened. We went into Iraq. We shouldn't have gone into Iraq. We shouldn't have gotten out the way we got out.

The world is a total mess. Take a look at what's happening with Aleppo. Take a look what's happening in Mosul. Take a look what's going on in the Middle East. And people are fleeing and they're going into Europe and all over the place. The world is a mess, David.

DAVID MUIR: You brought up Iraq and something you said that could affect American troops in recent days. You said, "We should've kept the oil but okay maybe we'll have another chance." What did you mean by that?

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Well, we should've kept the oil when we got out. And, you know, it's very interesting, had we taken the oil, you wouldn't have ISIS because they fuel themselves with the oil. That's where they got the money. They got the money from leaving -- when we left, we left Iraq, which wasn't a government. It's not a government now.

And by the way, and I said something else, if we go in and do this. You have two

nations, Iraq and Iran. And they were essentially the same military strength. And they'd fight for decades and decades. They'd fight forever. And they'd keep fighting and it would go -- it was just a way of life. We got in, we decapitated one of those nations, Iraq. I said, "Iran is taking over Iraq." That's essentially what happened.

DAVID MUIR: So, you believe we can go in and take the oil.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: We should have taken the oil. You wouldn't have ISIS if we took the oil. Now I wasn't talking about it from the standpoint of ISIS because the way we got out was horrible. We created a vacuum and ISIS formed. But had we taken the oil something else would've very good happened. They would not have been able to fuel their rather unbelievable drive to destroy large portions of the world.

DAVID MUIR: You've heard the critics who say that would break all international law, taking the oil. But I wanna get to the words ...

(OVERTALK)

DAVID MUIR: ... that you ...

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Wait, wait, can you believe that? Who are the critics who say that? Fools.

DAVID MUIR: Let, let me ...

PRESIDENT TRUMP: I don't call them critics. I call them fools.

DAVID MUIR: ... let me talk about your words ...

PRESIDENT TRUMP: We should've kept -- excuse me. We should've taken the oil. And if we took the oil you wouldn't have ISIS. And we would have had wealth. We have spent right now \$6 trillion in the Middle East. And our country is falling apart.

(OVERTALK)

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Our roads -- excuse me. Our roads, our bridges, our schools, it's falling apart. We have spent as of one month ago \$6 trillion in the Middle East. And in our country we can't afford to build a school in Brooklyn or we can't afford to build a school in Los Angeles. And we can't afford to fix up our inner cities. We can't afford to do anything. Look, it's time. It's been our longest war. We've been in there for 15, 16 years. Nobody even knows what the date is because they don't really know when did we start. But it's time. It's time.

DAVID MUIR: What got my attention, Mr. President, was when you said, "Maybe we'll have another chance."

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Well, don't let it get your attention too much because we'll see what happens. I mean, we're gonna see what happens. You know, I told you and I told everybody else that wants to talk when it comes to the military I don't wanna discuss things.

I wanna let -- I wanna let the action take place before the talk takes place. I watched in Mosul when a number of months ago generals and politicians would get up and say, "We're going into Mosul in four months." Then they'd say, "We're going in in three months, two months, one month. We're going in next week."

Okay, and I kept saying to myself, "Gee, why do they have to keep talking about going in?" All right, so now they go in and it is tough because they're giving the enemy all this time to prepare. I don't wanna do a lot of talking on the military. I wanna talk after it's finished, not before it starts.

DAVID MUIR: Let me ask you, Mr. President, about another promise involving Obamacare to repeal it. And you told The Washington Post that your plan to replace Obamacare will include insurance for everybody. That sounds an awful lot like universal coverage.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: It's going to be -- what my plan is is that I wanna take care of everybody. I'm not gonna leave the lower 20 percent that can't afford insurance.

Just so you understand people talk about Obamacare. And I told the Republicans this, the best thing we could do is nothing for two years, let it explode. And then we'll go in and we'll do a new plan and -- and the Democrats will vote for it. Believe me.

Because this year you'll have 150 percent increases. Last year in Arizona 116 percent increase, Minnesota 60 some-odd percent increase. And I told them, except for one problem, I wanna get it fixed. The best thing I could do as the leader of this country-- but as wanting to get something approved with support of the Democrats, if I didn't do anything for two years they'd be begging me to do something. But I don't wanna do that. So just so you unders-- Obamacare is a disaster.

It's too expensive. It's horrible health care. It doesn't cover what you have to cover. It's a disaster. You know it and I know it. And I said to the Republican folks-- and they're terrific folks, Mitch and Paul Ryan, I said, "Look, if you go fast -- and I'm okay in doing it because it's the right thing to do. We wanna get good coverage at much less cost." I said, "If you go fast we then own Obamacare. They're gonna put it on us. And Obamacare is a disaster waiting to explode. If you sit back and let it explode it's gonna be much easier." That's the thing to do. But the right thing to do is to get something done now.

DAVID MUIR: But you ...

PRESIDENT TRUMP: So I wanna make sure that nobody's dying on the streets when I'm president. Nobody's gonna be dying on the streets. We will unleash something that's gonna be terrific. And remember this, before Obamacare you had a lot of people that were very, very happy with their health care.

And now those people in many cases don't even have health care. They don't even have anything that's acceptable to them. Remember this, keep your doctor, keep your plan, 100 percent. Remember the \$5 billion website? Remember the website fiasco. I mean, you do admit that I think, right? The website fiasco.

Obamacare is a disaster. We are going to come up with a new plan ideally not an

amended plan because right now if you look at the pages they're this high. We're gonna come up with a new plan that's going to be better health care for more people at a lesser cost.

DAVID MUIR: Last question because I know you're gonna show me around the White House. Last question on this. You've seen the estimate that 18 million Americans could lose their health insurance if Obamacare is repealed and there is no replacement. Can you assure those Americans watching this right now that they will not lose their health insurance or end up with anything less?

PRESIDENT TRUMP: So nobody ever deducts all the people that have already lost their health insurance that liked it. You had millions of people that liked their health insurance and their health care and their doctor and where they went. You had millions of people that now aren't insured anymore.

DAVID MUIR: I'm just asking about the people ...

PRESIDENT TRUMP: No, no.

DAVID MUIR: ... who are nervous and watching ...

PRESIDENT TRUMP: We ...

DAVID MUIR: ... you for reassurance.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: ... here's what I can assure you, we are going to have a better plan, much better health care, much better service treatment, a plan where you can have access to the doctor that you want and the plan that you want. We're gonna have a much better health care plan at much less money.

And remember Obamacare is ready to explode. And you interviewed me a couple of years ago. I said '17 -- right now, this year, "'17 is going to be a disaster." I'm very good at this stuff. "'17 is going to be a disaster cost-wise for Obamacare. It's going to explode in '17."

And why not? Obama's a smart guy. So let it all come do because that's what's happening. It's all coming do in '17. We're gonna have an explosion. And to do it right, sit back, let it explode and let the Democrats come begging us to help them because it's on them. But I don't wanna do that. I wanna give great health care at a much lower cost.

DAVID MUIR: So, no one who has this health insurance through Obamacare will lose it or end up ...

PRESIDENT TRUMP: You know, when you ...

DAVID MUIR: ... with anything less?

(OVERTALK)

PRESIDENT TRUMP: ... say no one I think no one. Ideally, in the real world, you're talking about millions of people. Will no one. And then, you know, knowing ABC, you'll have this one person on television saying how they were hurt. Okay. We want no one. We want the answer to be no one.

But I will say millions of people will be happy. Right now you have millions and millions and millions of people that are unhappy. It's too expensive and it's no good. And the governor of Minnesota who unfortunately had a very, very sad incident yesterday 'cause he's a very nice guy but -- a couple of months ago he said that the Affordable Care Act is no longer affordable.

He's a staunch Democrat. Very strong Democrat. He said it's no longer affordable. He made that statement. And Bill Clinton on the campaign trail -- and he probably had a bad night that night when he went home -- but he said, "Obamacare is crazy. It's crazy." And you know what, they were both right.

DAVID MUIR: Mr. President, thank you.

(OVERTALK)

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Thank you very much. Appreciate it.

END OF TRANSCRIPT

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