

Trump declares Asia trip a success, says he will improve trade and rein in North Korea

WASHINGTON - President Trump declared his trip to Asia “a tremendous success” on Wednesday, saying he persuaded countries to buy more U.S. products, renegotiate better trade deals for America, and pressure North Korea into giving up nuclear weapons.

“We have laid out a pathway toward peace and security in our world, where sovereign nations can thrive, flourish and prosper side by side. This is our beautiful vision for the future,” Trump said in a televised address just 18 hours after returning from his 12-day trip to Japan, South Korea, China, Vietnam, and the Philippines.

“My message has resonated” throughout the Asia-Pacific, he said.

The speech, delivered by teleprompter from the White House, appeared to be a direct response to some critical news coverage of the trip. In a series of tweets earlier Wednesday, he singled out the “failing” New York Times after a story describing the trip as a “very epic charm offensive.”

“They should realize that these relationships are a good thing, not a bad thing. The U.S. is being respected again,” he tweeted.

In the speech, Trump outlined his efforts in a country-by-country rundown — pausing for an awkward break as he drank from a Fiji water bottle.

Japan slapped more sanctions on North Korea and agreed to spend more money on its own military, including by purchasing U.S. military hardware, he said. He praised South Korea for agreeing to re-negotiate its free trade agreement deal with the United States, a deal he described as “a disaster” that has robbed the U.S. of jobs.

Trump noted the opulent reception he received in China, including a tour of the Forbidden City, and said President Xi Jinping agreed to help reduce the massive U.S trade deficit with China and to exercise more influence over North Korea in

an effort to “de-nuclearize” the peninsula.

The president protested trade agreements he considers to be unfair during economic summits in Vietnam and the Philippines. Trump reiterated how, during those visits, he asked nations to step up pressure on North Korea by reducing trade with Kim Jong Un’s government.

Trump’s 24-minute recap of his Asia itinerary was long on superlatives but short on news, and mostly summarized points he had already made during the trip.

He blamed previous presidents for problems he inherited, citing “previous mistakes” made by “other administrations” - but not specifying which ones. “The one common thread behind all of these problems was the failure to protect and promote the interests of the American people and American workers,” Trump said.

Analysis: Trump’s trip to Asia is over. Now what?

Trump gave the speech at the White House in the wake of criticism of the trip by some analysts and political foes.

The critics said Trump did not show specifically how other countries might pressure North Korea into giving up nuclear weapons. Kim’s government says it won’t happen, and mocked and taunted Trump during his Asia trip. Nor did the president specify how “fair and reciprocal” trade deals might work, either in a new agreement with Japan or a revamped deal with South Korea, they said.

Congressional critics said Trump spoke too much about the pomp and ceremony of the trip - such as a tour of the Forbidden City in Beijing - and not enough about trade and North Korea.

“It is past time for President Trump to focus on working with our partners to find a meaningful diplomatic solution to the North Korea crisis,” said Sen. Edward J. Markey, D-Mass. “President Trump was too distracted by the pomp and circumstance in Beijing to extract meaningful economic and security concessions from China.”

While Trump praised China’s promise to buy more U.S. products, it did not announce it would open more markets to U.S. products like cars, some analysts noted.

“Deals are no substitute for policy change,” said David Dollar, a senior fellow on the Chinese economy at The Brookings Institution.

When it comes to China, soon to be the world’s largest economy, Dollar said, “What would really change the relationship is opening up new markets in areas from autos to entertainment to social media. There seems to have been little discussion of this kind of policy change either in preparation or during the trip.”

In declaring the trip “a flop,” Sen. Charles Schumer, D-N.Y., said Sunday on Twitter:

“POTUS acts like a lap dog to Xi and China, but talks tough to our friends in Southeast Asia. Presidency by misadventure.”

Trump sounded hoarse during his White House remarks, and at one point crouched down looking for something behind the lectern.

“Thank you,” he said. “I don’t have water, but that’s OK.”

Reporters pointed to a small table next to the lectern. “To your right, sir,” one wire reporter said. He took a drink from a water bottle and continued talking.

Source: <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2017/11/15/trump-declares-asia-trip-success-says-he-improve-trade-and-rein-north-korea/867319001/>

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