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Secretary of State Marco Rubio with Donald Trump, Jr. of Triggered with Don Jr.

INTERVIEW

MARCO RUBIO, SECRETARY OF STATE

APRIL 8, 2025

QUESTION: Well, guys, joining me now, Secretary of State Marco Rubio. Good to have you, Marco. How's everything?

SECRETARY RUBIO: Thanks for having me. Thank you. Thanks for having me on here.

QUESTION: Well, I imagine this is a good day given the outcome of the basketball game last night.

SECRETARY RUBIO: Yeah, yeah, yeah. It was good to – by the way, that young guy, he's – I think he's the youngest coach maybe since – they were saying last night on TV since Valvano to win a national title. He's only been there three years. They hired him from the University of San Francisco. He played, I think, six or seven years in Israel in basketball and then he came over, and he's done a great job. And that's a team that's not built with a bunch of like high-number recruits, like five-star famous guys. He's kind of pieced it together. So it's great. It's great for the school.

The only thing that's crazy is you watch the videos of these kids – my son's at the University of Florida – and these kids climbing up on the light poles and stuff like that, it's

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I don't know. I don't remember that back in the day. People just won, they had a parade. Now they want to tear up the town even the night before. So that was the only downside of winning, is seeing these people risking their lives over in Gainesville.

QUESTION: Yeah, listen, kids are going to be kids. I think I'm okay with kids being kids. I think we need a little bit more of that as well. But yeah, we've got to be a little careful.

SECRETARY RUBIO: Yeah, I draw the line at life-threatening shows of enthusiasm. Those are the things that – luckily, my son wasn't the guy on the lightpost. But I saw that last night, I was like, somewhere there's a nervous mom.

QUESTION: Well, thank you again, Mr. Secretary, for taking the time. I guess to start off, it was interesting to see the Supreme Court yesterday, in my opinion, smartly lifted the restraining order against the Trump Administration as it relates to the ability to deport Tren del Aragua murderous, drug-dealing gang members to El Salvador. Can you talk about the significance of this? I know you've been dealing with this a lot on a daily basis. I know you were intimately involved, obviously, when they were trying to recall to make sure we couldn't deport murderous thugs. But can you talk about that historic work coordinating with President Bukele of El Salvador to get these criminals actually off of our streets?

SECRETARY RUBIO: Well, a couple things. The most important thing about that court ruling is it said you have to file it, you have to go before the judge wherever those people are being held before they're sent abroad. Because right now, what was happening is these activists were basically just finding a court – they would find – they'd forum shop. They'd find, "Where can I find a friendly federal judge that gives me the highest probability of victory in court?" So you have over 600-something District Court judges, and so you have a guy in New Jersey or a guy in New York or a guy in D.C. basically enjoining the entire country. I mean, one of these federal judges has the power to stop the entire federal government in all 50 states and every one of our territories.

And so I think the most important thing the court said is, number one, if you want to fight these things, you have to fight it in the jurisdiction where they're being sent from or being held – in this case, Texas – which clearly, for whatever reason, these lawyers, they don't want to go to Texas to file it, right?

And then the other is just the power of the federal government to conduct foreign policy. We have a judge right now that is basically trying to order the federal government, the Executive Branch, to bring people back. In essence, they are trying to order us to go to the president of El Salvador and tell him you must now send people back to us. So we can't live in a country – it's just not constitutional – where judges are now conducting the foreign policy of the United States.

The trip to El Salvador was one of the first trips I did. I think it was two weeks in, maybe three weeks in, as Secretary of State. I met with Bukele. I've known him for a long time. He's very pro-American, very – likes the President a lot. He's going to be visiting here pretty soon – I think maybe next week it is when he's going to be coming to the Oval Office. And he agreed; he said, look, I've built these prisons and I will house people here. First of all, he wants his MS-13 killers that are in the United States, because they're wanted for crimes in El Salvador too.

And then he's also willing to hold members of this dangerous Venezuelan gang, and he's doing it at a fraction of the cost of what it would cost us here in the United States to hold them. These – this is one of the most dangerous gangs ever, Tren de Aragua, one of the most dangerous gangs you've ever seen. They go in, they take over entire communities, and we want them out of the country. And Venezuela wasn't taking them, so we had to find a place to send them, and he has the perfect place to send them. And that's a deal we cut with him back in early February, and this was the execution of it. We're very grateful.

And since then, we sent another group over there – not as big, but you look at the roster of people, the next – I think nine or ten that we sent. You see the rap sheet on some of these people, it's one of the worse collections of human beings I've ever seen in my life, and I'm glad they're no longer in the United States.

QUESTION: Well, watching the leftists try to defend these people, have them released – I mean, it's sort of wild. I can't imagine a civilization that could survive by releasing arguably some of the most violent people in history back into our streets. Have they just lost the plot so badly that this is their hill to die on?

SECRETARY RUBIO: Yeah, I think they're so triggered by everything that happens in terms of any sort of removal of people from the country, it's almost automatically assumed that if you are somehow removed from this country you are a candidate for the Nobel Peace Prize or you are

some sort of – it's amazing. You read these articles; these are the greatest people who have ever lived, who just somehow all happen to be illegally in our country.

But it's a very simple and basic point: What country in the world would assume millions of people in a mass migration, not to mention thousands and thousands of people that you know are members of dangerous gangs and either have criminal records in their home country or here or are part of groups that commit crimes, who would – it's the stupidest thing I've ever heard that some country would want to keep them there. It would make all the – for a real everyday person in America, if you went to them and said, "Should we kick out people that are in here illegally and are dangerous criminals," that's, like, a no-brainer. That's got to be like a 90/10 issue in the United States, right?

QUESTION: The fact that there's even a 10 is shocking to me. I mean —

SECRETARY RUBIO: Right, or maybe it's even higher, right?

QUESTION: Yeah.

SECRETARY RUBIO: But these guys consistently fall on the other side of it, right? They consistently fall on the other side of it. And what they're basically telling the American people is these people that are in our country illegally, and by the way are dangerous, somehow have the same rights if not more rights than everyday citizens in our country who are law-abiding, were born here or naturalized here or legal citizens of the United States – they basically have the same rights that you have.

It's the same issue with the student visas. We have this concept that's been built up that this is somehow a right that people are entitled to a visa. No one is entitled to come into the U.S. illegally, much less remain here, and no one is entitled to a visa. A visa – we deny visas every day all over the world because we think somebody might overstay, because we have questions about somebody.

So none of these things are right, so it's time – in addition to doing what's good for our country, it's an important opportunity to sort of reset reality on what these things actually are.

QUESTION: Yeah. I'd argue the Biden administration canceled plenty of visas of people that actually could be the next astronaut, the next nuclear physicist, the next – because

they probably weren't reliable Democrat voters. But I think more importantly, as you and my father have both made very clear, gangs like Tren del Aragua – part of Maduro's narco-terrorist regime who've influenced violence on American citizens, murder, as well as the Venezuelan people – this isn't just a foreign problem; it's an American one, and it's right in our backyard. What else do people need to understand about how deep this really goes? Because this isn't just, hey, they got rid of a couple people. I mean, this – this seems to me like a serious op designed to really undermine and hurt America at the base level.

SECRETARY RUBIO: Yeah. No, there was no doubt that it was used as a tool against us. I think mass migration's been weaponized against America. I think as the years go on, as the months go on, as we learn more about it, there'll be evidence and proof of that out there. There is no doubt there was a concerted effort, among other things. I mean, there was a lot of people already wanting to come for a lot of reasons. On top of that, I think you had a concerted effort to push people towards the United States. It's not unprecedented. In 1980, Fidel Castro opened up his mental institutions, he opened up his jails, and he basically flooded the United States with criminals from Cuba, and we paid an extraordinary price for it. So it's not unprecedented.

In the case of Tren de Aragua, that was a prison gang inside of Venezuela. The Venezuelan regime pushed them out of the country knowing that many of them – first of all, they destabilized all kind of countries neighboring in the region, but ultimately wound their way up here to the United States. And we saw that trend begin probably in January of 2023 we started to see uptick in people arriving.

It was actually Venezuelans that were telling me this. People here in the country, they were saying, look, these people that are coming now, they're members of gangs. And at first you kind of think, well, how do you really know? But they were right. They were absolutely right. And we started to see that. And you started to see them in the unlikeliest places. It wasn't like they were all coming to Miami. They actually were going to places like Chicago and New York and Aurora, Colorado, and sprinkled all over the country. And then the crimes began.

So there's no doubt that this was a concerted effort by the Maduro regime not just to drive these gang members out of their country but to drive them towards the United States and to inflict a price on this country. And it's not – it's right out of the Fidel Castro playbook.

QUESTION: Yeah. Well, María Corina Machado won 92 percent of the vote there in an open primary despite brutal repression, censorship. I mean, I had her on the show two or three weeks ago. She was talking about – I mean, if she went to a restaurant – because she couldn't even fly, driving to a campaign stop – they'd shut down the restaurant for even serving her. I mean, she is clearly the choice of the Venezuelan people. She was banned from the ballot. But even her surrogate, Edmundo González, still won the election by 40 points. I mean, that's –

SECRETARY RUBIO: Yeah.

QUESTION: That's not like some of these things here where you say, hey, you won by basis points, where are the gains? I mean, that's pretty decisive even in that regime. Would you say the Venezuelan opposition today is more unified and credible than perhaps we've seen in the past, and that can actually effectuate real change going forward?

SECRETARY RUBIO: Well, they're as brave as they've ever been, and she in particular. María Corina Machado is an incredibly brave woman. I mean, if you – and I'm not criticizing anybody when I say this, right, but if you look at the Venezuelan opposition, a large percentage of the well-known figures in it are now living abroad, because there comes a time where your family's lives is threatened or they force you out of the country or you leave. You travel overseas to go give a speech and they don't let you back in. She has stayed. But she's in hiding. They're looking – they're hunting her down every day. Like, they're trying to get a hold of her, they've tried to arrest her a couple times. Incredible bravery. One of the bravest people in the world, and I don't think people know enough about her.

But you have to – people have to understand, I mean, being in the political opposition in Venezuela at this point is a life-threatening circumstance to be in. I mean, they will – they will put you in jail. They've jailed everybody around her, everybody – and these are not like normal jails. I mean, these are atrocious conditions that they're in.

So it's not a government. The Maduro regime is not a government. They govern territory because they have the guns and they have the security forces, but it basically is a narco-terrorist organization with strong ties to Iran, strong ties to narco-trafficking, and they just happen to control territory. They don't even control all of Venezuela because the border regions with Colombia are controlled – openly controlled – by narco-guerrilla terrorists.

So yeah, I mean, if they had a real election in Venezuela, Maduro would lose – like he did – by a lot. But obviously, the way they stay in power is they kill and jail the people who don't agree with them.

QUESTION: Well, I know the Biden administration – I mean, these were regimes that were largely on the ropes until we shut down our own energy production, the Keystone Pipeline, and allowed Chevron to make a deal with the Maduro regime which gave them the cash that I'm sure was siphoned off and/or funneled through back to the regime to keep them in power. I mean, I can't think of a more glaring example of basically giving a lifeline to literally a terrorist dictator than what we saw in the past.

How do we reconcile that that even happened in America, despite sort of party differences? I mean, it's so flagrant, and the fact that the media won't even talk about that, won't even talk about this; but if we do anything here, they're so vocal about any kind of change in what was ultimately a failed policy that boosted up a dictator.

SECRETARY RUBIO: Look, in foreign policy we want to be mature and realistic about it. You're going to have to deal with some bad people, right? You're going to have to deal with people that you don't like, people that you don't agree with, but for the purposes of foreign policy, peace, and all that kind of thing, you have to deal with them, okay?

The problem is you can't do it in a stupid way, and that's what the Biden people did. They went to Maduro and they said, okay, we're going to do a deal. You promise to hold elections, free and fair elections in like nine months or whatever, and we will immediately lift sanctions and allow you to start producing oil and getting paid for it. It was a side deal, by the way, because they didn't – they only announced that they did this deal with Chevron. What they didn't announce was that Chevron – with a side, secret deal – was allowed to pay the Maduro regime royalties. It accounted for over 25 percent of all the revenue going into that regime from oil.

So they did that deal. Well, they didn't have – you talked about the election. The election was fake. They didn't have an election. And after that, after that, they left the deal in place. They left it in place, even though they violated their word on holding free and fair elections. I think the way – if they were going to do it – and I don't think at this point you can do it – you say first you have free and fair elections, then we'll lift the sanctions. And then we'll – but they – and even if you do

it the way that the Biden people did, at least if they don't – if they break their word, undo the thing. Stop getting – allowing them to get money. But they didn't do any of that.

So I think it's one more example of stupidity in our foreign policy, which other countries look at and say, well, hell, they got away with that; we should – we could be able to get away with whatever we want as well. It's really both weakness and stupidity.

QUESTION: Yeah. I mean, I'm not a foreign policy wonk by any stretch, but I know enough about negotiation to say you don't give up all your leverage, you don't give the other side everything that they want before you get to the table to figure out what it is that you want. You keep maximum pressure on them so you can actually effectuate real policy changes.

SECRETARY RUBIO: Yeah. Well, if I want to put it in real estate terms, you don't get to say, okay, pay me for the building and I get to keep the building anyways. (Laughter.) And that's pretty much the deal they made. It's like, here's all this money for your – we want to buy your hotel or your property. We're going to send you all this money for it. But by the way, you get to keep the hotel and the property. You get the money and the hotel. That's what these guys got. They got to keep their dictatorship and their deal, but obviously President Trump is a very different kind of president, and that's over now.

QUESTION: I agree. Mr. Secretary, can you talk about the impact of your successful leadership and what appears to be a broader pivot into the Western Hemisphere? We've seen comparisons to the Monroe Doctrine. Can you talk about the opportunities to shake up the foundations of communism in the Western Hemisphere and build strong, long-lasting American alliances in our backyard, whether it's with Bukele in El Salvador, Milei in Argentina, María Corina Machado in Venezuela hopefully eventually, and perhaps others? What does all of that look like to you?

SECRETARY RUBIO: Yeah. Well, the baseline is the United States wants to be friends with our friends, right? So for a long time if you were a U.S. or pro-American ally in the region, we kind of ignored you and in some cases actually treated you bad. But if you were an irritant like Nicaragua or Cuba or Venezuela, then we made all these deals with you to make you happy, right? So we made deals with the people that hated us and we either neglected or sometimes were outright hostile towards the countries that were pro-American.

So we've reversed all of that. And you – and look, maybe I'll miss a country here, but you talk about places like Guyana, Argentina, Paraguay, Costa Rica; the president of Panama is very pro-American, meaning he wants to be our ally and our partner; El Salvador, the Dominican Republic. So we've made a concerted effort to reach out to these countries that have governments and leaders that want to be aligned with the United States, not just on regional issues but international issues, and figure out a way – we want those democratically elected leaders to go back to their people and say, hey, there's benefits to being friends of America; here are the benefits.

At the same time, it allows us to clearly define the countries that have governments that are enemies of the United States, unfortunately, in Cuba, in Nicaragua, in – and obviously the regime in Venezuela. So we identify these. And then others, we've got some tough issues to work through, like with Mexico. On fairness, I think the Mexicans are doing more today against the cartels and against migration than they have ever, ever done ever before, and obviously the credit goes to President Trump for being very strong about that. But that's an example of how positive engagement has allowed us to get things – has allowed us to reach a level of cooperation with the Mexican Government that we never have had before under previous presidents.

QUESTION: How would you like to see that? Because, I mean, to me that's the biggest thing. I mean, we spend in trillions in Ukraine; it doesn't matter. We – I mean, it's not really a clear and present threat to us, we – all of those things. But, I mean, the Mexican border, whether it's, honestly, a lot of the stuff I'm sure you're probably dealing with on trade as well as the cartels, with the fentanyl trade coming across and then human trafficking and child sex trafficking – I love seeing Mexico do that. What more can we do to help bolster those efforts?

Because, I mean, I think if we look at it objectively, I imagine there's probably plenty of cartel infiltration into the Mexican military. You see about X number of presidential candidates in Mexico killed, likely by the cartels.

SECRETARY RUBIO: Yeah, yeah.

QUESTION: There is undue influence. It's not like a gang in California. These are very sophisticated, very well-funded paramilitary organizations at this point. How can we help bolster that? Because when I look at 100,000 Americans dying a year – two Vietnams a year – indiscriminately across the board with fentanyl, that seems to me like the most obvious clear and

present danger to the United States of any foreign issue that we deal with, any war and any conflict.

SECRETARY RUBIO: Yeah, no, no doubt. So I think the first is to recognize what you just said, and that is – and I'll tell you why we recognize it. You're absolutely right. I mean, you have judges – like, let's talk about extraditions. There are people that are extraditable, like, they're wanted in the United States; they should be extradited. But they'll literally go to some corrupt judge and say, oh, that's not me, I'm not Jose Sanchez, I'm not Juan Ramirez, that's not me. And they spend 10 years in this process. And then you've got some people in that government that have been very – that want to get rid of those people, that want to take those on, and we just have to understand that in Mexico for those people to stand up and say I'm going to take on a drug cartel, it's not like you might lose the next election or be removed from office. It's like you might be beheaded. You might be killed. Your car might blow up. Your kids might and your family might be killed. Same with journalists that reveal all that.

So I think part of it is capacity building, meaning working with them. The Mexicans have capabilities. I mean, they're not – it's not a Third World country. I mean, they've got institutions there that we partner with. It's intelligence sharing, whether it's them alerting us, hey, these guys we think have crossed your border and they're operating in Tucson; or us letting them know, hey, there's a drug shipment or there's a human trafficking network moving across. Can you guys action that? So all of those sort of – all of that collaboration is going on right now as we speak, and it's more than it's ever been.

Now, there's more that needs to be done. And if you look at the border today, it's the most secure border we've probably ever had in my lifetime, that's for sure. I mean, there's just nobody crossing. In fact, one of the biggest problems we're facing or complaints we're hearing about now is that there are people that were headed here, coming up through Central America; they realized Trump won the election and he was actually serious. They made a U-turn and now they're kind of stuck in these countries along the way, whether it's Mexico or Guatemala, Honduras, whatever. They're making U-turns. So that has stopped, and I think that's – Mexicans deserve some credit for helping us on that front, because they've actually sent more national guard troops to the border than they ever have before.

Look, they've still got big problems. We've still got to deal with the fact that there are parts of Mexico where the drug cartels are way more powerful than the government. In fact, the

government might not even be present there. They are the government. It's a huge undertaking and it requires – we have to work – it's not just an us issue. I mean, it's the Department of Defense, it's Kristi Noem in DHS, it's Tom Homan, it's all of these different elements of government that are partnering with the Mexicans. This is the closest we've ever worked with them. We have a lot more to do, but this is the closest we've worked with Mexicans, the Mexican authorities, on tackling this problem, and I think there's more to be done.

QUESTION: That's great. Meanwhile, I guess, the State Department – we talked about visas a little bit earlier, but you guys have been sort of aggressively confronting visa holders tied to terror groups and extremism. It's sort of shocking to me that that was never done before. You would think that would be a pretty serious red flag, but apparently it wasn't. Only people who buy MAGA hats and/or Bibles would be targeted by the Biden administration. Can you lay out perhaps your mission and priorities as it relates to foreign national here on visas who are acting against America's interests?

SECRETARY RUBIO: Yeah. So if you go right now to a window somewhere in an embassy and apply for a United States visa, there's all kinds of reasons why we won't allow you to come in: because we think you might overstay your visa, because we don't like or have questions about some of your political activities and your views. We just won't give you a visa proactively, on the front end. My argument is if we identify people like that who we would not have given a visa to, had we known information, but now they've got a visa and now they're here and we know the information, shouldn't we ask them to leave as a result of it? In essence, if we wouldn't – if there are things about you that had we known we would not have given you a visa, we should be taking away your visa. It's as simple as that.

There's no – no one's entitled to a visa. I mean, there are all kinds of reasons why people get denied. There are people that can't tell you why their visa was denied; they just don't know. It's just we – we're not taking more people from that country, or we just – whatever it may be. So I think, at the end of the day, that's what we're trying to do right now, is we're trying to go and identify people who we have information about who, had we known that information, we never would have given them a visa. And we're revoking those visas, and they have to leave.

Now, I think everyone would tell you this – if you told me I'm applying for a student visa so I can attend a university, and while I'm at your university I'm going to become a member in support of

or even participate in groups that are going to take over libraries, spray paint monuments, start riots, bang drums all day and night, harass Jewish students – if you told me you were going to be linked to any of that stuff, we never should have given you the visa. Now that you're doing it, we should take away your visa. And that's what we're trying to do and that's what we are doing.

I know it's a lot of work, but we – it's something I wanted to do when I was a U.S. senator. I've been talking about this for two and a half years. I think it's the craziest thing I've ever seen. What country in the world – how stupid, how ridiculous is it for some country to say, "Yes, bring more people to our country that are going to disrupt and create riots in our streets and on our campuses." Who would do that? It's idiotic, and we're not doing idiotic things anymore.

QUESTION: Yeah. You would think that one of the major disqualifications would be on the application, if you withheld your true intentions for being there, that in and of itself would be disqualifying. And that's clearly what so many of these people are doing. They're coming in under a guise of being a student, but they're far more active in their role as activists for hate than they are actually trying to be students.

SECRETARY RUBIO: That's right. And look, I mean, at the end of the day one thing is you're a U.S. citizen, you go on campus, you get wrapped up in these movements – it's very unfortunate, and I think that's a societal problem we have to confront as a country, like why are the citizens of the most prosperous and freest country in the history of the world raising kids that are turning out to hate the country that made all of this possible. But another thing is to say: And by the way, we're also going to invite people into our country as guests who are going to join and foment these movements. It just makes no sense to me.

By the way, that's not the only visas that are getting revoked. That's – like if you have a DUI – if you're here on a student visa and you have a DUI or you have some other crime, that's an automatic suspension. And they weren't doing that; that wasn't happening. That should be automatic. You commit a crime while you're in this country; your visa's gone. You didn't tell us you were coming here to break the law; you told us you were coming here to study and then go back to your country. And if they're not doing that, that should be the end of the visa. And that was something that wasn't being enforced either.

QUESTION: Yeah. And it's not like there's not precedent for that, right? I mean, you can't get into Canada if you've had a DUI. I mean, you can't lie about an application to go to Mexico on your

passports. It feels like we've had the most lax immigration laws as probably the country that most people around the world would want to get into, and yet we don't even hold ourselves to the similar standard of our neighbors and, frankly, everyone else around the world.

SECRETARY RUBIO: Yeah. No one else does it this way. No one else does it this way. We're the ones that – I think something has built up in the American mentality that somehow coming to America is a right, that everybody on Earth has a right to come to America legally or illegally if they want. And that's just not true. That's never been true. But that certainly can't be the standard, certainly not the legal standard. And it also makes no sense.

You – every country in the world has to be able to control who comes in, when they come in, why they came in. We have to have standards for all of that. And then you have to enforce those standards. And we just – we've just completely lost focus on that, and instead sort of created this mentality that I think really spanned both parties, that we should just allow anyone who wants to come in to come in, that our default position is yes, come in, and we'll figure it out later. And that can't be our default position anymore.

And by the way, you explain this to foreign countries – they completely understand. At least privately they completely understand.

QUESTION: They're all doing it. They may be outraged because they want to get rid of their —

SECRETARY RUBIO: Well, and the ones —

QUESTION: — less than desirables. But I don't think we can be the world's dumping grounds for criminals and murderers. I always talk about the statistics under the Biden – 13,000 murderers. I mean, that's Joe Biden's ICE. They knew they were murderers and let them in.

SECRETARY RUBIO: Yeah.

QUESTION: Sixteen thousand rapists and sex offenders; 600,000 criminals overall. I mean, that's insane. They knew it and we're like, "Eh, it's okay." Spread out 16,000 rapists amongst the 4,000 counties in America, four rapists per county in America. I mean, it doesn't seem like that would go well. It's 3.6 murderers per county around the country. What good could possibly come from these things?

SECRETARY RUBIO: No, nothing good comes up. But it just tells you we just completely – policymaking in America became completely detached from common sense, completely detached from reality. We sort of adopted this mentality that we're welcoming – everyone who wants to come in, come in.

You know who else had that mentality? A bunch of countries in Western Europe that now deeply, deeply regret it. The Germans made the decision let everybody in, let everybody in. And now everybody in Germany is like – and all over Europe is like, okay, we made a big mistake here. Obviously, we're a bigger country, but we've made similar mistakes, right? And we can't let that continue to happen.

QUESTION: Well, I mean, Europe feels like it's over. And it feels like they're – actually recognize that, and they can't really do much about it. But we've had our own issues here as well. I mean, I know under the previous administration, the State Department made DEI 20 percent of Foreign Service officer performance. I mean, DEI – I don't know what that has to do with Foreign Service officer performance. But what did you find out as you got in there, and what are you doing to fix the issue of that? Because none of that seems accretive to anything that the State Department would actually need to be doing.

SECRETARY RUBIO: Yeah. I think what you find is that you end up sort of losing focus on promoting people on the basis of merit. And we have very good, talented people here that never got promoted or got stuck in mid-level ranks. I mean, they have to wait 25 years to be an ambassador somewhere, or 30 years. And then it's all because of some – how some supervisor judged you based on some scorecard.

It's like anything else. People are – you're going to get what you reward. You're going to get what you value. It's the reason why we keep – why we score tests. It's the reason why we have points in sports. We want to know who won and we want to know – we want to reward good behavior. We want to award good – we want to reward good qualities and we want to diminish bad ones.

So we're changing that standard. We want to promote people within the State Department on the basis of how good they are at their job. And there are different jobs people do here. Some people are on Consular Affairs, which are the ones that review visas. Some people are diplomats or economic officers, whatever it may be. But we want people rewarded on how competent they

are, how good they are at their job. And frankly, what I think that opens the door to is the ability to promote people that maybe have been here 10 years instead of 25, but really are better than the people that have been here 25 years. You know what I mean?

I mean, otherwise, you start to lose talented workforce. Imagine you're in the Foreign Service. You're there for 12 years. You realize there's another 10 years before I get promoted to anything. And by the way, it all depends on how somebody judged me on some scorecard about whether I hit some DEI metrics. So we're getting rid of that in terms of how we judge and analyze our workforce, and I think it's going to give us a more accurate way to promote people. I think it's going to help us with recruiting. I think we're going to be able to —

QUESTION: Yeah. Oh, and people need to know that they have a chance. If you have good talent, to your point, they don't want to know – and you've probably dealt with this in Congress; I saw that all the time. It's like people who have no business being on the most prestigious committees end up on these committees because they've been there longer and therefore have some sort of tenure, but they're making trillion-dollar decisions about something that they don't understand, whereas a freshman congressman, senator may end up there but they – their life's work was exactly that. So they actually know what they're talking about, but they have no chance of ending up in these places.

So it's really hard to recruit talent if they know that they may be more qualified than the people that are going to get that job and they've got to sit there for 25 years, not because they don't deserve it but because they just haven't been there long enough.

SECRETARY RUBIO: Yeah, and understand, like, nobody goes into the Foreign Service thinking they're going to become millionaires working for the U.S. Government. They do it because they want to be involved in foreign policy, they want to get around the world or what have you. But I think we're going to have trouble attracting people to that career, and I think we're going to have trouble retaining people in that career, given all the other opportunities that now exist out there, if they don't see a pathway to fulfillment, professional fulfillment.

QUESTION: Yeah.

SECRETARY RUBIO: And so I think that's going to help us do that, but I also think it's going to help us place the right people in the right places, because we're going to be judging them on the

basis of how good they are at their job, which really should be how we make decisions about everything. I always go back to sports. If you think about it, I mean, how do we judge who gets to – who's on a team or who gets to play? And it's basically very simple, and that is your performance in practice and in games that determine ultimately who you put on the field or on the court or whatever it may be. And that's how we need to do it at all levels, including here in government.

QUESTION: Well, yeah, I'm glad that you're making that change. But how do you see all of that – whether it's the DEI stuff, et cetera – how does all of that tie into the scandal surrounding USAID? What's the status of USAID today? Is it gone? Is what's left of it now kind of completely within your authority to oversee? I know you've assembled a tough and courageous team, including top deputy Chris Landau, Acting Under Secretary Darren Beattie, who's been on this show many times, and others. What's it all mean and how do we combat sort of that years of just insanity, actually?

SECRETARY RUBIO: Well, I think that foreign aid is something that we need to do and we're going to continue to do, but every dollar we spend in foreign aid has to achieve at least one of three objectives. It has to make America stronger, it has to make America more prosperous, or it has to make America safer. If the program doesn't do one of those three things, it may be a great cause and I encourage the Gates Foundation or charities all over the world to take it up, but it has to be one of those three things.

I think the other big mistake that happened with foreign aid is we turned it into a tool to export our domestic policies of the far left, right? So the far left decided these are things that we think are good and it also became cultural imperialism. We began to use foreign aid not as a way to make America stronger, safer, more prosperous, but as a way to impose – impose – the domestic political agenda of the left onto foreign countries. And it became a vehicle for that.

I think the third thing that developed over time is what I call the foreign aid industrial complex. And I'm talking about dozens and dozens of these nongovernmental organizations, these NGOs, that were raking in hundreds of millions of dollars to run these programs on behalf of the U.S. Government. And it came out – and this is not me; Samantha Power would have said this – you have to spend – in order to get $12 million to people directly, you have to spend $100 million. You have to spend 100 million to get 12 million out to – directly, because you have to pay the NGO and then the subcontractor then the sub-sub and the sub-sub-sub. And before you

know it, you're paying Hamas to hand out food or whatever. And that has to stop and that has to end.

So we conducted a review of 6,000 programs, almost 6,000 programs, at USAID. We identified close to 900 that we are going to continue to do, either in their current form or amended. We canceled 5,000-some of those contracts, and now the goal is to bring all of those programs under the State Department so that we can directly review – because remember, USAID was separate from the State Department. They did whatever they wanted.

QUESTION: Yeah. Well, it feels like that was on purpose, right? Once it's at the NGO level, all of a sudden there's no oversight, so who knows where that money is going? I've always wondered, as you watch – that stuff gets discovered by DOGE, and within three days the top seven people at Act Blue, the big Democrat fundraising apparatus, all of a sudden magically disappear. And I've always wondered for years: How is it that they're raising 5x for every congressional seat that – what we can run, how is it that they're raising 10x on some of them? Do you think there's any ties there to this money basically just being kicked back to Democrat – the fundraising apparatus and/or other shady things? Because I – I just don't believe in enough coincidence anymore to believe that was just – magically happened at the same time.

SECRETARY RUBIO: Well, some of that's been referred to the Justice Department to look at, but what I can tell you most definitely is that there are people that have made a lot of money by being part of the foreign aid industrial complex, by being part of this network of NGOs who do things. And then some of it, frankly, just didn't make any sense, right? Like you – I just came back from a trip to the Caribbean where I went to Jamaica, I went to Guyana, and I went to Suriname – the Caribbean Basin. And their number one complaint is that USAID-funded NGOs didn't partner with government, right? And then – and you can even go to embassies.

By the way, this is not really well understood. There's always been tension between State Department and USAID, because there's some ambassador that's like, okay, I'm trying to get – we're trying to get good relations. The foreign policy of the U.S. is to have good relations with the leader of this country. And then USAID, operating out of their embassy, is, like, funding the political opposition of that leader that —

QUESTION: Yeah, or, like, trans Elmo in places where let's just say that's not as popular as it is in California.

SECRETARY RUBIO: Another example, right, these sorts of things that you see. But in the case of the Caribbean, it's like, okay, they want to spend all this money on these literacy programs out in the countryside – which we're not against as a government – we're fine with that. The problem is that we can't even get to those schools, kids can't even go to school, until we first, like, get rid of the gangs that are threatening kids from going to school. So our number one priority, if you want to help us, help us with what we need. Don't help us with what you want, which is to get into these rural schools, where now you start indoctrinating people on the social priorities of the far left in the United States. It's part of that exporting of it.

So we're going to realign foreign aid, so we're actually going to be helping countries with what they generally need. And a lot of these countries, it's security assistance. What they want to do is they want to be able to build up police departments and security forces so they can become self-sufficient at taking on these gangs and not require foreign aid in the future. The best foreign aid is foreign aid that ultimately ends because it's successful, because you go in, you help somebody, they build up their capacity, and now they can handle it themselves, and they don't need foreign aid anymore. That's what foreign aid should be geared towards, not perpetual – these programs exist for 25 years. If a foreign aid program has been going on for 25 years, it has not achieved its purpose because it hasn't solved the problem.

QUESTION: I think that's very well said. I think, unfortunately, that machine wants to keep those people employed in whatever else they're doing. So, yeah, that's what I was wondering, sort of a – it felt like one big sort of grift, kickback apparatus. Perhaps it's incompetence, but I don't believe that either. I think these people have been very well entrenched, so I'm really glad to see you taking all of that on.

So as we wrap, because I know your time is a little limited today, I do want to say just what an incredible job I think you're doing with this.

SECRETARY RUBIO: Oh, thank you.

QUESTION: It's been so great to see this cabinet, people just getting together, not sort of taking on the positions that they would have otherwise. And I think even your worldview – JD's

worldview, so many of these guys – probably has really evolved over the last 10 years. I'd love to hear how you see that happening but also how you'd like to sort of assess the almost first 100 days, and what do you see in store for the next 100?

SECRETARY RUBIO: Yeah. First of all, on your worldview – our worldview should always be under examination because the world is constantly changing. Like, anyone who has the same worldview today that they had 15 years ago is lost, because the world looks nothing like it did 15 years ago. So as circumstances change, the way you approach the world has to change. We're different – we're in a very different era. Fifteen, 20 years ago, we were the sole uni-power force in the world. We took on a lot of causes because nobody else could. The world looks a little different right now for a lot of different reasons. So I think it's been a very busy – clearly, like I was just saying before we went on the air here with this, that every day here feels like six months' worth of work on every front.

QUESTION: Yeah.

SECRETARY RUBIO: As you know, the President is pushing very hard on every front to get everything done, and I think he has two advantages. The first is he was president, so it's been the fastest transition you've ever seen because this is not – there was no on-the-job learning here. It was go.

I think the team is also a very good team of people that have known each other for a long time. I mean, I look at this cabinet meeting, I look around the room; I've known almost everyone in that room for at least a decade, and you have had relationships with them even before they were in government. I mean, Pete Hegseth I've known for a long time. You name it. And you go – Pam Bondi's from Florida. I've know her for almost 20 years. These are people you've worked with before, and they're all aligned with the President's vision.

I think the first time, in the first term, not to be critical of anybody, but I think the President, he wins the election and then he sort of said – they sort of bring in people and say, look, these are the people in the Republican Party that do this kind of stuff. I think now, having the advantage of having been there before and so forth, he had the ability to put together a team of people who are responsive to the President's tasking to the extent that it's not even a problem, to the extent that what I'd say what has been challenge is the challenge is we're moving so fast, there's so much to do, everyone is so eager to deliver, that you need 26 or 27 hours in the day, because we

work for someone that apparently has found a way to fit 27 hours in a 24-hour day in terms of how he works.

And so – but it's exciting to be a part of. You – we truly feel like we are making changes and decisions today in the positions we're in that are going to dramatically improve our country and life in America for two generations. Like, we feel like we're about – on achieving that, not just here in the State Department but on matters of trade, international relations, domestic economics, rebuilding our industrial capacity. And I think the President has assembled a great team to do it, and obviously he's always – he's always pushing hard, as you know better than anyone. It doesn't – what have you done – it's what you did yesterday doesn't matter.

QUESTION: It doesn't matter how many wins you rack up.

SECRETARY RUBIO: Exactly. (Laughter.)

QUESTION: If you get that call at 6:00 a.m., "What have you done for me lately, Marco?"

SECRETARY RUBIO: That's right. Why are we not undefeated? And why didn't we win by 20 instead of 15? We got the championship, oh, but why didn't we win by 20 or 25? And it's good. That's the way you push the envelope and that's the way you achieve excellence.

QUESTION: Well, Secretary Rubio, thank you so much for the time. I really appreciate it. Keep up the great work. I look forward to seeing so many more great things coming out of the State Department and so much more. Thank you.

SECRETARY RUBIO: Yeah. Awesome. Thank you. Thanks for having me on.

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