



Date and Time: Tuesday, June 5, 2018 10:02:00 AM EDT

Job Number: 67826583

Document (1)

1. [THE 11TH HOUR WITH BRIAN WILLIAMS for June 1, 2018](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: 11th Hour with Brian Williams

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: News Transcripts

THE 11TH HOUR WITH BRIAN WILLIAMS for June 1, 2018

MSNBC 11TH HOUR WITH BRIAN WILLIAMS 11:00 PM EST

June 1, 2018 Friday

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Section: NEWS; Domestic

Length: 7800 words

Byline: **Brian Williams**, Hans Nichols, Chris Matthews

Guests: Jeremy Bash, Catherine Lucey, **Brian** Bennett, Barbara McQuade, Josh Gerstein, Ron Insana

Highlight: After the meeting with North Korean official, President Donald Trump announces that the Trump-Kim summit is back and that they discussed ending Korean War and denuclearization of the peninsula. Defense Secretary James Mattis arrived in Singapore ahead of security summit to discuss security challenges and opportunities. Eric Holder, Former Attorney General, says he's worry about what the political leadership that the Justice Department is going to face after the President humiliates Jeff Sessions calling his recusal from the Russia investigation a betrayal. President Trump broke years of presidential protocol on Friday morning with a tweet that signaled a strong jobs report was on its way from the Labor Department, an **hour** before the report was released. U.S. employers extended a streak of solid hiring in May, adding 223,000 jobs and helping lower the unemployment rate to an 18-year low of 3.8%.

Body

BRIAN WILLIAMS, MSNBC HOST: Tonight, a picture and a very large letter worth a thousand words. The North Korea summit is back on after an Oval Office meeting with Kim Jong-un's deputy while some experts openly fear Donald Trump is being taken for a ride all the way to Singapore.

And late word tonight, the next summit might be with Vladimir Putin according to "The Wall Street Journal."

Plus, a warning from a former attorney general. Buckle your seat belts as Trump wages war on justice and his attorney general.

And the secret the President apparently couldn't keep. The problem is it's the kind that moves markets. "The **11th Hour**" on a Friday night begins now.

And good evening once again from our NBC News Headquarters on a Friday night here in New York. Day 498 of the Trump Administration, and the President said today the June 12th North Korea nuclear summit is back on. He had canceled it just a few days back, and there's more. "The Wall Street Journal" reports tonight the White House is planning for yet another potential summit, this one between Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin. But more on that in just a moment.

First, today's announcement on the nuclear summit came after the President met with a top North Korean official for over an **hour** in the Oval Office, something historic in and of itself. Kim Yong-chol is the North Korean leader's right-hand man, former Intel chief and top nuclear weapons negotiator. And as "The New York Times" points out, he's the first North Korean official to set foot in the White House since the year 2000, only the second ever to meet with a sitting American President.

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After the meeting, President Trump spoke to reporters about denuclearization, but listen carefully as he also here sets expectations.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Mr. President, what's your sense of what the North Koreans are willing to do on the issue of denuclearization? Are they looking at it all at once?

DONALD TRUMP, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: Well, I think they want to do that. I know they want to do that. They want other things along the line. They want to develop as a country. That's going to happen. I have no doubt.

But we're going to be -- June 12th, we'll be in Singapore. It will be a beginning. I don't say and I've never said it happens in one meeting. You're talking about years of hostility, years of problems, years of, really, hatred between so many different nations. But I think you're going to have a very positive result in the end.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

WILLIAMS: President Trump also said sanctions were a topic in today's meeting, adding that for now no new penalties will be imposed on the North.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TRUMP: One thing I did do, and it was very important, we had hundreds of new sanctions ready to go on. And he did not -- the director did not ask, but I said I'm not going to put them on until such time as the talks break down.

We have very significant sanctions on now. But we had hundreds -- we have hundreds that are ready to go. But I said, "I'm not going to." But why would I do that when we're talking so nicely?

(END VIDEO CLIP)

WILLIAMS: Today's news of course follows a roller coaster ride of mixed signals. Peter Baker of "The New York Times" wrote today, "The on-again, off-again summit meeting scheduling had all the earmarks of a T.V. cliff-hanger from a President who made a name for himself hosting a reality show on NBC for 14 years, only this time there were deadly serious consequences. Essentially, Mr. Trump and Mr. Kim are right back to where they were shortly before the President abruptly canceled the meeting eight days ago, back to conciliatory language with no clearer understanding of what an actual agreement would look like, but with more scar tissue from a week of suspense." That's important right there. We'll get back to it.

Also, during today's meeting, President Trump was given a personal letter from Kim Jong-un, and the topic of this letter gave us one of the all-time great verbal U-turns of this still young presidency. As the President describes the letter then says he hasn't opened the letter in two statements that were minutes apart.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TRUMP: A letter was given to me by Kim Jong-un, and that letter was a very nice letter. Oh, would you like to see what was in that letter? Would you like it?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Can you tell us?

TRUMP: How much? How much? How much?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Can you just give us a flavor of what the letter said?

TRUMP: It was a very interesting letter. And at some point I may be -- it may be appropriate, and maybe I'll be able to give it to you. Maybe -- UNIDENTIFIED MALE: What was your response to the letter? Did you send anything back?

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TRUMP: No, I didn't. I haven't seen the letter yet. I purposely didn't open the letter. I haven't opened it. I didn't open it in front of the director.

I said, "Would you want me to open it?" He said, "You can read it later." I may be in for a big surprise, folks.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

WILLIAMS: Here at long last is a picture of the letter. It is a giant letter in a giant novelty birthday card-sized envelope. Prior to the President handling it, it was tested for contaminants, a subtle reminder of the kind of people we're dealing with here.

Meanwhile, Defense Secretary James Mattis arrived in Singapore today for a security summit with U.S. allies in the region. NBC News Pentagon Correspondent Hans Nichols is there tonight, part of our advance team on the ground. He has an update on preparations for the North Korea summit and the Defense Secretary's trip.

HANS NICHOLS, NBC NEWS PENTAGON CORRESPONDENT: **Brian**, Singapore woke up this morning to very reality that there's going to be a summit here in just ten days. And that means there's some urgent tasks, namely figuring out the logistics, just where this summit is going to take place.

Now, there had been reports in local presses about the North Korean team and the U.S. team shuttling around town. There are speculations about where it might be. The Marina Bay Sands hotel and casino is just over here, that's owned by Sheldon Adelson. Some of the speculation is centered on that hotel.

But beyond the logistics, there are the deliverables. I think what's important about that meeting between President Trump and his North Korea interlogger is just how long it took and in the speed with which Mr. Trump made the decision to put that summit back on, the velocity. There was barely any time for consultations. If this is a hurry-up city, this is a no-huddle offense by the President. He's clearly calling audibles the entire way.

Now, one concession he potentially made was saying that you could have a formal peace treaty between North and South Korea and all the parties who are involved. Remember there was a U.N. mandate back in the 1950s during the Korean War. The issue there is that's something the South Koreans have desperately wanted as well as the North Koreans. Trump didn't talk about complete and verifiable denuclearization, and he went out of his way that you could take and the North Koreans could take their time.

My suspicion on this, **Brian**, is that this backdrop is going to be a familiar scene. We could have multiple summits, and the urgent task now for everyone else is to figure out how to put both sides in a position to get to a deal whether that's on the 12th or going on.

One other note, Secretary Mattis speaking this morning, he likely had to scrub any reference to maximum pressure. That's the idea that you had sanctions, you had military assets that forced Kim Jong-un to the table. President Trump today saying that he no longer wanted to use that term, although he did say sanctions are still in place, and if talks go south, they can always ratchet those up. **Brian?**

WILLIAMS: Need a scorecard to keep it all straight, Hans. Hans Nichols, our NBC News Pentagon Correspondent reporting for us from Singapore tonight.

With all that, let's bring in our lead-off panel on a Friday night. Jeremy Bash, back with us, Former Chief of Staff at the CIA and Pentagon, also Former Counsel to House Intel. Catherine Lucey is back with us, White House Reporter for "The Associated Press." And also **Brian** Bennett returns to the broadcast, Senior White House Correspondent for "Time Magazine." Good evening and welcome to you all.

And, Jeremy, I'm going to begin with you. Is it still your -- first of all, what's going on here? Subset question one, is it still your contention that getting talks at all with the American President is baseline victory for the North? And when the President talks about these talks maybe not being over in one session, maybe several, maybe weeks, is that the kind of talks that should precede presidents sitting down at the table?

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JEREMY BASH, FMR. CIA CHIEF OF STAFF: Yes, it's become clear today, **Brian**, if it wasn't clear before, that our President is an enormously ineffective negotiator. He has made massive concessions even on the road to Singapore, putting aside what he's actually going to give up at the table -- across the table from Kim Jong-un.

So first, **Brian**, he's caved twice on the idea of the summit, first accepting the invitation outright initially without any consultations and without winning any concession. Then once he canceled the summit, he caved a second time and re-accepted the invitation that was brought to him today to the oval office.

Second, he said the era of maximum pressure is over. And as Hans noticed in the center piece, that caused the Pentagon to scrub all plans of a pressure on North Korean to reassure are allies.

And third is, he's heaped praise on the North Koreans. He's called them honorable people. He says he doesn't want to speak ill of them at all. This is a murderous, thuggish regime. And they have won a massive concession just by being in the Oval Office, which hasn't happened in 20 years, by standing next to the President. We're going to see more of that in spades next week in Singapore.

WILLIAMS: A regime where we always point out citizens have been forced to eat dirt while so much of the GNP goes into the development of a nuclear arms program.

Hey, Catherine, you're very good at getting people to talk to you in this West Wing. Has anyone, though, admitted to you, anyone of any rank and stature, that the fear is we, the President, has already given too much, and this is a slippery slope into Singapore?

CATHERINE LUCEY, WHITE HOUSE REPORTER, "THE ASSOCIATED PRESS": I think the thing that we heard some going into the last sort of roller coaster negotiations is there was concern with a lot of the people around the President that expectations have been set very high for this meeting. That, you know, the chatter about Nobel Prizes and the historic nature of the meeting. And so I think some of what you were seeing today with the meeting back on is really an effort by the President to manage expectations.

You know, he's saying it's not going to get fixed in one meeting. There may have to be more sanctions, you know, that this is a get to know you plus, I think he said today. So I think they are trying to set a tone, you know, to try and sort of ratchet down what can be done.

WILLIAMS: **Brian**, in the moments it took me to walk into the studio, one of our producers caught you on the phone and transcribed a line you told them, which I'm sure you won't mind me reading aloud. "It was amazing for me to see a guy who recently was the head of the North Korean spy service walk out of the Oval Office and pose for pictures with the American President." You said that as having been there today and witnessed it. Talk a little bit about that for members of our audience who may not be as struck as we are by the history of this and who this guy is.

BRIAN BENNETT, SENIOR WHITE HOUSE CORRESPONDENT, TIMES MAGAZINE: Well, I just wanted to, yes, step back for a moment to think about what happened today. You had the number two ranking official in North Korea walk into the Oval Office, spend more than an **hour** there with President Trump, and this is a guy who was linked to a murderous attack on a South Korean Naval ship in 2010 that killed more than 40 South Korean sailors. He was running the intelligence apparatus for one of the most, if not the most repressive regime in the entire world right now.

And President Trump was even asked afterwards, after the meeting, after he shook hands with him, if he had brought up human rights in their meeting. President Trump said no. President Trump in the walk-up to this summit has repeatedly said he doesn't want to challenge Kim Jong-un's ability to stay in power. He's solely focused on Kim Jong-un giving up his nuclear weapons, and that is just a very fascinating position for the American President to be in. And we're going to have to see how that plays out and how President Trump can use his leverage inside the negotiating room.

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I know that aides are concerned that whatever preparations are made before Trump goes into that meeting, that President Trump in order to get to a deal might be willing to give up more than aides around him have prepared him for.

WILLIAMS: Yes, well put.

Catherine, Victor Cha, who is thankfully one of the experts we turn to here at MSNBC, said tonight to NBC News that now is the time for both sides to go silent. Speaking for the American team you cover on a daily basis, what's the chance of that?

LUCEY: That President Trump will go silent seems unlikely. We hear from him constantly on Twitter, speaking to reporters, and there's some time to go before the summit. So I think the idea that he's going to stop talking publicly certainly is not what this presidency has looked like so far.

WILLIAMS: Jeremy Bash, to this "Wall Street Journal" report tonight that has all the earmarks of Michael settling the family business, this report of another summit with Putin of Russia, number one, do you believe it? Number two, what could go wrong?

BASH: Well, I do believe it. I think the President has talked with Putin before about having a major summit in which they would discuss many issues, including Russia's takeover of Syria, including Russian aggression in Europe, and also the situation on the Korean peninsula. So I'm not surprised by this.

I think, though, the President again has to be careful because he has shown himself to be an enormously ineffective negotiator. And if he's going to give away the store even more to Putin, heap more praise on him, give him standing, give him concessions, yield to him on things that Putin really cares about, I think it's going to redound to the detriment of American national security. And so I rather see the President hold off any discussions with the Russian leader until we can figure out exactly what we want to negotiation and if there's nothing to be gained, we shouldn't hold it.

WILLIAMS: Jeremy, that advice right there that you just gave us, for a young man, you qualify these days as an old policy hand. Who is there in the West Wing or anywhere in the national security structure to at least mention that, your view just expressed in a meeting to the President?

BASH: Well, I do think National Security Adviser Bolton is hawkish on issues like Russia and on issues like North Korea, and I think he's probably very concerned tonight. Because as you remember, for example last week he was talking about the Libya model, putting aside the fact that Gadhafi was killed in the end. But even the Libya model was basically taking out of nuclear weapons out of -- and the nuclear weapons program out of Libya, that's off the table. The President said today very clearly that he's not going to insist in that meeting, in that discussion with Kim Jong-un that they're going to completely denuclearize. So I think John Bolton has got to have a talking to with his boss.

WILLIAMS: So, **Brian**, having heard that from Jeremy and knowing what the optics are when the President sits down with Putin or talks up Putin as he inevitably will before and after such a meeting, this White House is boldly willing to show as much moxie, is that requires to go ahead with a summit like this?

BENNETT: Well, certainly, the President is willing to go through with that. I mean, I was in Hamburg at the G20 last year when President Trump sat down with Putin, and the two seemed happy to see each other. I mean, there really did seem to be a rapport there.

Obviously, a lot of other things have gotten in the way, including Russia's involvement in Syria in the intervening months. But I think President Trump does want to try to have a good relationship with Putin if he can. I think obviously there are people around him in the White House who are concerned about that and concerned about how it looks in the midst of this investigation into Russian meddling in the election and ties to the President's campaign. But I don't think that's going to necessarily get in the way of President Trump wanting to go along and see if he can establish a rapport with Putin.

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WILLIAMS: Hey, Catherine, you get the last word. We have seen what happens to even the best White House efforts at a theme week. Are we expecting anything next week where the machinery of government is concerned?

LUCEY: You know, I think all the attention next week is going to be building up for the Singapore trip. Certainly, as the -- and presumably it's on, but the will they/won't they aspect of it, what the schedule is going to look like, what the meeting is going to be like, the negotiations around that, I think it's going to be hard for any other story to break through really at the moment.

WILLIAMS: And I should mention the obvious. It has unseated the ongoing Russia investigation as at least our lead story tonight on a Friday night, when we thank Jeremy Bash, Catherine Lucey, **Brian** Bennett. Really appreciate you, guys, helping us to start off tonight.

And coming up for us, President Obama's former A.G. predicts a clash between the White House and the Justice Department worse than what's already happened. Eric Holder's warning for all the rest of us, buckle up your seat belts.

And later, the First Lady has vanished from sight in effect. It's been 22 days since Melania Trump was last seen. She says she's doing fine, doing her job, albeit not visibly. We'll talk about it, though, as "The **11th Hour**" continues.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

ERIC HOLDER, FMR. U.S. ATTORNEY GENERAL: I worry about what the political leadership that the Justice Department is going to do in the face of this unprecedented onslaught by the President. Are they going to have the steel to say to this President at some point no? I suspect that we are on a path where there's going to be an inevitable clash. We're going to get to a point where the Justice Department simply will not go any further, and something's going to happen. I don't know who gets fired or what happens, but we're going to be -- you know, buckle up your seat belts.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

WILLIAMS: Gets your attention. Former Attorney General Eric Holder today with a pretty stark prediction about the toxic relationship between the President and the Justice Department across town.

This week, we saw the President continue to humiliate our current Attorney General, Jeff Sessions, publicly calling his recusal from the Russia investigation a betrayal. We learned this week the President repeatedly pressured Sessions to change his mind, unrecuse himself as it were. And we saw the unexpected announcement that the President would pardon or is considering pardoning three people with prosecutorial ties, at least, to former FBI Director James Comey and his allies.

As our friend Mike Allen of Axios put it today, "Maybe these three events are mere coincidence. But almost no one around Trump, even his closest allies, thinks this is the case."

Let's talk about it with Josh Gerstein, Senior White House Reporter for Politico, and Barbara McQuade, Former U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Michigan.

And, Counselor, I'd like to begin with you because you've proven so good at the game Dave Letterman originated, is this a thing? So is the following a thing if you're Robert Mueller? If you learn through the good folks at Axios that at least four occasions that we know of that the President went back after probing Jeff Sessions, "Can you go back into the Russia matter," is that of interest to the Mueller investigation, or are they several incidents ahead of us?

BARBARA MCQUADE, FMR. U.S. ATTORNEY: Well, I think it's a thing. I think that, you know, whenever you are looking at obstruction of justice, there is the act. So did this actually happen? Did President Trump try to convince Jeff Sessions to reverse his recusal decision?

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And then the second part of that that's so important is, what was his purpose? What was his motive? Did he have a corrupt intent in doing so? And on its face, it appears there's certainly enough there to look further into it to see whether it is a thing because when you think about why would he want him to reverse his recusal decision?

Justice Department ethics lawyers have said this is the appropriate decision, and the matter should be handled by your deputy so that there is at least the perception of fairness, if not actual fairness can be achieved in this way. And what President Trump is saying is, "No, no, no. I don't want it to be handled fairly. I want it to be handled by my ally because what I really want is someone to protect me from whatever it is that he is concerned about the ultimate resolution of the case. So I think that is enough to raise concern that there is perhaps this corrupt purpose behind such a decision if it happened.

WILLIAMS: Yes, Josh, let's continue this point. Why would Trump, given what we know of his relationship with Jeff Sessions -- there are all alternatives. Why would the alternative to him be an unrecused and back with his fingers in the cake mix Jeff Sessions?

JOSH GERSTEIN, SENIOR WHITE HOUSE REPORTER, POLITICO: Well, you know, the President has suggested before that he'd like to have an attorney general like Eric Holder, since you mentioned him earlier, and the President -- President Trump has said that he thinks Eric Holder covered for President Obama and covered for Presidential candidate Hillary Clinton. So you can tie those things together and assume that what the President was up to here was trying to have more political control over these sort of investigations like the investigation into the 2016 campaign. I do think, though, that it's unlikely that these events alone, this pressure on Sessions alone, would be the kind of obstruction case that Mueller would try to outline. It would have to be part of a broader pattern, and there are some facts already in that pattern.

It's also work keeping in mind that I think ultimately what we're talking about here are facts that Mueller would likely put in a report to Congress that could potentially become the basis for impeachment. It may not be quite as critical whether this outlines a case that could be proven, say, in front of a jury in court.

WILLIAMS: Barbara, let me steer the ship into the subject of pardons. Admittedly, I watch too much cable news. But in the last 24 **hours**, everyone on cable news has contended that pardons and the choice of who to pardon has been a signal.

This is being done as a signal to folks who are out there. They may flip. They may hold out. Will Mueller, again, because you're the former fed here -- will Mueller see it that same way?

MCQUADE: I don't know. You know, the President does have pardon power, and so I don't think that, you know, there's a basis to charge a case there. But it does seem at least plausible that President Trump is exercising his pardon power to send a message to people like Michael Cohen or Michael Flynn or Paul Manafort that, "You know, I take care of people, and so you don't have this Hobson's choice of going to trial or cooperating. There's a third way out. I could pardon you." And so perhaps that is a message.

I also think there's a message being sent to the American public more generally because if you look at what is the common theme behind all of those cases where President Trump has granted pardons, and in every one of them, he has made a pitch that these people were treated very unfairly by the government. And I think he is trying to, again, undermine the Justice Department, the FBI, and sort of groom the public into this idea that the government frequently treats people unfairly so that if and when, you know, he faces charges or others close to him face charges, there is that narrative and the public is conditioned to believe that to be true.

WILLIAMS: Of course, you can criminalize a pardon by dangling them or putting them out for bidding, which would be wrong as they say.

Hey, Josh, when I say everyone is talking about the pardons in terms of a signal, I really mean everyone. Here's a man we heard from earlier on this same subject. We'll talk about it on the other side.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

HOLDER: I think the President is trying to send a message to some people who potentially might be involved in the Russia investigation. If you pardon somebody, all right, well, that means that they are -- they don't have much to worry about with regard to whatever the pardon covers. But if Bob Mueller, for instance, wants to take a pardoned person, put that person before a grand jury, that person no longer has the ability to say, "I'm going to invoke my Fifth Amendment right." That's been stripped away. You have a pardon. And that person then becomes a perfect witness for the special counsel.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

WILLIAMS: So there you have it. Always the lawyer, Josh. As a civilian, what do you find notable in the persons and pattern of pardons thus far in this presidency?

GERSTEIN: Well, I'm not sure the scenario that Holder outlined is the most likely one here. It seems like the sequence in which this would play out would be to let someone like Paul Manafort go to trial and perhaps maybe after the midterm elections move in with some sort of pardon or some sort of pardon, say, if Roger Stone were charged, maybe put one out there at some point for him. I don't think they would come so early in the process because Trump could have done that already.

But, you know, I don't think we have to really speculate about what Trump is up to here. He's given us several statements. He said, for example, in the case of Dinesh D'Souza, the commentator that he just pardoned, that the White House said that he viewed that as a case of selective prosecution. In some of the other cases, he suggested Rod Blagojevich, the former Illinois governor that he's talking about pardoning or commuting his sentence, has said that, you know, he thinks that case was exaggerated.

So he's minimizing anti-corruption laws. He's minimizing campaign finance violations, suggesting that they're overenforced and overprosecuted, and it's interesting that those are some of the laws or at least are in some of the same areas where we've seen Mueller already bring charges and where he may bring charges in the future. So I don't think it's totally uninformed speculation to say that there is a message here.

WILLIAMS: And, Barbara, I want to give you the last word because this question came up yesterday. How do the feds feel, all the federal prosecutors that work so hard to get convictions, to get people to plea out, how do they feel when a pardon swoops in like this?

MCQUADE: Well, ordinarily there's a process that the Justice Department undergoes before a pardon is granted, and the prosecutor's office, the U.S. attorney's office that handled the case gets an opportunity to provide input. The judge who sentenced the person gets an opportunity to provide input. And, you know, then the President decides what he wants to. But at least that office had a chance to explain some of the things that motivated the prosecution.

WILLIAMS: That's in normal time.

MCQUADE: In this case, President Trump didn't do that. And so I think when that happens, there's a special bitterness because the President didn't even want to hear their side of the story. So I think it's frustrating for prosecutors who handled -- in this case, you know, he pleaded guilty, he admitted under oath that he committed this crime. And so I'm sure there is great frustration by prosecutors who worked hard, did the right thing, got a righteous prosecution and conviction, and see the President undo it in this way without ever even seeking their input.

WILLIAMS: Josh Gerstein, Barbara McQuade, thank you both very much for joining us on a Friday night. Terrific conversation.

And coming up for us, some good news tonight. Unemployment is at its lowest rate since 2000. The bad news was that the good news was once again overshadowed by the president's Twitter account this morning. More on that when we continue.

WILLIAMS: Another presidential norm was broken today when about an **hour** before the monthly jobs report was set to be released, the president said this. "Looking forward to seeing the employment numbers at 8:30 this

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morning." Well, when the report came out, it showed an increase of 223,000 jobs in May, topping expectations. A great number no matter which way you look at it, while the unemployment rate fell to an 18-year low.

Trump's tweet raised eyebrows because a 1985 policy directive on the release of economic data states, "Employees of the executive branch shall not comment publicly on the data until at least one hour after the official release time." Politico explains, "The one-hour lag is meant to allow the jobs data to stand on its own without any immediate spin from elected officials." Imagine that.

Former Obama chief economics adviser Austan Goolsbee wrote on Twitter, "If the president just tipped that the numbers are good, he broke the law." University of Michigan economics and public policy Professor Justin Wolfers added this. "If any other federal employee had tweeted in a way that gave the appearance of hinting at confidential information, they would be fired on the spot. Plus there would be an investigation checking their e-mails and phone logs to make sure they hadn't leaked to others too."

The president's chief economic adviser Larry Kudlow confirmed he had briefed the president on the jobs numbers Thursday night, but said Trump's tweet wasn't a problem to him.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

KRISTEN WELKER, NBC NEWS CORRESPONDENT: Doesn't this go against the 1985 OMB directive which essentially says no one should reveal what the findings are the night before or before they're released officially?

LARRY KUDLOW, CHIEF ECONOMIC ADVISER: Right, and we didn't.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Why is there such secrecy around this number?

KUDLOW: Wait. Can I just -- this is very important. No one revealed the numbers to the public.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Why would the president tell anybody to look at the jobs report if it was going to be negative?

KUDLOW: You'll have to -- you'll have to ask -- that's a therapy thing. I don't know --

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: That's a therapy thing?

KUDLOW: Look, it's up to him. He likes to tweet. I do think a lot of people were waiting for the jobs numbers.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

WILLIAMS: With us to explain it all is one of the great all-time veterans of the world of the financial journalism, CNBC contributor Ron Insana.

Well, my friend, let's --

RON INSANA, CNBC CONTRIBUTOR: Good to see you.

WILLIAMS: Great to see you. So if it was a norm --

INSANA: Yes.

WILLIAMS: -- or rule or a law that the president --

(CROSSTALK)

WILLIAMS: Yes, exactly. We say it has the power to move markets. What kind of people could get rich if they moved quickly this morning upon seeing that tweet?

INSANA: Well, first of all, anyone who saw the tweet has an advance notice that the number is probably good given the way the president framed it. Second, there are people who operate large computer-run programs that do sentiment scraping and contextual analysis --

WILLIAMS: My doctor does that.

INSANA: Yes, at least once a year. But they pick up on key words. And then these algorithmic traders can move very quickly and can move billions of dollars in a nanosecond based on what the computers find in a Twitter feed, in a news headline, and people can make a lot of money.

And an **hour** before the number is released, that's a lot of time. Now, granted the reaction was in nanoseconds, the dollar went up, interest rates went up, the stock market extended its morning gains. So people could have conceivably made a fair chunk of change off that tweet.

WILLIAMS: Can we go back and look and see who might have made a ton of money this morning?

INSANA: Hard to do. I mean you would have to go through everybody's blotter, you know, everybody's trade blotter to see what they're doing. Now, you could go through the president's e-mails. Of course that is fraught on its own to find out whether or not he had suggested to anyone else, hey, check out my tweet at 8:30, and if any of his friends were in the financial markets, that would also be a questionable move.

WILLIAMS: The president will dine out on these numbers, more than he already has, and he deserves to because by any measure, the economic numbers are fantastic though I note you said to one of our producers, you see something coming.

INSANA: Well, I think, look, we are at peak economic growth in the U.S. I think we might get some acceleration going in the next couple of months. The world is slowing down. We're starting to see job growth level out a little bit. We're running at roughly the same rate of job increases per month as we did last year. We're very late in the cycle. These numbers are good, and wages may start to move up more quickly because there is a shortage of labor as part of that has to do with current composition of the economy, part of it has to do with immigration policy.

But we're seeing now companies pay up for workers. And when that happens, the Federal Reserve gets nervous about wage inflation, starts to raise rates more aggressively to cool things off. And that's something over the next six to nine months may be a factor that slows down this economy from its current reasonably torrid pace.

WILLIAMS: New topic. I'm going to show you what the prime minister of Canada said to Chuck Todd today, and we'll talk about why and the circumstances after we see this.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

JUSTIN TRUDEAU, CANADIAN PRIME MINISTER: The fact that -- I mean next week we're hosting the G7 summit of world leaders and the airfield, the military base that Air Force One is going to land on was put there in World War II to protect an aluminum smelter that was providing to the military effort. The idea that we are somehow a national security threat to the United States is quite frankly insulting and unacceptable.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

WILLIAMS: We're coming up on the Normandy anniversary where Canadians and Americans died in the same pools of blood on the same beaches. How did we manage to tick off our neighbors to the north?

INSANA: Well, I think this is a fundamental misunderstanding of international trade on the part of the Trump administration, including the president, including people like his top adviser, Peter Navarro, who think that trade is a zero-sum game.

If you go back to NAFTA when it was first passed in 1993, trilateral trade among the U.S., Canada, and Mexico was \$300 billion. Today it's \$1 trillion.

WILLIAMS: Yes.

INSANA: We have what they call an integrated supply chain. We get parts from Canada. We get goods from Canada, we get goods from Mexico. Cars are put together at various points across the border. It keeps costs down for American consumers. And then generally, this trade has been a good thing. When people argue that trade has cost jobs, innovation has cost more jobs than globalization.

In fact, 85% of the jobs that have been lost over the last 30 years have largely been to disruptive activities from technology, not from trade. Trade actually benefits this economy. There have been some bad trade policies and bad decisions made over the years, but certainly with Canada, one of our most important trading partners, with Mexico, where Mr. Obrador is now the lead candidate, he himself a socialist who could actually turn south on the NAFTA agreement here. We're angering a lot of people that we shouldn't be angering, our closest allies, not only Mexico and Canada but the European Union as well at a time when we probably need them more than we have in the past.

WILLIAMS: As I like to say, what could go wrong? Great to see you. My pleasure to you as well. Thanks for coming by our modest operation around here.

Coming up for us, a preview of a special event on this network this weekend. It's about Bobby Kennedy. Almost half a century after his assassination, and its host, Chris Matthews, will join us after this.

WILLIAMS: On a week with so much news, we are thrilled to welcome our friend and colleague Chris Matthews to the broadcast. He is of course the host of "Hardball," and he is more importantly the author of "Bobby Kennedy: A Raging Spirit." Germane to tonight's conversation because Chris is also hosting an MSNBC headliners documentary special this Sunday night on Bobby Kennedy airing at 9:00 p.m. Eastern Time.

Chris, thank you for joining us tonight. And before we get to that, I'd like to start off on current events --

CHRIS MATTHEWS, MSNBC HOST: Sure.

WILLIAMS: -- beginning with North Korea. What do you think is going on?

MATTHEWS: Well, I think the president is about to really take the biggest chance of his life since he ran for president. I really think that if you look at North Korean tactics going back to the Korean War itself, which is officially of course the president points out has never really ended, two years beginning in the summer of -- I think it was July of '51, they talked in Panmunjom on the 38th parallel for two years.

So his idea of a lickety-split, you know, apprentice-type reality **hour**, it doesn't square with the time thinking they have over the time reference they make over in North Korea. They could be tricking him into that chair and letting him sit there for months and years even. So I'm -- that's what I'm afraid of, that we will be humiliated as a country and nothing will get done.

WILLIAMS: Because you mentioned "The Apprentice," I'm duty-bound to next ask you about pardons. How the notions of pardons has changed from presidents and presidencies past. We've noted many times over the past 24 **hours** there's a whole department over at justice at the president's disposal for this kind of thing. What do you make of the Dinesh D'Souza pardon and the names we're hearing maybe next in the pipeline like Blagojevich and Martha Stewart.

MATTHEWS: I think they have a double value for the president. Almost every case he's addressing a constituency that he allies with. Arpaio down in the southwest with him on opposition to illegal immigration with a vengeance. He's got Scooter Libby, the Neocon, of course, former top aide to Dick Cheney. I mean he has all these elements. He's going after Dinesh D'Souza, really a right wing columnist. He's just basically giving a token to all the constituency groups that like him.

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Going after Martha Stewart or getting her off, she already served her time. I think she paid her debt to society, I thought really quickly. And I always thought there was a way over punishing of Mr. Blagojevich. Fourteen years in prison for basically bad language and bs-ing in the back room and conniving. Politicians connive.

But I think it's also -- the second purpose is to tell people like Michael Flynn, like Paul Manafort, like all the people, especially perhaps Michael Cohen, I know how to do this thing. I know how to pardon people. You could be on my list.

WILLIAMS: And before we get to Bobby Kennedy, I want to do this a little bit backwards. I want to share with our audience a snippet from Sunday night's broadcast. We'll watch it together, and after that we can discuss it on the other side.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Robert Kennedy's life was shaped by tragedy.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: President Kennedy was murdered.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: He was overcome by the ghost of his brother.

MATTHEWS: Which compelled him to help others.

ROBERT KENNEDY, FORMER UNITED STATES SENATOR: There's more that we need to do within our local communities.

MATTHEWS: His passion for the underdog, from every background, made him one to unite people.

KENNEDY: I run to seek new policies, policies to end the bloodshed in Vietnam.

MATTHEWS: But he never got the chance.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Senator Kennedy has been shot.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Is there a doctor in the house?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: It was a crushing blow.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: My grandfather was stolen not just from his family but from his country.

KENNEDY: If you give me your help, if you give me your hand, that I will work with you and we will have a new America. Thank you very much.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

WILLIAMS: Chris Matthews, of course, we'll be watching this on Sunday night. My own theory as to why your latest book is doing so well is kind of exactly what you told the viewers the night it came out. And that is that it's a salve, yes, but it also is a touchstone, a reminder of this man, what he represented, and his times.

MATTHEWS: I think the statement you can make about Robert Kennedy is objective. You can look at the people along the train tracks from New York where he was carried from St. Patrick's Cathedral from his funeral down to Washington to join his brother at Arlington Cemetery. The people along those tracks are his greatest testament, a company and people. African-American in cities like Philadelphia.

In fact, in Philly, at 30th Street Station, which you know so well, sitting 20,000 people singing together spontaneously the battle hymn of the republic. And all those poor whites along the tracks between the big cities. This kind of affectionate patriotism, a couple cops you'll see in this picture saluting him, these working class guys having their kids join them, a whole family doing that. That affectionate patriotism across ethnic lines, if you will.

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I don't like the word race. We're all the same race. The ethnic line is gone right now. And I think that Bobby offered to bring it together, bring people together. And I think that's why this is so sad. At least in remembering him, there's some tonic value, that we know it's possible because it once happened.

WILLIAMS: Indeed. John Lewis who was on the train is quoted in the documentary saying he didn't want it to stop. There's ample evidence had it been a transcontinental train ride, those same crowds, that same kind of diverse cross section of Americans would have shown up to pay homage as it goes by. We'll all be watching Sunday night. Chris Matthews, our thanks and to our audience, be sure to watch headliners, Robert F. Kennedy, hosted by our friend Chris this Sunday night, 9:00 p.m. Eastern Time on this very network.

We're back with more right after this.

WILLIAMS: The president and some members of his family departed the White House this afternoon for Camp David. It's his seventh trip there as president. Noticeably missing once again today was the first lady. We say this respectfully but we have seen more public photos of Kim Jong-un over these past 22 days than we have Melania Trump. That's another way of saying the first lady was last seen in public May 10th, 22 days ago. The night we saw her greeting the three American detainees released by North Korea.

Now, four days after that night time event, the first lady was admitted to Walter Reed for what the White House called a benign kidney procedure. She remained hospitalized for five days, though the procedure that the White House said she underwent is often conducted on an outpatient basis.

Last week when our own Peter Alexander asked how Melania's doing, the president said this.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

PETER ALEXANDER, NBC NEWS CORRESPONDENT: How's Melania?

DONALD TRUMP, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: She's doing great right there. She's doing there. Just looking at us right there.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

WILLIAMS: As to right there, "The Washington Post" described that moment this way. "Reporters turned to look at the spot Trump indicated but there was no sign of the first lady."

In an unusual break from tradition, the first lady did not join the president at the Arlington National Cemetery on Memorial Day to honor fallen soldiers. Instead she expressed her gratitude for service members in a post on Twitter.

Now, when asked about this extended absence from public life, her office provided this statement. "She has had several meetings internally with staff and will continue to do so this week. We are focusing on her initiatives and also some longer term planning for events such as the congressional picnic and the Fourth of July.

Coming up for us, what could be a problem for the president each time he complains about the cost of the investigation into his administration, that is next when we continue.

WILLIAMS: Last thing before we go here tonight. If you're looking for the president this weekend, you might try the Catocin Mountains of the state of Maryland. Home of one of the most beautiful facilities that we maintain for our presidents and their families, Camp David, it's the president's, as we said, seventh trip there since taking office.

There are built-in cost advantages to going there because it's an easy chopper ride from Washington and the compound is already secured and built for just that purpose. As opposed to the president's preferred weekend getaway, his Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida, and where the government is concerned, that's an entirely different price range. This is all germane because the president complains about prices constantly from the cost of the U.S. embassy in Jerusalem to the cost of say the Mueller investigation.

Philip Bump over at "The Washington Post" did some price comparisons recently, all based on publicly available numbers. He reports that through end of March, the cost of the Mueller effort has been \$16.7 million. By comparison, the president's 17 trips to Mar-a-Lago have run up a tab of \$17 million thus far.

Remember, at \$1 million a throw, Mar-a-Lago is a big ticket travel item. It means Air Force One down and back, motorcades to and from, it means offshore security provided by the coast guard. Everything else, thanks to the Secret Service, state police, local cops.

It could be argued the Mueller investigation has been a bargain when compared to the 157 days of his presidency that Donald Trump has spent at a Trump branded property. He seems to have chosen the economic alternative, at least for this weekend's plans.

That's our broadcast on a Friday night and for this week. Thank you so very much for being here with us. Good night from our headquarters here in New York.

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Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Document-Type: SHOW

Publication-Type: Transcript

Transcript: 060101cb.473

Subject: TALKS & MEETINGS (90%); US PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES 2012 (89%); US PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES 2016 (89%); HEADS OF STATE & GOVERNMENT (75%); NUCLEAR WEAPONS (74%); PRESS CONFERENCES (73%); LAWYERS (72%); ATTORNEYS GENERAL (71%); MILITARY WEAPONS (50%); Donald Trump; North Korea summit; Kim Jong-un; Vladimir Putin; Singapore; James Mattis; Justice Department; Russia investigation; Jeff Session; Paul Manafort; Michael Cohen; Michael Flynn; Roger Stone; Economy; Tariff; Trade; World Affairs

Company: NBC UNIVERSAL INC (84%); WALL STREET JOURNAL (57%); INTEL CORP (54%)

Organization: US DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE (84%)

Ticker: INTC (NASDAQ) (54%)

Industry: NUCLEAR WEAPONS (74%); LAWYERS (72%); MILITARY WEAPONS (50%)

Person: DONALD TRUMP (90%); VLADIMIR PUTIN (73%)

Geographic: NEW YORK, USA (79%); KOREA, DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF (95%); UNITED STATES (92%); SINGAPORE (90%); RUSSIAN FEDERATION (79%)

Load-Date: June 2, 2018

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