Trump welcomes Merkel after bashing her on campaign trail

On Friday, Merkel presses ahead with the new, arriving in Washington for her first face-to-face encounter with Trump after months of preparation and one postponement due to snow. Analysts and White House officials alike say Friday's sit-down will be Trump's most important meeting with a foreign leader since the Republican businessman took office in January.

Merkel, who spoke to Trump by phone in January, pushed for an in-person meeting in order to begin developing the personal ties that she hopes will lead to effective cooperation down the road, according to a German official familiar with her planning.

"Face-to-face talks are always much better than talking about each other," Merkel told reporters in Munich recently.