

We don't give Pakistan aid anymore: Trump

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump on Sunday defended his administration's decision to stop hundreds of millions of dollars in military aid to Pakistan, saying the country does not do "a damn thing" for the US and its government had helped al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden hide near its garrison city.

Referring to Laden and his former compound in Abbottabad, Trump in an interview to Fox News said, "You know, living – think of this – living in Pakistan, beautifully in Pakistan in what I guess they considered a nice mansion, I don't know, I've seen nicer."

The compound was demolished shortly after US Naval Special Warfare Development Group forces, in a daring helicopter raid, killed Laden there in 2011. "But living in Pakistan... everybody in Pakistan knew he was there," he added.

"And we give Pakistan \$1.3 billion a year. Laden lived in Pakistan, we're supporting Pakistan, we're giving them \$1.3 billion a year -- which we don't give them anymore, by the way, I ended it because they don't do anything for us, they don't do a damn thing for us," he said, says a report published in The Economic Times.

In September, the Trump administration cancelled \$300 million in military aid to Islamabad for not doing enough against terror groups active on its soil. Trump also said that he has plans to visit Iraq and Afghanistan to meet American troops stationed there. "Well, I think you will see that happen. There are things that are being planned. We don't want to talk about it because of -- obviously because of security reasons and everything else," he said.

Trump has been criticised by his political opponents for not visiting either Afghanistan or Iraq in the first two years of his presidency. Speaking exclusively to Fox News, President Trump revealed what President Obama told him was the biggest challenge facing the US, discussed pending high-level departures from his administration and admitted that he occasionally enjoys calling on CNN reporter Jim Acosta.

"Actually I like to do it, but in many cases I don't," Trump acknowledged. In ruling that the administration temporarily has to restore Acosta's White House access pass on Fifth Amendment due process grounds, federal judge Timothy J. Kelly noted that Trump could simply choose to ignore Acosta. (The judge, in his preliminary decision, did not rule on CNN's First Amendment claim.)

But Trump, speaking to Wallace, floated another idea for handling Acosta. "I think one of the things we'll do is maybe turn the camera off that faces them, because then they don't have any air time, although I'll probably be sued for that and maybe, you know, win or lose it, who knows," Trump mused. "I mean, with this stuff you never know what's going to happen."

Calling Acosta "unbelievably rude to [White House Press Secretary] Sarah Huckabee, who's a wonderful woman," Trump said his administration is currently formulating "rules and regulations" for White House reporters. "And if he misbehaves, we'll throw him out or we'll stop the news conference," the president added.

Calling media reports that he is bitter and resentful following the midterm elections nothing more than "disgusting fake news," Trump next addressed some potential high-level departures from his administration.

Taking stock of the administration's progress after two years, amid some past and apparently pending roster changes, Trump gave himself high marks -- literally. "I think I'm doing a great job. We have the best

economy we've ever had," the president said. "We're doing really well. We would have been at war with North Korea if, let's say, that administration continued forward." Trump continued: "I would give myself, I would – look, I hate to do it, but I will do it, I would give myself an A+, is that enough? Can I go higher than that?"

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