Donald Trump

Trump says he was 'too tough' on immigrants as he floats amnesty deal

President concedes US voters were turned off by deportations, Iran war and 'bad messaging' on the economy in midterm elections



Donald Trump and assistant Natalie Harp sit aboard the Marine One helicopter following his visit to Florida on Sunday © Eric Lee/Reuters

Myles McCormick in Washington

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Donald Trump conceded he had been "too tough" on immigration and offered to work with Democrats on an amnesty deal for migrants in a sign that he could temper his deportation campaign in the wake of Republicans' midterm rout.

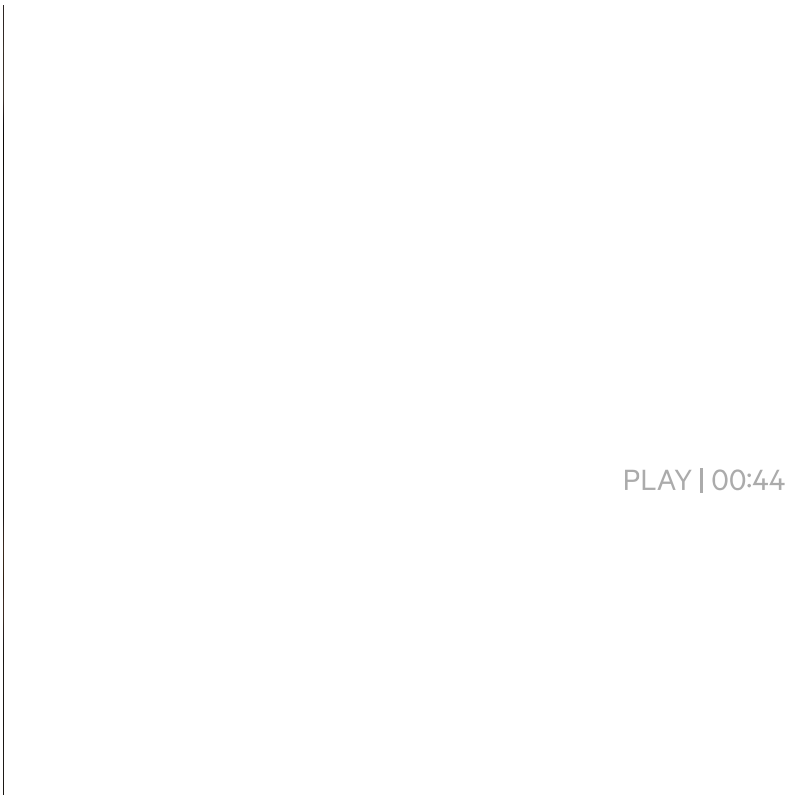
The president said in a TV interview aired on Sunday that some voters had been turned off by the severity of his administration's approach to immigration.

"I think it might be too tough," Trump told the CBS *60 Minutes* programme, referring to his deportation drive.

He said federal agents also deported “people that had good jobs”, adding: “There’s a large part of the country that think that they should be allowed to stay if they’re good people.”

Trump acknowledged that “there’s a group of people that I would say on the sort of pretty far right that would like everybody taken out”, but said others had a “more modified” viewpoint.

“In other words, get the killers out, get all the rough ones out, get the drug dealers out — but let the people that are here, and in some cases here for 10 and 15 years, work a deal for them.”



US President Donald Trump: 'Some deportation policies were too tough' © 60 Minutes

The president made immigration a central part of his re-election campaign two years ago and has led a sweeping crackdown since taking office, deporting huge numbers of undocumented immigrants and ratcheting up border security.

But the deportation drive, which saw Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers conduct raids on communities across the country, led to ugly scenes, public shoot-outs and multiple deaths. Polls suggest voters felt it went too far.

Asked if he thought some kind of "legal status" deal with Democrats was possible, Trump told CBS that was "something that's actually doable". He added that he would be willing to work with legislators such as Texas senator-elect James Talarico to achieve reform.

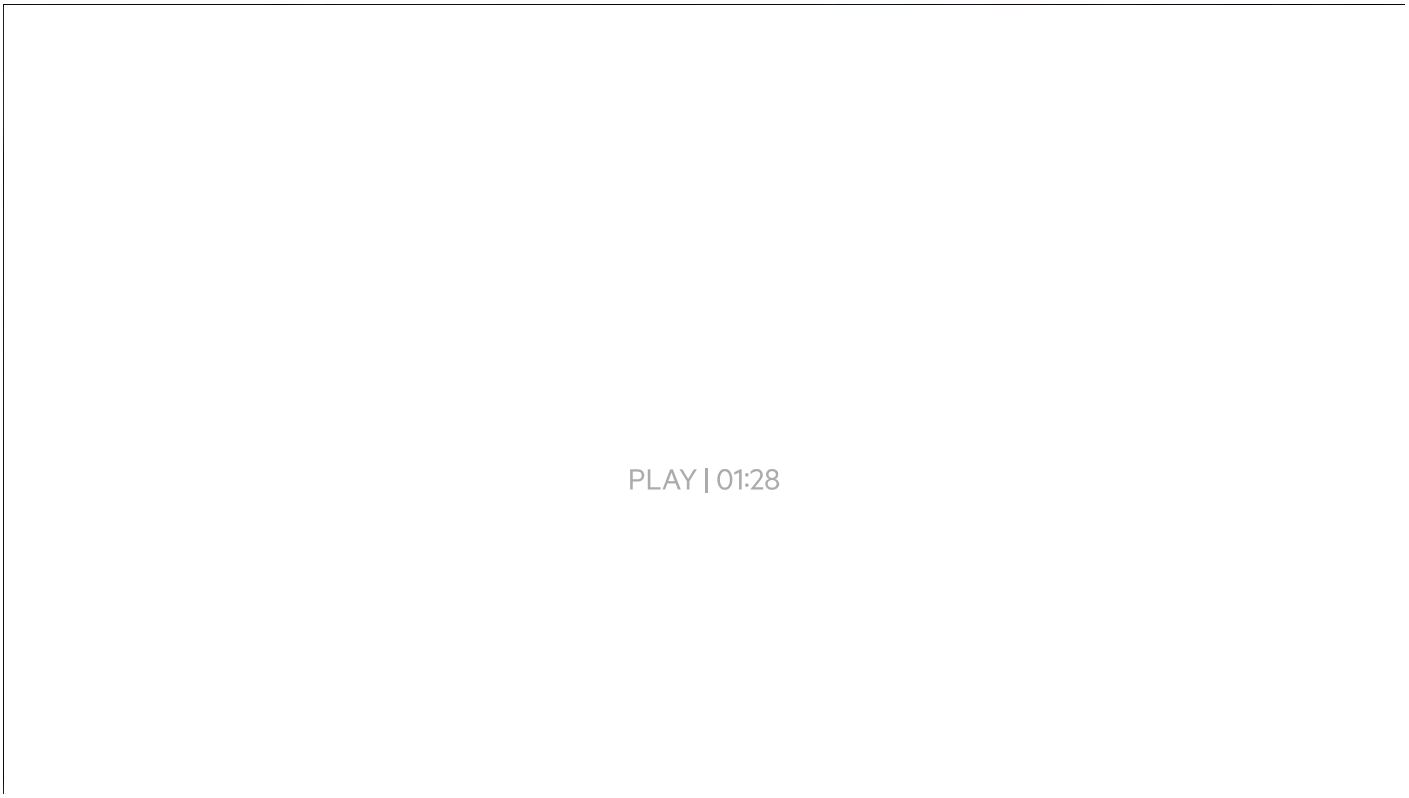
The interview was filmed on Friday morning, shortly before Trump announced he was appointing immigration hardliner Stephen Miller as his chief of staff.

In an unusually frank admission, Trump also conceded that his "bad messaging" on the economy had cost Republicans with voters, despite what he described as "historically good numbers" and "the highest stock market in history".

Trump said he did not disagree with JD Vance's assessment that the Iran war had been the ultimate reason Republicans lost the midterm elections. But he said he still stood by his decision to launch the war "because you can't let Iran have a nuclear weapon".

The president also indicated he was willing to work with Democrats on AI safety, insisting he was not against implementing regulations as long as they did not surrender the US's leadership position in the technology.

"I don't mind guardrails," Trump said. "But I don't want to put us in a deep second position. We're leading number one. And China has no guardrails."



US President Donald Trump: 'I do hate some of my enemies' © 60 Minutes

But Trump made clear that any détente with Democrats would only go so far, as he lashed out at his perceived enemies — including former Democratic Speaker Nancy Pelosi and former FBI director James Comey — whom he admitted he could never forgive even if it cost him entry to heaven.

“I found them to be extremely dishonest people, very bad people, very bad for our country. I love our country far more than I can love people and people like that,” he said.

“I probably cannot do that,” Trump said of ever forgiving them. “Because I do hate some of my enemies and I always will.”

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