Powering U.S. Energy Dominance with Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum

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Featuring Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum
Moderated by Richard Goldberg
Introductory remarks by Clifford D. May

This transcript has been edited for clarity.

MAY: Well, welcome, and thank you for joining us for today's event hosted by the Foundation for Defense of Democracies.

I'm Cliff May. I'm the founder and president of FDD. It's Friday, October 24th. We're pleased to have you here for this conversation, some in person, some tuning in live, some listening to our podcast, some watching on C-SPAN – very pleased to have C-SPAN with us.

America's ability to achieve and sustain energy dominance is central to both economic growth and national security. The newly established National Energy Dominance Council [NEDC] is charged with ensuring reliable, affordable energy at home, while leveraging U.S. resources to project strength abroad.

This mission is critical not only to fueling and capitalizing on the artificial intelligence revolution, and I would argue the artificial intelligence arms race – maybe something you want to comment on – but also to strengthening America's capacity to deter, and if necessary, to defeat the Chinese Communist Party, which I'll remind you is the most powerful communist party in all of history.

We will also have to counter threats from Russia, from the Islamic Republic of Iran, from North Korea – we call those four the Axis of Aggressors around here – and from Venezuela and other adversaries who are sort of an "axis of enablers" to the Axis of Aggressors.

FDD's newly established national energy – I'm sorry, FDD's newly established Energy and National Security Program seeks to address some of these challenges and opportunities.

To discuss these issues and more, I am very pleased to welcome the Honorable Doug Burgum, 55th secretary of the Department of the Interior and chairman of the National Energy Dominance Council. A North Dakota native, Secretary Burgum served as the state's 33rd governor from 2016 to 2024. He provided seed capital to Great Plains Software in 1983 and led the startup through a successful IPO before its acquisition by Microsoft in 2001. Secretary Burgum remained with Microsoft for six years as senior vice president of business solutions. He later co-founded Arthur Ventures and has served as chairman for several international software companies, including Atlassian and SuccessFactors, and as a board member for Avalara. I hope I pronounced all that close enough.

Joining Secretary Burgum is FDD's senior advisor, Richard Goldberg, director of FDD's Energy and National Security Program. During the Trump administration's transition from late-2024 through August 2025, Rich helped conceive, launch, and operationalize the National Energy Dominance Council. As its senior counselor, he advised on all aspects of the council's work, including oil and gas, nuclear power, A.I. energy infrastructure, and critical minerals. Rich serves as a national security and international affairs advisor at the Department of the Interior and supported Secretary Burgum and Secretary of Energy Chris Wright in their roles on the National Security Council.

Before we dive in, just a few words about FDD, in case you don't know. For almost 25 years now, FDD has operated as a fiercely independent, nonpartisan research institute exclusively focused on national – excuse me, on national security and foreign policy. As a point of pride and principle, we do not accept foreign government funding. For more on our work, please visit our website, FDD.org, follow us on X and Instagram and subscribe to our YouTube channel. We've everywhere.

Rich, the floor is yours.

GOLDBERG: Cliff, thank you so much. Mr. Secretary, thank you for being here. I feel like I used to work for you. I still feel like I work for you, but I know in this context, I'm interviewing you so I will get that in my mind. But thank you for being here. It's a real honor for FDD as we launch this new program.

I think it'd be helpful – we call this program Energy and National Security, and increasingly, especially with, now, the National Energy Dominance Council, which you chair, we see the interplay – the real integration of energy and national security. How do you view it? How do you see energy within the context of national security today?

BURGUM: Well, first of all, thanks to Cliff; thanks to you, Rich. Great to be here at FDD, and this is a – certainly, at the time it was created, it was an important organization, probably more important today than ever, so grateful for all the people that have helped build this organization and are addressing these important topics.

When you think about national security and energy, you can't really separate the two any more than you can separate energy from the economy. The economy – and energy's not just an industry – sometimes it get (sic) treated like that, but it is a component of every other industry, and whether it's the, you know, the clothes that you're wearing, the gas in your car, the food on your table, everything you touch, the home you heat has got an energy component.

So, if we don't have abundant, affordable, reliable energy, you know, that drives inflation, it drives economic insecurity. You can't have prosperity for people if you don't have the energy policy figured out. And as it turns out, it always has been true, but now more true than ever with the rise of A.I. that if you don't have energy abundance, which you can translate into energy dominance, you simply – I like to think about it is as at the NEDC, as, you know, we sell energy to our friends and allies so they don't have to buy it from our adversaries. And thank goodness we have a president in President Trump who understands everything I just said, and he understood the need for a National Energy Dominance Council and he understands energy diplomacy, and energy diplomacy and wielding the power of energy, and that we have an energy abundance in this country has been central to him resolving the eight conflicts, and it'll be central to him resolving the ninth one – hopefully, soon, you know, around the world.

And so, it's a tool for nothing short of prosperity at home, peace abroad is what the NEDC is all about.

GOLDBERG: Yeah, and this term, "energy dominance," right, this is, you know – we haven't heard this term until I'd say the last year or so. I heard you saying it a lot in the last couple of years. President Trump has definitely adopted this. We now have a National Energy Dominance Council.

We used to talk about energy security, I think we talk about energy independence as a nation, now we talk about energy dominance. What does that term mean to you? What does it mean to the President?

BURGUM: Well, I think for the analysts and others that are following along, when we had this thing, like, you know, every president for 40 years said energy independence, but it was always allowed – there was always kind of a loophole on that which was net.

You know, as long as we were exporting more than we were importing, it was OK to have dependence on certain – you know, certain individuals, but that didn't mean that you had the, you know, the infrastructure that you need to do that.

Energy dominance is: we can take care of all of our own needs domestically and we've got the ability to supply, in quantities, to all of our allies so that they don't have to be dependent on others. And we have – and again, part of what drove energy in the last couple of decades has been this climate extremism or climate idealism, depending on how people – they may not have thought of themselves as an extremist, they thought of themselves as a climate, you know, idealist.

But if you said to yourself, you know, the most important thing in the entire world for all decisions from all governments is one degree of theoretical temperature change in the year 2100 and you let that start driving every decision that you make around energy policy, well, you know who that's really good for? It's really good for all of the people that Cliff talked about at the beginning in terms of the, you know, the Axis of Aggressors.

I mean, if you're Russia and you convince Germany to, you know, shut down all your nuclear, close all of your, you know, base load coal plants, and become entirely dependent on the Russian gas, that's a great thing for – it's a great thing for your business model.

And if anybody that's tracking national security doesn't think that there is – in a world of democracies, where there is open information and anybody can sign up to have a social media account, if anybody is left alive that doesn't understand that countries like Iran and Russia and China and others that have state-sponsored cyber information programs going on every day, if they don't understand that they have been feeding, you know, information out to support the idea that this idealistic, extremist cause was the thing that was going to save the planet, then people are just asleep.

I mean, understand that it was a actively driven strategy to try to convince people that somehow this promise of a highly subsidized, intermittent, weather-dependent sources of energy was going to somehow save the planet when in fact what it was really doing was destabilizing national security and it was undermining the economic prosperity of our allies.

And so, again, nothing short of trying to reverse that is what we're also about at the NEDC.

GOLDBERG: There's two places where I have seen, I mean, I think clearest examples of what you just said becoming very obvious, I hope, to a broad range of people, regardless of partisanship, regardless of ideology.

One is just this week, we obviously saw new sanctions announced on Russia, this week targeting oil, but there's an ongoing conversation on gas as well. And we think about past attacks on U.S. LNG and the transformation that we see ahead now on U.S. LNG and what it means for Europe, what it means for Russia policy, other policies around the world.

And then the A.I. energy infrastructure context as well and having the power, having the electricity to power us to A.I. and win that race.

Both of those seem pivotal to our national security. To take either one in which order you want, but maybe Russia is the story of the week right now. How do you view this week's sanctions announcement within the context of energy dominance and the role of American energy there?

BURGUM: Well, the sanctions are critical right now – against Russia are critical to ending this conflict in Ukraine. Russia – been funding this war based off of their oil and gas sales and revenues, in the same way that Iran was funding 24 terrorist groups off of their oil production.

And the failure of the U.S. to exercise a policy around energy dominance is no more clear than it was under the last administration. In the last administration, the Biden administration, there was nothing short – it was actually – the number's actually 70. There was 70 executive orders and administrative actions taken against the state of Alaska. You know, their production went down. North Dakota, energy-producing state, under the Biden administration, our oil production went down. We were at one time the number two, you know, oil producer in the country. It went down because of the pressuring.

And you know whose oil production went up during those four years? Iran's oil production went up. And Iran was supposedly sanctioned by the last administration, but they were also, you know, releasing billions of dollars of funds for, you know – here's for five hostages, here's $6 billion. We'll un-freeze accounts.

I mean, it was such a pro-Iranian approach, and in many ways, it was the – you know, they allowed the whole Russia/Ukraine thing to happen because they were all on board on the climate extremism thing.

And it – take Germany. Germany is the, you know, the biggest economy in the E.U., and Germany chased this green dream. They spent, they spent $500 billion all-in on trying to chase this, what I call the green dream of, we're going to have wind and solar [inaudible].

They produce 20 percent electricity now than when they did before and it's at three times the cost. And so, you spent all that money and then you shut down your infrastructure, you do become entirely dependent on Russian gas.

If it weren't for the U.S. coming to their rescue and having the ability to export LNG to Europe, you know, and if they didn't have a warmer winter that first winter after the invasion of Russia and Ukraine, there would have been serious, serious issues there.

But what was the Biden administration doing? The Biden administration literally was – nothing's more clear than on LNG. They had an order to stop the building of export facilities from the U.S. It's the one thing that I literally cannot explain to you, Rich, or the audience. Why would anybody in either party think that's a good idea? I haven't even been able to follow the money. What happened? Why would somebody think that was a good idea?

And because – though if you were, if you were someone that said, "Oh, we're doing it to save the planet because we're worried about CO2," LNG has been the thing that's reduced CO2 emissions more than anything else. So, it doesn't even make sense from an environmental standpoint. I still can't figure that one out.

But under the Trump administration, we're trying to build as much capability as we can. In 2025 – I mean, this is how fast we're going: 33 percent increase in LNG exports from the U.S. in this year, I mean, and we're still building LNG export facilities at a rapid capability.

I mean, we're now – the U.S. is now the largest LNG exporter in the world. And LNG can be used to heat homes. I mean, a single ship leaving the coast of Louisiana can heat 100,000 German homes for a year. I mean, so, home heat, turn it into fertilizer, generate electricity for the A.I. arms race. It's so critical. And we've got a lot more that we can do to actually increase our ability to sell energy to our allies.

But the Russians funding this war, they've got a high cost of energy. Most of their oil production is traditional in conventional wells. They never cracked the code on the shale side of things. They're depleting their best resources; they're moving into the marginal areas. If we can get the price of oil down a little bit further, it gets below their break-even point.

And at some point, I mean, you know, wars are a little bit like political campaigns; they end when you run out of money. And at least right now, Russia's shown no interest. They've been fighting this senseless war for four years against a little country and not winning. And then, you know, and how do you get it to stop? We have to get it to stop by cutting off their financial resources.

And President Trump, Scott Bessent, and the whole team in this administration, there's a plan to do so. The relationships we have in the Middle East that allow people like Kuwait and Saudi Arabia and others to pick up the slack and start selling oil to India.

And we got a president – President Trump, he picks up the phone this week, calls, you know, calls [Prime Minister] Modi and says, "You guys have got to stop buying Russian oil." Picks up the phone, calls the Crown Prince [of Saudi Arabia], calls MBS, says, "Hey, can you guys do that?" He's like – probably not even reported. I mean, this is just – we've never had a president who could literally, without an appointment, can say, "Get him on the phone, I want to talk to him." And shaping world energy policy right from the Resolute Desk is what's happening in a week like this that leads up to us announcing these sanctions.

And then we're going to have, we're going to have the alliances to make it stick. And so, I'm very optimistic that the pressure that we're going to be able to put on Russia is going to bring that conflict to an end.

And again, that's President Trump's all along, said, let's stop the killing. And again, what this is –sell energy to our friends and allies, so you stop buying.

Step two will be, and what [Secretary of Energy] Chris Wright and I and others are working on is, how do we build the infrastructure in Eastern Europe so that they have alternative sources from the U.S.? I mean, we can harangue a landlocked Eastern European country all we want and say, stop buying Russian, you know, LNG. But if they've only got one pipe into the country. It's kind of, you know, falls a little bit on – like they say to us, “What do you want me to do? I got one pipe.”

But we have an opportunity to build infrastructure that permanently will take away these dependencies on Russia so that it can never do it again. It creates alternative supply. It's great for those countries in Eastern Europe, for their economies and it's great for the U.S. And if we can – again, I think we're starting to see a turning point on how people think about energy policy around the world.

Led by the United States, people are starting to wake up. Particularly, we'll talk about A.I. But in a world of A.I., you know, if you don't have reliable, affordable, and massive amounts of energy, you're going to miss out on the next wave of capital investment that's in an A.I.-driven economy.

GOLDBERG: And you were recently in Greece, right after you were at Gastech a few weeks ago. This is sort of the crossroads, it seems like, where a lot of this American LNG is coming into that will serve that Eastern European market.

BURGUM: It will. And Greece has been, you know, a terrific partner. Their prime minister totally gets it, totally on board. And there's another big energy conference coming up in a couple weeks, Chris Wright and I will both be there.

You know, I visited an LNG import facility in Greece. They had offloaded 31 LNG ships from America, 35 had been at the port, 31 of them had come from the U.S. They would like to take more – this is there, offloading more there.

They've got some ability, you know, to be able to send that off to their neighbors. But like I said, the North-South Corridor idea that would come from there, their participation in the 3+1, you know, there's more resource in the Eastern Mediterranean, all kinds of opportunities to break the dependence that Eastern Europe has had on Russia.

And that, even more than NATO, is going to stop the threat of conflict along that border, which we know has been going on for over a century, you know. Let's just get it over with. Build the infrastructure and make sure that those countries have an opportunity to prosper and have national security, become, you know, strong allies, become full partners with the rest of the world.

GOLDBERG: You mentioned that North-South Corridor there, and then into 3+1, Greece, Cyprus, Israel, United States. We have larger visions of IMEC [India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor], obviously underway as well, connecting India into this corridor through the Middle East. The potential and the future of Saudi-Israel normalization, this energy corridor.

I mean, American energy feeding into all of this, American infrastructure building into all of this. This really does seem like a global integrated picture where the U.S. is driving an energy agenda, which is all in focus of our national security.

BURGUM: Absolutely. And then throw in another one, which I know you're deeply familiar with, but the Kurdish region of Iraq. You know, Iraq is dependent on getting power and electricity from Iran. I mean, it's like hard to be independent when, you know, somebody next door can flip a switch, and you lose 40 percent of your power. That's not really independence. And so, again, you know, American technology, American companies, American investment coming into some of these regions, building out this infrastructure, you know, it's got an opportunity to really make this a change and make this a lasting peace.

And, of course, again, the diplomatic success. I mean, Jared Kushner, Steve Witkoff, the president, I mean, everything that's going on right now in the Middle East, really remarkable. And this is an opportunity for us, and it's an opportunity for American companies and our allies to really put in the infrastructure to allow energy abundance to flourish and help bring prosperity and peace to the world.

GOLDBERG: Before we leave the Middle East, I want to go back to Alaska and something you said. But if we're in the Middle East right now, obviously, we went through a 12-day historic war between Israel and Iran, ended with the B-2 bomber strike that the president likes to talk about, and the incredible destruction that brought on parts of the Iranian nuclear program.

From an energy perspective, going through that 12-Day War, what are your reflections on that? Are there lessons learned? Are there takeaways? Are there things that have changed since then? Are there, are there ways that we see the Middle East or our national security in reflection on what happened or what didn't happen in market reaction across those 12 days?

BURGUM: Well, first of all, again, under President Trump's leadership, remarkable courage, remarkable insight, remarkable decision-making to get us to where we are today. But having – as you would know, the chair of the National Energy Dominance Council also sits in the National Security Council. Department of Energy Chris Wright, our fantastic Secretary of Energy, has always sat on that position. DOE has always sat on the Security Council.

And you've heard President Trump say publicly many times that when he met with the pilots that conducted this incredible 37-hour mission, leaving the U.S. flying nonstop over and back, enormous logistics on, you know, hundreds of other aircraft involved in both escorting and refueling, and the precision of that happening.

And then he talked to the pilots, and he said publicly, "The pilots have said to me, hey, we've been planning this mission three times a year on paper for 22 years." Well, just think back over that timeframe, because 22 years takes you back to the pre-shale revolution in America. It takes you back to a point in time when we didn't have energy dominance.

And so then imagine, if you will, that if you're the president of the United States and you're in a meeting and you ask the question and say, "Well, we do have the ability to bomb Iran and stop their nuclear program?" "Yes, but if we do that, what's going to happen to the price of oil?"

And if you'd asked that question 22 years ago, pre-shale, it would have been, oh, well, that's going to be a problem, because we're very dependent on imports. And so much of the world's economy depends on what goes through the Strait of Hormuz. And Iran's got this enormous capability to, you know, almost immediately deploy. I mean, they're right there: the mines, the ships, the small craft, they have – boom. We're locking this thing up. And that's the choke point for the global economy.

And so, you know, again, President Trump, if we're making this decision this year and he asked his advisors, you know what's going to happen to the price of oil? Well, you know what the advisers had an opportunity to say? “Nothing.”

Nothing at all. It's not going to change the price of the pump, because guess what? The U.S., we don't get any oil anymore out of the Strait of Hormuz. And so, then you're in a position where now the military power, tied with the economic power of tariffs, tied with the courage to be able to actually use that, you've got the degrees of freedom.

Because I'm sure other presidents may have gotten to that point, you know, where they said that we're going to, you know, we're going to take action but then they didn't because of the impact that might have happened here. There's an election, price at the pump going through the roof, you know.

And so, this, you know, the 12-Day War happens with Iran. And what happens here? Americans, if they weren't paying attention, didn't even know what happened. And they certainly didn't notice it when they went to fill up their car because the price didn't really change here domestically.

But you know – and again, it's public information. You know who called Iran? China. China called Iran. It was in the paper two days later. China calls Iran. "Do not mine the Strait of Hormuz." China imports 11 and a half million barrels of oil a day, and half of that is coming through the Strait of Hormuz. We didn't have to worry about it. Other people in the world did. And this is the degrees of freedom and power that you have. If you've got a president that's willing to both, A, understand it, and A, (sic) use it, you know.

This is why we get the remarkable results that we have today is because of all of these coming together. If we did not have energy dominance, we wouldn't have the ability to deploy power the way we are, either through tariffs or through militarily, at all.

GOLDBERG: I want to back up a little bit. You were talking about the lead up to the Russia sanctions this week and some of the energy coordination that goes into it.

We also saw this week major announcements on Alaska. And we have seen over the course of this administration, a real focus on Alaska, both in oil, but also LNG and the building of an LNG pipeline of Alaska long term.

Alaska seems like one of our treasured national security assets that we underappreciate from that perspective. How do you view Alaska in terms of oil and gas and where are we going? I'd love to hear sort of status, especially from an Indo-Pacific security perspective on where we are with the last LNG.

BURGUM: Well, let me just start again. It starts with the president. Biden was, you know, captive to listening to a bunch of people that don't live in Alaska. There was essentially an anti-energy policy framework in the prior administration. I mentioned the, literally, 70 executive orders and actions by the administration against Alaska.

And let's just start with Alaska. For those that – people know it's big. It's almost exactly the size of California, plus Arizona, plus New Mexico, plus Texas. I mean, you take our second, our third, our fifth, and our sixth largest states and throw them together, that's the size of Alaska. And Alaska does – as President Trump – day one, unleash the extraordinary, you know, potential of Alaska. And so, we have a number of things going on. President Trump, that was day one, we've been executing on that a week and a half ago, you know.

We haven't talked about critical minerals yet. But he, you know, they've been trying to build a road up there for decades, a 211-mile gravel road, privately owned, toll-based road that gets into the Ambler Mining District.

The Ambler Mining District has got 17 hundred claims that have been made in this remote wilderness that you cannot access. There is no roads. It is, back there, some of the richest deposits of things that we need in, and now the battle that we are in against with China around critical minerals that are there.

And with the stroke of a pen, through some capability that existed since 1980, legislation that was built to support Jimmy Carter, President Trump was able to say, "No, we're building this road. We're getting this thing done." We've seen the capital prices of everybody that's in that, I mean, if they're public, their stock market prices shot up, the amount of venture capital that's going into mining.

We killed the mining industry in this nation, not just in Alaska, but Nevada, California, Arizona. We've got to get back into things. It's not just "Drill, baby, drill." It's "Mine, baby, mine."

I mean, we're winning on the oil and gas side of the world. We have got a battle in front of us on the critical minerals. President Trump understands Alaska can be a part of that.

But back on the oil and gas side, we fought – we, the United States of America, fought, and soldiers and sailors died fighting to win the war in the Pacific, fighting their way up those island chains, and what's left, those territories of Guam, Marianas Islands, American Samoa.

All of these are territories of the United States. They are all part of the Department of Interior. We meet regularly with the governors of those areas. We've got troops. We've got bases out there. China is encroaching across all of those island nations.

And then we have Japan, who, post-World War II, has been one of our greatest allies, and at a time – for a while, had the second largest economy in the world. They've declined a little bit. It's 120 million people living in Japan. It's the size of North and South Dakota combined. 120 million people. They have basically zero oil and gas. South Korea, 51 million people in half the size of North Dakota. Almost zero oil and gas.

We have got so much oil and gas in Alaska. Tokyo to Anchorage, eight days. Japan is importing a majority of their oil and gas right now. If it's not coming from Indonesia, it's coming from the Middle East, 27 days by ship.

The security of a secure supply chain going down the Aleutian Islands, bringing it right to Tokyo that we can deliver that.

And of course, everybody knows that we've had oil in Alaska for 50 years. The amazing Trans-Alaskan pipeline, remarkably built in 28 months. In 28 months. This is when America could build big important things and build them well.

That thing is, on the northern reaches, the North Slope, it's built on stilts, so it doesn't melt the permafrost. It's never had a major leak. It's got seismic capability to be able to handle the jiggles that come from the many seismic events that happen. It crosses three mountain ranges. It goes from sea level to over 4,100 feet and down and up, and down and up.

I mean, this was America. In 1976, we built that in 28 months, and there was no road. They had to build the road first. They had to build a road, then they built the pipeline. It's worked perfectly. There's no way to get gas off the North Slope. Every barrel of oil that comes up produces enormous amounts of gas. We've re-injected. With every barrel that comes up, we take the gas, and we re-inject it back in the North Slope field. There's 50 trillion cubic feet with a "T," 50 trillion cubic feet of gas on the North Slope.

So, there's a proposal right now to build on along that same road, an LNG pipeline. And when we build it, it's a 42-inch pipeline. The demand coming off that pipe for LNG from Taiwan, from South Korea, from the Philippines, from Vietnam, and from Japan, could be more than double than what that pipe will hold. I mean, the minute it gets built, people are going to say, "Wow, we should have built two pipes." So, we're trying to think ahead.

But those folks are all super nervous. They have to kowtow at some point in time to China. Why? China has got a 300-ship navy. If there is a conflict around Taiwan in the South China Sea, where is all the energy coming through to get to these Pacific Island neighbors who are all increasing their defense budgets?

We have 29,000 troops in South Korea. We've got huge air bases in Japan. How is that going to work if those countries are out of energy in two or three weeks? Not going to work well, because that's how World War II ended. World War II ended – not only we had brave sailors and soldiers, people like my dad on a destroyer that made it through Okinawa and all the way there, but we also, we had submarines. We sank the oil tankers. Japan ran out of energy. They lived through it. They remember that. They don't want to get in a conflict where they're – they want to have energy security, too.

We have the opportunity now, finally, with infrastructure to provide that for them, and that changes the whole dynamic of China's power in the North Pacific, is Alaskan energy. And when we do that and we serve them out of Alaska, that frees up all of our amazing research that we have along the Gulf Coast, and the Gulf of America, to be able to serve Europe and all the allies in the other part of the world. So, we're just beginning on energy dominance. Alaska is going to pay a key part of that geopolitically for what's going on.

But, with President Trump stopping in Japan, meeting with people in Malaysia, meeting with people in South Korea, it's going to be a key part of the discussions they have this week is what we can do.

And the deals that have already been negotiated by President Trump, Howard Lutnick, Scott Bessent, in terms of that record investment that's coming from both South Korea and Japan into the U.S., some of that will be designated to build infrastructure in Alaska, which will then help our allies in that region.

GOLDBERG: There's obviously been doubters in the Japanese press, others, of the viability to get this pipeline done. What gives you the confidence it's actually going to get done? When would it get done?

If you're the Japanese, if you're the South Koreans, if you're the Philippines, when am I actually going to get gas out of Alaska in the future?

BURGUM: Well, at Gastech in Europe a couple weeks ago, there was an LOI that was signed between the developer Glenfarne and some prospective customers. I think, earlier today, midnight our time, but later in the day, it happened already today. There was an announcement about the first off-take agreement that was signed.

And I think that the FEED study, which is really going to be – that show the ROI of this project, expected to come out in December. I think when people see that and they take a look at that and they say, this is economically viable and it's going to be beneficial for those partners that are going to be on the receiving end of those off-take agreements, then this thing is going to happen.

It's the only infrastructure project that President Trump mentioned in his joint address to the two chambers of Congress earlier this year. And so, it is a high priority for this administration.

NEDC, we're working on it basically all the time as a project. How do we accelerate the permitting, the land transfers, the corridor, everything that we have to do to get that thing built? And then, there's actually interest from other foreign investors that say, hey, in addition to the pipeline, what if we were able to store gas and take gas off the North Slope by ship for the months of the year that there's open ice up there? How do we do that?

That could be, versus a second pipeline, it could be a second project, which is just tapping into that gas field and figuring a way to move it out by ship, because it's a resource and there's demand, and it's going to have the same, the same benefits of peace and prosperity that we have we're getting off the Gulf Coast.

GOLDBERG: You've touched on both of these so far, but I want to go deeper on them. One is on A.I. One is on – you talked about critical minerals and supply chains there.

It would seem that the century will be defined by who wins, the United States or China, in this, in this whatever you want to call it, Cold War, strategic competition, whatever the language you're comfortable with is, and two things will define that.

One is who has the power to unlock that last compute on A.I. that you need and who controls the periodic table. Where are we on both races?

BURGUM: Well, these are – we're behind. I mean, we're winning on the oil and gas side right now, but we're behind on – I mean, if you take a look at the periodic table and you say, what are the 20 most important rare earth critical minerals on that list and who controls the processing? Take the top 20, China, 85 percent to 100 percent of the processing.

It's been strategic. They've been at it for decades. We've been lulled to sleep. Part of that same environmental misinformation was the thing that killed mining. I mean, we graduated 36,000 lawyers in America last year. We graduated 300 people that had a mining or metallurgical degree.

We just basically said, “We can't do that. It's so dirty. Mining is so dirty. Let's let somebody else do it.” So then, China, they're going to tear up the Congo, they're going to tear up Indonesia, use child or slave labor, ship all those resources to China, and do the processing there. And then, now, in recent weeks, say we're going to put export controls on everybody for every element of it.

I mean, what they announced was – it wasn't export controls. It was the largest intelligence gathering program ever announced in the history of mankind, completely unacceptable and an escalation of what's been going on.

Again, looking forward to President Trump sitting down with President Xi, and maybe taking that dialogue a different direction.

But, you know, whatever they resolve in the trade negotiations, we, as a country and our allies, have to have a determination to say we are not going to be put in a position where the things that matter to defense, matter to technology, matter to our basic industry, that we're going to say we can't do that at home. We have to be able to do that at home.

And guess what? When you do it here, cleaner, better, safer, smarter than anywhere else in the world. As a percentage of even the public land, we could, we could be a mining powerhouse again and be using like 0.001 percent of all the public land in America. I mean, look, 700 million acres of public land. It takes very little actual space to do mining in terms of the footprint of it.

And so, yes, we can. We can protect the environment, and we can have critical mineral security to do that. So that's actually critical.

The announcement that we announced earlier this week with Australia on Monday when the Prime Minister was here, again, NEDC spans across – like, half the cabinet sits on the any NEDC, so Commerce, Treasury, Agriculture, Energy, Interior, I mean, EPA, we're all part of that group.

And so, when that group says, here's an assignment, let's go get a framework done for a deal with Australia, and we got the deal signed, but that's a framework, we expect other countries to join the club and sign agreement that would have that same framework, which is, we're going to be able to trade amongst ourselves, both the minerals and the process, refined materials between that, in a way where we can exclude those that might want to do dumping to destroy the economics of markets and prevent market entry from occurring.

We have to get back to having a market where market functions.

And, of course, as part of that big breakthrough, which none of us have ever seen before in my lifetime, but the U.S. has – we have announced, I mean, that we're going to through Defense Production Act, through the Department of War, we're going to be taking equity positions in critical minerals companies with – the first deal was with Mountain Pass.

When we announced Ambler Road at the same time, we announced after the close of markets, but there's a couple of public companies that each co-owned a group called Trilogy, which owned the rights to that, and between direct equity investment and warrants.

All of you, if you're an American citizen, you now own part of Trilogy Metals and think of this as starting at the federal level, what states like North Dakota had, what Alaska has, with their permanent fund, what Texas has, is that we've got to be in the sovereign wealth building business.

And it's OK for us to take minority positions and things that are critical to national security, because, when you do, and then you announce it, there's gains that occur because then you breathe life back into these markets that'll help attract capital from the traditional capital markets. But that's an important strategy.

And just like we have a strategic petroleum reserve, we have to think about how we're building up a critical minerals reserve as well across all of these – all these elements.

So, it is – the periodic table, some people may have slept during that portion in high school, but those that didn't, you get a great career ahead of them, because we've got to get back into this game and really be strategic about how we manage it. But the good news is we've got the resources to do it. Now, we just have to move at warp speed to make sure that we take care of those dependencies.

GOLDBERG: Power and A.I. China seems to be way ahead. We're catching up. It's a priority. Are we going to get there? How are we going to get there?

BURGUM: China has been, again, very strategic while the rest of the world – and they might have signed onto the Paris Accords and said, "Great. The rest of you shut down your energy production. Go to something that's highly subsidized, intermittent, and weather-dependent, you know, and bankrupt yourself doing that, and then keep shutting down your baseload. And meanwhile, even though we've signed the agreement, we're going to ignore everything on there and we're going to build so much electricity every possible way we can."

China added 93 gigawatts of coal last year. A gigawatt is all of the Denver Metro area. 93 gigawatts. These aren't U.S. clean coal – beautiful, clean coal U.S. plants, you know, where everything is taken out from a mission standpoint, you know, that comes out of a U.S. plant. If there's a U.S. coal plant running today, it's one of the cleanest plants in the world. But China's just slapping them up, 1970s, '80s technology. Let's go.

And again, so their line – if you look at electric production in China, it is just skyrocketing. Nuclear – they have over 25 projects that are being built right. The last 30 years, I think we built two. I mean, if it weren't for the U.S. Navy with their small modular nuclear reactors running our submarines and our aircraft carriers, you know, we'd have been basically, like, shut ourselves out of an industry. But even though we were trying to kill the nuclear industry, we still get about 17 or 18 percent of our electricity from it. But President Trump signed four executive orders breathing life back into the nuclear electricity energy in this country, and that market, there's more capital that's flown back in from the private sector and from venture capitalists into nuclear in the last four months than there was in previous decades.

So again, whether it's nuclear, geothermal, there's some exciting things that are happening. We've got to get back in the hydro business. I mean and keep our hydro going. And then we have to keep everything that's going now baseload, regardless of source has to keep going. Chris Wright has used his authorities to stop the premature shutdown of baseload in this country.

And it's all about electricity. A kilowatt hour is worth more today than at any point in human history. It's a beautiful thing that electricity can run these lights, or you know, heat your home if you wanted to. There's more efficient ways to heat your home than with electricity. That would (sic) call natural gas, but it's great that we've got, you know, power.

But now you can take electricity and turn it into intelligence. And again, I would ask everyone, stop calling them data centers. I mean, a data center – great. You've got a healthcare insurance provider, and you've got a patient, and then you've got the payer, the insurance company. It's a closed-loop system. If that data center is transacting, you know, a healthcare claim, if it's transacting a shopping claim between a buyer, a seller and a third party, you know, that's interesting. It's commerce. It's business transactions.

If you have an A.I. factory, you're taking electricity and creating intelligence – intelligence is a general-purpose technology, a GPT. It can be used by anyone. You can use it to cure cancer. You can also use it to shoot down, you know, 498 out of 500 incoming missiles, which is what Israel did a year ago and America, you know, read that in the paper, and then said oh, what was the score of the game last night? I mean, like it was, like, no big deal that somehow, you know, that somehow, if people shot 500 missiles at us in America right now, that we'd be able to shoot down 498? I don't know. I mean, this is like – this is why the Golden Dome, Iron Dome, you know.

There's a world of warfare that's occurring right now on this planet that is being driven and secured by A.I., and the U.S. has been behind on that. We've got to catch up. We've got to have the power to be able to do that, and the power is electricity.

So, at NEDC, we are doing everything – every day we get up, and we say, "What are the supply chains? Do we need more turbans? Do we need more transformers?" We need to wake up the utility sector that's been asleep for 30 years because there's been no increase in demand.

I was in tech for 30 years. We never used more than one percent of the nation's electricity that entire time. Why? Because you know, P.C.s got more efficient. We were building, you know, tools that allowed everybody that built a refrigerator to be more efficient. I mean, we kept getting more and more efficiency, so people just thought we're going to have the same demand for electricity forever.

What we got handed by the Biden administration, it shows, like, oh, electricity is going to be flat. It's actually declining because we were shutting down baseload and replacing with intermittent, and intermittent, you know, it doesn't show up. When you need it, it doesn't show up. I mean, it's like – and A.I. needs power after the sun goes down. A.I. needs power when the wind is not blowing.

And by the way, you also need – if you want to watch a football game on TV, you actually need, you know, if you're dependent on – you want to be on, depending on the weather, on what – you know, is the sun shining and the wind blowing? It's a night game? Oh, there's no power. My TV's not working.

You know, we need reliable seven-by-24-hour power, and so we're working on every aspect of that. The fastest way we can get there is with the excess natural gas we have in our country. And there's been an industrial complex that's become very good at protesting horizontal infrastructure. America, there are people that get up every day and say, "We're going to save the planet by stopping this transmission line because we don't like the electrons that are going down it. We're going to stop this gas transmission line. We're even going to stop CO2 transmission lines because we're worried that somehow if we can capture and utilize CO2 for enhanced oil recovery, it's going to extend the life of fossil fuels," even though in North Dakota, we were doing carbon-negative barrels of oil with CO2 enhanced oil recovery.

I mean, there's ways to solve everybody other's (sic) problems if you just, you know, build the infrastructure to do that. But if you can't build infrastructure quickly in this country, which is very tough to do even with the permitting support, you know, from the federal government where we're cutting through red tape, record reductions. I mean, we're doing E.A.s – environmental assessments – that used to take over a year, we've done them in less than 14 days. We've done permitting on EISs [Environmental Impact Statement] in 24 days that would take years and years. You know, how you do that? Well, it's a simple thing: You focus, you build processes that don't involve long delays of whisper chains, and then you put a strike team on it and just make it happen.

So even with faster permitting, you still run into local and state conflicts in terms of, how do you build – how do you build transmission? And we have states in this country that essentially have anti-energy policies. They are not on board, you know, with the dominance thing and if you want to know where they are, don't look for red and blue states; just look for the price of electricity. Get out a map and say, "Where is the price of electricity high?" And if it's three times higher than it was in my home state, it has to do with the fact that you've got a set of policies that say, "We're not supporting oil and gas industry. We're not allowing natural gas pipelines. You know, we're not – we are shutting down baseload. We're anti-nuclear." I mean, just look. The policies drive price.

The election next year is not going to be about CO2. In November, in midterms, it's going to be about affordability of electricity. Affordability of electricity is going to be what's on consumers' minds domestically. And so again, energy dominance is about abundance. It's about getting the price of power down for all Americans and having enough to win the A.I. arms race, and there is a – there is, again, part of what has to happen is we've got to allow the hyper-scalers to be able to build.

Chris Wright has announced that he's initiating rulemaking, which is going to lead to new rules, which is going to, you know, shortcut this seven years to go to FERC [Federal Energy Regulatory Commission] to be able to get an interconnect to be able to get new power online. If it's new power for generation for A.I. and it's either behind the meter, off the grid, or they produce enough to be able to throw extra power onto the grid so they're a net add to help lower the prices, we want to accelerate all of those.

We got left with a FERC queue, you know, for interconnects. 95 percent of the FERC queue that we inherited when we stepped into office was wind, solar, and batteries. That's all intermittent, highly expensive. And if it's solar or batteries, it's dependent on China, the whole point is we're trying to get off of being dependent on Chinese supply chains.

And so, the A.I. arms race is actually an electricity-generation arms race. It's something where we're behind. China is producing lots of more electricity all of the time. We have to get in the game, and that's something we're working on every single day.

GOLDBERG: I want to let you get back to work but one last question. I'd be remiss if we didn't mention the elephant in the room, which is we're having this conversation amidst a government shutdown, quite obviously. We're having an energy discussion, energy, and national security. Are there energy implications in a shutdown right now?

BURGUM: Well, in a world where we understood global competition, we wouldn't not allow either party to shut down the government under a condition, when there is an alternative called a CRA [Continuing Resolution Act]. We just say if there is one and there's agreement to that, you know, then you can't shut this thing down.

I mean, why – China is not taking the month off, they're not shutting down their entire national infrastructure and government. And of course, at Interior, we're a business. If we were standalone, we have the largest balance sheet in the world.

And we have a huge responsibility to manage that balance sheet, and that includes the 500 million acres of surface. There's another 200 million acres of surface over at the U.S. Forest Service, 700 million acres of sub-surface, 2.5 billion of offshore. Great, you've got the largest balance sheet in the world.

We've closed our doors arbitrarily, and, like, who's available to actually help drive revenue? Whether it's an entrance fee at a park, I've got nobody out there to collect that; whether it's getting permits done. You know, we're grabbing any cash that was laying in any drawer to try to pay those essential people, including the people that can do the permitting so that we can keep going.

We're on a track way ahead of last year in terms of permitting. And whether it's permitting, you know, timber, grazing, oil and gas, infrastructure, easements, all of the things that we've been talking about, the whole thing, if it crosses federal land, we're trying to do everything we can to not be handicapped.

But this is – as a business person, I look at this. It makes no sense to me. I mean it, you know, and again, the Democrats that are responsible for this are hurting the people that supposedly – I mean, if you're a small business in an entrance community of a national park in the fall season, in the leaf season is when everybody comes, and now the park is, you know, it can't be opened with all of the facilities and people are canceling vacations. I mean, the last time that this happened, it's like a half a billion dollar economic impact on small businesses just for entrance communities in parks. You add up the whole economy; it's billions of dollars a day.

Unless they're trying to arbitrarily hurt the GDP of our country 'cause they think that would be a good talking point at the midterms, unless they're actively saying, "We're going to try to hurt America 'cause we think that'll be good at the elections." Cause I can't think of what other reason you'd do it.

If you actually want to change a healthcare rule, then do what President Trump has said. He'll meet with anybody. "Just get the government going, then I'll be happy to meet. We can talk about negotiations," you know, or they can introduce a bill and try to get the bill passed in this environment, you know? That's what they could do. I mean, that's the way the government's supposed to work.

But this idea that we stop doing it 'cause, 'cause on the other – the flip side of this is, you know, what all of us are doing in the Cabinet is, like, taking a hard look at, like, wow, maybe we actually don't need all of these resources. Maybe we're actually able to run with a lot less resource. So maybe they're actually helping us get to the point where we could say, you know, we don't need as many people, we don't need as much cost, because they clearly don't care where this is happening or not, you know?

But again, I feel for the people that are at home not getting paid. You know, of course, we're trying to do – I have five law enforcement agencies. We have to fight fires around the country right now. It's still fire season. We're trying to figure out ways to pay all of these basic, essential services. I mean, we're running a giant, giant business, and being shut down is not an easy way to do it.

But I don't think the people that are driving this politically understand the implications that they're having on the operations that are affecting, again, as you say, national security, energy production, and what else? I have a whole bunch of tribal kids that go to Bureau of Indian Education schools. I'm trying to keep schools open across a bunch of western states too.

I mean, the Department of Interior should be called the Department of Everything. We've got a little bit of everything. But, you know, again, whether it's payments to, you know, for healthcare for veterans in Guam, I mean, we're trying to get those guys enlisted in the battle of, how do we do a better job of fighting Chinese influence around Guam? It takes appropriated monies to do some of these things. So, the lack of understanding about the implication inside the Beltway is astounding to me from an operational standpoint.

But anyway, great question. And if any of you know anybody – if you know five Democrat senators, I've got an appeal out to them. We'd be happy – doesn't matter who you are, if you're a senator, you know, in any state, there is an Interior implication for your state, whether it's a national park, a U.S. Fish and Wildlife location, you know, tribal lands, whatever, you know? Vote on behalf of your own state, get the government open again, and then we can deal with whatever dialogue they want to have going forward through the regular process.

But meanwhile, again, China's not taking the time off. We need the government to get going again.

GOLDBERG: For those in the audience, for those watching at home online, those watching at home on television on C-SPAN or elsewhere, thank you for joining us. For more information about FDD, you can visit us online at fdd.org.

And Secretary Burgum, thank you for your time.

BURGUM: Thank you, Rich.

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