

TAPPER: I'm Jake Tapper. We're live at the Ronald Reagan Library in Simi Valley, California for the main event. Round 2 of CNN's presidential debate starts now.

TAPPER: The eleven leading Republican candidates for president are at their podiums. They are ready to face off, and if you've been watching this race, you know anything could happen over the next few hours.

To viewers who are just joining us, welcome to the Air Force One Pavilion of the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library. Our thanks to the staff here and especially to former first lady Nancy Reagan for this impressive setting with Ronald Reagan's presidential plane as our backdrop.

(APPLAUSE)

TAPPER: This debate is airing on CNN networks in the United States and around the world. It's also being broadcast on the Salem Radio Network. I know everyone is very eager to get started.

But first, I want to explain the ground rules tonight. My name is Jake Tapper. I'll be the moderator. I will be joined in the questioning by Salem Radio Network talk show host Hugh Hewitt. He worked in the Reagan administration for six years. And by CNN's chief political correspondent Dana Bash.

I will ask follow-up questions, I will attempt to guide the discussion. Candidates, I will try to make sure each of you gets your fair share of questions. You'll have one minute to answer and 30 seconds for follow-ups and rebuttals. I'll give you time to respond if you've been singled out for criticism.

Our viewers should know we have timing lights that are visible to the candidates to warn them when their time is up. These 11 Republicans are positioned on the stage based on their ranking in recent national polls.

TAPPER: Our goal for this evening is a debate. A true debate, with candidates addressing each other in areas where they differ. Where they disagree -- on policy, on politics, on leadership. Now, let's begin.

I'd like to invite each candidate to take 30 seconds to introduce him or herself to our audience. First to you, Senator Paul.

PAUL: Good evening, everyone. I'm an eye surgeon from Bowling Green, Kentucky. My wife, Kelly, and I have been married for nearly 25 years, and I spend my days defending the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

I think there's nothing more important than understanding that the Constitution restrains government, not the people.

Thank you.

(APPLAUSE)

HUCKABEE: I'm Mike Huckabee. I'm delighted to be on this stage with some remarkable fellow Republicans.

None of us are a self-professed socialist. None of us on this state are under investigation by the FBI because we destroyed government records, or because we leaked secrets.

I know that there are some in the Wall-Street-to-Washington axis of power who speak of all of us

contemptuously. But I'm here to say that I think we are, in fact, the A team.

We have some remarkable people, and, in fact, not only are we the A team; we even have our own Mr. T, who doesn't mind saying about others, "you're a fool."

And I'm delighted to be here with all of these guys, and would put any of them in an administration that I led. Thank you very much.

(APPLAUSE)

RUBIO: Thank you. My name is Marco Rubio. I'm from Florida. My wife Jeanette and I are the proud -- we've been married 17 years, and we're the proud parents of four children, two of whom were able to join us here this evening.

I'm honored to be here at the Reagan Library, at a place that honors the legacy of a man who inspired not just my interest in public service, but also our love for country.

And I'm also aware that California has a drought, and so that's why I made sure I brought my own water.

(LAUGHTER)

TAPPER: Senator Cruz?

CRUZ: I'm Ted Cruz. I am the son of an Irish-Italian mom and a Cuban immigrant dad who fled oppression and came to America seeking freedom. I'm a husband to my best friend, Heidi, who's here tonight. I'm a dad to two little girls who are the loves of my life, Caroline and Catherine.

If you're fed up with Washington, if you're looking for someone to stand up to career politicians in both parties, I'm the only one on this stage who has done that over and over again, and if we stand together, we can bring America back.

CARSON: Hi, I'm Ben Carson, and I'm a retired pediatric neurosurgeon. I'm here with my wife, Candy, of 40 years, and two of my sons, and their wives.

I stress the pediatric part of my career because the reason that I've gotten involved in this race is because I'm very concerned about the future of our children, and the direction of our country is one that does not portend well, unless we, the people, intervene and retake our rightful place at the pinnacle.

(APPLAUSE)

TRUMP: I'm Donald Trump. I wrote "The Art of the Deal". I say not in a braggadocious way, I've made billions and billions of dollars dealing with people all over the world, and I want to put whatever that talent is to work for this country so we have great trade deals, we make our country rich again, we make it great again. We build our military, we take care of our vets, we get rid of Obamacare, and we have a great life altogether.

Thank you. Thank you.

(APPLAUSE)

BUSH: I'm Jeb Bush, and I believe America's on the verge of its greatest century, and I'm ready to lead. I'm a

committed, conservative reformer that cut taxes, that balanced budgets, that took on the special interest in Florida, and we won.

I look forward to talking tonight about how we can fix a broken Washington D.C., and create an environment where people can rise up again in this great country.

Thank you.

(APPLAUSE)

WALKER: Good evening, I'm Scott Walker, and tonight, I want to thank and Mrs. Reagan, and the Reagan Library for hosting us. You see, in my lifetime, the greatest president was a governor from California. Ronald Reagan knew how to go big, and go bold. He understood the essence of moving this country forward, and that's what I did when I took on the status quo in my state, and the Washington based special interest.

Now, more than ever, America needs a leader who will go big and bold again. Someone who's been tested. I'm ready to be that leader. Thank you.

(APPLAUSE)

FIORINA: Good evening. My story, from secretary to CEO, is only possible in this nation, and proves that everyone of us has potential. My husband, Frank, of 30 years, started out driving a tow truck for a family owned auto body shop. We have come to a pivotal point in our nation's history where this nation's possibilities and potential are being crushed by a government grown so big, so powerful, so inept, so corrupt, and a political class that refuses to do anything about it.

I am prepared to lead the resurgence of this great nation.

(APPLAUSE)

KASICH: Hello, I'm John Kasich, the Governor of Ohio. Emma, and Reese, my children, and Karen, love 'ya girls. Thanks for watching tonight.

By the way, I think I actually flew on this plane with Ronald Reagan when I was a congressman, and his goals, and mine, really much -- are pretty much the same. Lift Americans, unify, give hope, grow America, and restore it is to that great, shining city on a hill.

Yes, he was a great one, and I learned much from watching him. The most important thing, hope to Americans, unify, lift everyone in America.

(APPLAUSE)

CHRISTIE: Hi, my name is Chris Christie, and I'd like to you take the camera off me and put it on the audience because I'd like to ask all of you, how many of you, raise your hand, believe that in today's Barak Obama America your children will have a better life than you've had?

You see? That's why I'm running for President. because leadership is not about me, it's about our country. And, what we talk about tonight, it's not about us, it's about the people in the audience tonight, because in seven short years this president has stripped away their trust, and their faith, and their belief that the next generation will have a better life. He's stolen that from us, and when I'm president, I'm going to take it back.

(APPLAUSE)

TAPPER: Thank you one and all for being here. There are many important policy issues facing our nation. We're going to get to many of them tonight, but I do want to start off with some current events in the news, and also some of the comments the candidates have recently made on the campaign trail.

TAPPER: Mrs. Fiorina, I want to start with you. Fellow Republican candidate, and Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal, has suggested that your party's frontrunner, Mr. Donald Trump, would be dangerous as President. He said he wouldn't want, quote, "such a hot head with his finger on the nuclear codes."

You, as well, have raised concerns about Mr. Trump's temperament.

You've dismissed him as an entertainer. Would you feel comfortable with Donald trump's finger on the nuclear codes?

FIORINA: You know, I think Mr. Trump is a wonderful entertainer. He's been terrific at that business.

I also think that one of the benefits of a presidential campaign is the character and capability, judgment and temperament of every single one of us is revealed over time and under pressure. All of us will be revealed over time and under pressure. I look forward to a long race.

TAPPER: You didn't answer my question. Would you feel comfortable with Donald Trump's finger on the nuclear codes? It's an issue that one of your fellow candidates has raised.

FIORINA: That's not for me to answer; it is for the voters of this country to answer, and I have a lot of faith in the common sense and good judgment of the voters of the United States of America.

TAPPER: Mr. Trump?

(APPLAUSE)

TRUMP: Well, first of all, Rand Paul shouldn't even be on this stage. He's number 11, he's got 1 percent in the polls, and how he got up here, there's far too many people anyway.

As far as temperament -- and we all know that -- as far as temperament, I think I have a great temperament. I built a phenomenal business with incredible, iconic assets, one of the really truly great real-estate businesses.

And I may be an entertainer, because I've had tremendous success with number-one bestsellers all over the place, with "The Apprentice" and everything else I've done.

But I will tell you this: What I am far and away greater than an entertainer is a businessman, and that's the kind of mindset this country needs to bring it back, because we owe \$19 trillion right now, \$19 trillion, and you need this kind of thinking to bring our country back.

And believe me, my temperament is very good, very calm. But we will be respected outside of this country. We are not respected now.

(APPLAUSE)

TAPPER: Mr. -- Senator Paul, your name has been invoked.

PAUL: I kind of have to laugh when I think of, "Mmm, sounds like a non sequitur." He was asked whether or not he would be capable and it would be in good hands to be in charge of the nuclear weapons, and all of a sudden, there's a sideways attack at me.

I think that really goes to really the judgment. Do we want someone with that kind of character, that kind of careless language to be negotiating with Putin? Do we want someone like that to be negotiating with Iran?

I think really there's a sophomoric quality that is entertaining about Mr. Trump, but I am worried. I'm very concerned about him -- having him in charge of the nuclear weapons, because I think his response, his -- his visceral response to attack people on their appearance -- short, tall, fat, ugly -- my goodness, that happened in junior high. Are we not way above that? Would we not all be worried to have someone like that in charge of the nuclear arsenal?

TAPPER: Mr. Trump?

(APPLAUSE)

TRUMP: I never attacked him on his look, and believe me, there's plenty of subject matter right there.

(LAUGHTER)

That I can tell you.

WALKER: But Jake, Jake, Jake, Jake...

TAPPER: I want to -- I want to give Mr. Trump...

WALKER: But Jake, this -- this is -- this...

TAPPER: ... Mr. Trump, I want to give you another chance -- Mr. Trump, I want to give you a chance to respond to something that your rival to your left, Governor Bush, said.

Governor Bush told me last week when I read him the quote from Governor Jindal that he agrees you're not a serious candidate.

Tell Governor Bush why you are a serious candidate and what your qualifications are to be commander-in-chief. TRUMP: I've actually been in politics all my life, although I've been on that side as opposed to this side. I'm now a politician for about three months. Obviously, I'm doing pretty well. I'm number one in every polls (sic) by a lot.

But the qualification is that I've dealt with people all over the world, been successful all over the world. Everything I've done virtually has been a tremendous success.

When markets changed, when things turned, I heard Governor Pataki, who, by the way, was a failed governor in New York, a very seriously failed -- he wouldn't be elected dog catcher right now. I heard what he had to say.

And I will tell you this: Atlantic City, I've made a tremendous amount of money in Atlantic City. I left seven

years ago, I've gotten great credit for my timing, and that's what I'm all about.

I'm a businessman, did really well, really well, and Jeb, what I want to do is put that ability into this country to make our country rich again. And I can do that, and I'm not sure that anybody else in the group will be able to do that.

TAPPER: Governor Bush, would you feel comfortable with Donald Trump's finger on the nuclear codes?

BUSH: I think the voters will make that determination.

But what I know to be true is that the next president of the United States is going to have to fix an extraordinary difficult situation. This administration, with President Obama and Hillary Clinton, has created insecurity the likes of which we never would've imagined. There's not a place in the world where we're better off today than six and a half years ago.

And that requires a steadiness. That requires an understanding of how the world works. That requires an understanding and appreciation of American leadership in the world.

You can't just, you know, talk about this stuff and insult leaders around the world and expect a good result. You have to do this with a steady hand, and I believe I have those skills.

WALKER Jake, this is -- this is -- this is...

TRUMP: But I have to say...

WALKER This is actually what's wrong -- this is what's wrong with this debate. We're not talking about real issues.

And Mr. Trump, we don't need an apprentice in the White House.

(APPLAUSE)

We don't need an apprentice in the White House. We have one right now. He told us all the things we wanted to hear back in 2008. We don't know who you are or where you're going. We need someone who can actually get the job done.

And you talked about business.

TRUMP: Well, in Wisconsin...

WALKER You -- you -- let me finish...

TRUMP: Excuse me.

WALKER No, no...

TRUMP: In Wisconsin, you're losing \$2.2 billion right now.

WALKER You're using the talking...

TRUMP: I would do so much better than that.

WALKER Mr. Trump, you're using the talking points of the Democrats...

TRUMP: No.

WALKER ... and as we all know...

TRUMP: I'm using facts.

WALKER ... that failed three times in four and a half years when I got elected, because it is working. We balanced a budget.

You want to talk about balanced budgets? You took four major projects into bankruptcy over and over and over again. You can't take America into bankruptcy. That's what's wrong with the politicians in Washington right now. They think we can take a country into bankruptcy.

(CROSSTALK)

TRUMP: Every major business leader has used the -- I never went bankrupt, by the way, as you know, everybody knows. But we -- hundreds of companies, hundreds of deals, I've used

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XXX: ... into bankruptcy. That's what's wrong with politicians in Washington right now. They think we can take a country into bankruptcy.

(CROSSTALK)

TRUMP: Every major business leader, has used the -- I never went bank bankrupt, by the way, as you know, everybody knows. But -- hundreds of companies, hundreds of deals, I used the law four times and made a tremendous thing. I'm in business. I did a very good job.

But I will say this, and people are very, very impressed with what I've done, the business people. But when the folks of Iowa found out the true facts of the job that you've done in Wisconsin, all of a sudden you, tubed (ph), he was No. 1 and now he's No. 6 or seven in the polls.

So, look, we brought it out, you were supposed to make a billion dollars in the state. You lost 2.2 -- you have right now, a huge budget deficit. That's not a Democratic point. That's a point. That's a fact. And when the people of Iowa found that out, I went to No. 1 and you went down the tubes.

TAPPER: Governor Walker?

WALKER: Jake, yeah, absolutely, I'll take this on, because this is an issue that's important in this race.

Just because he says it doesn't make it true. The facts are the facts.

(APPLAUSE)

We balanced a \$3.6 billion budget deficit, we did it by cutting taxes -- \$4.7 billion to help working families, family farmers, small business owners and senior citizens. And it's about time people in America stand up and take note of this.

If you want someone that can actually take on the special interest of Washington, which you yourself said you were part of, using the system, we need somebody that will stand up and fight for average Americans to put them back in charge of their government.

I'm the one who is taking that on. I'll do that as your next president.

TAPPER: Let's move on.

(APPLAUSE)

KASICH: Jake, Jake.

TAPPER: A phenomenon going on in the race right now is the political...

OK, Governor Kasich, go ahead.

KASICH: Listen, you know, I -- if I were sitting at home and watch thing back and forth, I would be inclined to turn it off. I mean, people at home want to know across this country, they want to know what we're going to do to fix this place, how we'll balance a budget, how we're going to create more economic growth, how we'll pay down the debt. What we're going to do to strengthen the military.

So, we just spent 10 minutes here...

TAPPER: We have a lot of issues coming up, sir.

KASICH: But -- but wait a minute. It's a lot of ad hogshead. Now, I know that it may be buzzing out there, but I think it's important we get to the issues, because that's what people want, and they don't want all this fighting.

TAPPER: We are getting to the issues, sir.

(APPLAUSE)

TAPPER: Phenomenon going on in the race is the political outsiders in the race, Dr. Carson, Donald Trump, Carly Fiorina, all together, have majority support in the polls.

Governor Christie, I want to ask you about something that Dr. Carson said the other day.

Dr. Carson said campaigning is easier for him, because he's not a politician. He can just tell the truth, therefore, while politicians, quote, "Have their finger in the air to see and do what is politically expedient."

Governor Christie, tell Dr. Carson, is that a fair description of you?

CHRISTIE: Well, I know Ben wasn't talking about me, I'm sure he was talking about one of the other guys, not me.

(LAUGHTER)

As far as being an outsider is concerned -- as far as being an outsider is concerned, let me tell you this, Jake, I'm a Republican in New Jersey. I wake up every morning as an outsider. I wake up every morning with a Democratic legislature who trying to beat my head in and fight me because I'm trying to bring conservative change to a state that needed it desperately.

And so, everyone can talk us here about their credentials. But the bottom line is, every morning I get up, I veto 400 bills from a crazy liberal Democratic legislature, not one of them has been overridden. I've vetoed more tax increases than any governor in American history, according to Americans for Tax Reform.

What folks want in this country is somebody to go down there and get the job done. And that's exactly what I'll do.

So, I know this much, that what the American people want to hire right now is somebody who believes in them. And believes that they are the ones who can fix our country. I will be the vessel through which they can fix this country, but it's not about me.

It's about all of you. And getting this government off your back and out of your way, and letting you succeed. I know Ben wasn't talking about me.

TAPPER: Well, let's find out. Thank you. CHRISTIE: Look at him smiling at me right now. I know Ben didn't mean it about me. One of these other guys, I'm sure.

TAPPER: Thank you, Governor Christie.

Dr. Carson, who were you thinking about on this stage when you said that?

CHRISTIE: Be honest, Ben, be honest.

TAPPER: And more broadly, is experience in government not important for a president to have?

CARSON: Typically, politicians do things that are politically expedient. And they are looking for whatever their particular goal is.

That is not the reason that I have gotten into this thing. I'm extraordinary concerned about the direction of this country, the divisiveness that is going on, fiscal irresponsibility, the failure to take a leadership position in the world.

All of those things will lead to a situation where the next generation will not have a chance that we've had now. So I don't -- I don't want to really get into describing who's a politician and who's not a politician, but I think the people have kind of made that decision for themselves already, and will continue to do so as time goes on.

TAPPER: Thank you, Dr. Carson.

CHRISTIE: See, Jake, it wasn't me.

(LAUGHTER)

FIORINA: Jake, I'll tell you -- I'll tell you why people are supporting outsiders. It's because you know what happens if someone's been in the system their whole life, they don't know how broken the system is. A fish swims in water, it doesn't know it's water. It's not that politicians are bad people, it's that they've been in that system forever.

The truth is 75 percent of the American people think the government is corrupt; 82 percent of the American people think these problems that have festered for 50 years in some cases, 25 years in other cases. The border's been insecure for 25 years; 307,000 veterans have died waiting for health care. These things have gone on for so long because no one will challenge the status quo.

You know what a leader does? They challenge the status quo, they solve problems that have festered for a long time and they produce results. That is what my whole life has been about. People know this is about far more than replacing a D with an R --

TAPPER: Thank you.

FIORINA: -- this is about changing the system.

TAPPER: Thank you. Thank you Ms. Fiorina.

(APPLAUSE)

Governor Bush, in addition to the fact that he's an outsider, one of the reasons Mr. Trump is a frontrunner, Republican voters say, is because they like the fact that he is not bought and paid for by wealthy donors. Mr. Trump has repeatedly said that the \$100 million you've raised for your campaign makes you a puppet for your donors. Are you?

BUSH: No. Absolutely not. People are supporting me because I have a proven record of conservative leadership where I cut taxes \$19 billion over eight years. We shrunk the state government workforce, we created a climate that led the nation in job growth seven out of eight years. We were one of two states to go to AAA bond rating. People know that we need principle-centered leadership, a disrupter to go to Washington, D.C. The one guy that had some special interests that I know of that tried to get me to change my views on something -- that was generous and gave me money -- was Donald Trump. He wanted casino gambling in Florida --

TRUMP: I didn't --

BUSH: Yes you did.

TRUMP: Totally false.

BUSH: You wanted it and you didn't get it because I was opposed to --

TRUMP: I would have gotten it.

BUSH: -- casino gambling before --

TRUMP: I promise I would have gotten it.

BUSH: during and after. And that's not -- I'm not going to be bought by anybody.

TRUMP: I promise if I wanted it, I would have gotten it.

BUSH: No way. Believe me.

TRUMP: I know my people.

BUSH: Not even possible.

TRUMP: I know my people.

TAPPER: Is there anything else you want to say about this?

TRUMP: No. I just will tell you that, you know, Jeb made the statement. I'm not only referring to him. I -- a lot of money was raised by a lot of different people that are standing up here. And the donors, the special interests, the lobbyists have very strong power over these people.

I'm spending all of my money, I'm not spending -- I'm not getting any -- I turned down -- I turn down so much, I could have right now from special interests and donors, I could have double and triple what he's got. I've turned it down. I turned down last week \$5 million from somebody.

So I will tell you I understand the game, I've been on the other side all of my life. And they have a lot of control over our politicians. And I don't say that favorably, and I'm not sure if there's another system, but I say this. I am not accepting any money from anybody. Nobody has control of me other than the people of this country. I'm going to do the right thing.

TAPPER: Governor -- BUSH: You've got, according to your -- to what you said on one of the talk shows, you got Hillary Clinton to go to your wedding --

TRUMP: That's true. That's true.

BUSH: -- because you gave her money. Maybe it works for Hillary Clinton --

TRUMP: I was -- excuse me, Jeb.

BUSH: -- it doesn't work for anybody on this -- on stage.

TRUMP: I was a businessman, I got along with Clinton, I got along with everybody. That was my job, to get along with people.

BUSH: But the simple fact is --

TRUMP: I didn't want to -- excuse me. One second.

BUSH: No. The simple fact is, Donald, you could not take --

TRUMP: OK, more energy tonight. I like that.

(LAUGHTER)

Look --

BUSH: I was asked the question.

TRUMP: I didn't want -- it was my obligation as a businessman to my family, to my company, to my employees, to get along with all politicians. I get along with all of them, and I did a damn good job in doing it. Go ahead.

BUSH: So he supports Pelosi, he supports Schumer, he supports Clinton --

TRUMP: Got along with everybody.

BUSH: When he -- and he -- when he asked -- when he asked Florida to have casino gambling, we said no.

TRUMP: Wrong.

BUSH: We said no. And that's the simple fact. The simple fact is --

TRUMP: Don't make things up. Jeb, don't make things up. Come on.

BUSH: Don't cut me off.

TRUMP: Don't make things up.

CARSON: Jake, can I say something about that?

TAPPER: Sure Dr. Carson.

CARSON: You know, when I entered this race, all the political pundits said it's impossible; you can't do it because you're not connected with the money. And there's no way that you can raise what you need in order to compete successfully.

I in no way am willing to get in the bed with special interest group or lick the boots of billionaires. I have said to the people if they want me to do this, please get involved. And we now have over 500,000 donations, and the money is coming in.

But the pundits forgot about one thing, and that is the people. And they are really in charge.

TAPPER: Thank you, Dr. Carson. Let's move to Russia if we could.

Russia is sending troops and tanks into Syria right now to prop up a U.S. enemy, Bashar al-Assad. President Obama's incoming top general says, quote, "Russia presents the greatest threat to our national security."

Mr. Trump, you say you can do business with President Vladimir Putin, you say you will get along, quote, "very well." What would you do right now if you were president, to get the Russians out of Syria?

TRUMP: So, number one, they have to respect you. He has absolutely no respect for President Obama. Zero.

Syria's a mess. You look at what's going on with ISIS in there, now think of this: we're fighting ISIS. ISIS wants to fight Syria. Why are we fighting ISIS in Syria? Let them fight each other and pick up the remnants.

I would talk to him. I would get along with him. I believe -- and I may be wrong, in which case I'd probably have to take a different path, but I would get along with a lot of the world leaders that this country is not getting along with.

We don't get along with China. We don't get along with the heads of Mexico. We don't get along with anybody, and yet, at the same time, they rip us left and right. They take advantage of us economically and every other way. We get along with nobody.

I will get along -- I think -- with Putin, and I will get along with others, and we will have a much more stable -- stable world.

TAPPER: So, you -- just to clarify, the only answer I heard to the question I asked is that you would -- you would reach out to Vladimir Putin, and you would do what? You would...

TRUMP: I believe that I will get along -- we will do -- between that, Ukraine, all of the other problems, we won't have the kind of problems that our country has right now with Russia and many other nations. TAPPER: Senator Rubio, you've taken a very different approach to the -- the question of Russia. You've called Vladimir Putin a, quote, "gangster."

Why would President Rubio's approach be more effective than President Trump's?

RUBIO: Well, first of all, I have an understanding of exactly what it is Russia and Putin are doing, and it's pretty straightforward. He wants to reposition Russia, once again, as a geopolitical force.

He himself said that the destruction of the Soviet Union -- the fall of the Soviet Union was the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century, and now he's trying to reverse that.

He's trying to destroy NATO. And this is what this is a part of. He is exploiting a vacuum that this administration has left in the Middle East.

Here's what you're gonna see in the next few weeks: the Russians will begin to fly -- fly combat missions in that region, not just targeting ISIS, but in order to prop up Assad.

He will also, then, turn to other countries in the region and say, "America is no longer a reliable ally, Egypt. America is no longer a reliable ally, Saudi Arabia. Begin to rely on us."

What he is doing is he is trying to replace us as the single most important power broker in the Middle East, and this president is allowing it. That is what is happening in the Middle East. That's what's happening with Russia, and...

TAPPER: Thank you, Senator Rubio.

(CROSSTALK)

TAPPER: I want to bring in Carly Fiorina.

(APPLAUSE)

FIORINA: Having...

TAPPER: Ms. Fiorina, you have met...

FIORINA: Having met Vladimir Putin, if I may...

TAPPER: ...yeah, you've met Vladimir Putin. Yes.

FIORINA: Having met Vladimir Putin, I wouldn't talk to him at all. We've talked way too much to him.

What I would do, immediately, is begin rebuilding the Sixth Fleet, I would begin rebuilding the missile defense program in Poland, I would conduct regular, aggressive military exercises in the Baltic states. I'd probably send a few thousand more troops into Germany. Vladimir Putin would get the message. By the way, the reason it is so critically important that every one of us know General Suleimani's name is because Russia is in Syria right now, because the head of the Quds force traveled to Russia and talked Vladimir Putin into aligning themselves with Iran and Syria to prop up Bashar al- Assad.

Russia is a bad actor, but Vladimir Putin is someone we should not talk to, because the only way he will stop is to sense strength and resolve on the other side, and we have all of that within our control.

We could rebuild the Sixth Fleet. I will. We haven't. We could rebuild the missile defense program. We haven't. I will. We could also, to Senator Rubio's point, give the Egyptians what they've asked for, which is intelligence.

We could give the Jordanians what they've asked for...

TAPPER: Thank you, Ms. Fiorina.

FIORINA: ...bombs and materiel. We have not supplied it...

TAPPER: Thank you.

FIORINA: ...I will. We could arm the Kurds. They've been asking us for three years. All of this is within our control.

(APPLAUSE)

TAPPER: Thank you. Thank you, Ms. Fiorina.

While you're -- while you brought up the subject of General Suleimani of the Quds forces from Iran, the next president, no matter who he or she may be, will inherit President Obama's Iran deal.

Senator Cruz, Governor Kasich says that anyone who is promising to rip up the Iran deal on day one, as you have promised to do, is, quote, "inexperienced," and, quote, "playing to a crowd." Respond to Governor Kasich, please.

CRUZ: Well, let me tell you, Jake, the single biggest national security threat facing America right now is the threat of a nuclear Iran. We've seen six and a half years of President Obama leading from behind. Weakness

is provocative, and this Iranian nuclear deal is nothing short of catastrophic.

This deal, on its face, will send over \$100 billion to the Ayatollah Khamenei, making the Obama administration the world's leading financier of radical Islamic terrorism.