

Remarks by President Trump and the First Lady in Memorial Day Address to Troops Aboard the USS Wasp

Yokosuka Naval Base
Yokosuka, Japan

11:26 A.M. JST

THE FIRST LADY: Hello, everyone.

AUDIENCE: Hello!

THE FIRST LADY: It is wonderful to be with you today. This has been a very enjoyable and productive visit with the Japanese people. And we are thankful for the incredible hospitality that we have received.

Back in November, I visited the USS George H.W. Bush, one of our nation's great aircraft carriers at work in the Atlantic Ocean. It is a privilege to once again join with you, our incredible sailors and Marines, on the USS Wasp at work, here in the Pacific Ocean.

Thank you for your service and sacrifice and all that you do on behalf of our country. May God bless you and your families.

I'd now like to introduce my husband, your Commander-in-Chief, the 45th President of the United States of America. Mr. President? (Applause.)

AUDIENCE: USA! USA! USA!

PRESIDENT TRUMP: What a group. What a group. This is a tough bunch of people, right? (Applause.) And that's good. That's very good.

And I want to thank you, Melania. You've been really the talk of Japan. They're not covering me. I'm a little bit upset with her right now. (Laughter.) No, they love you in Japan, honey, and we appreciate it very much. She really works very hard. They love our First Lady, and they love our First Lady back home.

I want to just tell everyone before we even begin: At ease! At ease. Just relax. We have plenty of time. Plenty of time. We're going to have a little fun. And I'm thrilled to be aboard the USS Wasp with the brave sailors and Marines, the Seventh Fleet. Special, special people. Thank you very much. Great job. Thank you. (Applause.)

And I have to wish you all a very Happy Memorial Day, right? Memorial Day — very special back home. And I always like to be back in the U.S., as you do, for that day. But we did a lot of

great things for the last three days in Japan. So we're working together. You're working. I'm working. We're all working together.

As President, I have no higher honor than serving as your Commander-in-Chief — and the extraordinary men and women of the American Armed Forces.

This has been a truly amazing and unforgettable visit to Japan. Melania and I are profoundly grateful to Their Majesties the new Emperor and Empress. I had the great honor of being their first state guests. That was a big honor for our country. We're also deeply thankful to our cherished friends and treasured partners, Prime Minister and Mrs. Abe. Very, very great people. Our thanks as well to Ambassador Hagerty and his wife Chrissy. Thank you very much. Thank you, Ambassador. Thank you, Chrissy. Thank you very much. Great job you're doing.

Today, we're proud to be joined by the many outstanding military leaders. We have a lot. These are very incredible ones. I especially want to thank the Commanding Officer of USS Wasp, Captain Christopher Herr. (Applause.) They like you, Christopher. They like you a lot. That's very good, Christopher. (Laughter.) And the Command Master Chief, Kevin Guy. (Applause.) Popular people. That's great. Wow. Great leaders.

My thanks as well to Lieutenant General Kevin Schneider, Commander of the U.S. Forces Japan. Thank you, Kevin. (Applause.) Thank you.

Vice Admiral Phil Sawyer, Commander of the U.S. Seventh Fleet. (Applause.) And, you know, they're all such good-looking people. You have all this media over here. They're going to end up in Hollywood. They're going to leave us. Some of them will be picked for Hollywood, right? And they won't do it. They like this better — and I agree.

Rear Admiral Gregory Fenton, Commander of the United States Naval Force Japan. Thank you. (Applause.) Thank you, Gregory. Thank you. Great.

Rear Admiral James Pitts, Commander of the Submarine Group 7. (Applause.) And you know we're doing a lot of big submarines right now. We're building a lot of them. I'll tell you, the best in the world. Not even a contest. Right? It's really something. I just saw plans for one. But they're no longer the little submarines that we think about. These are incredible machines, right? Thank you very much.

Brigadier General Todd Dozier, Deputy Commander of the 5th Air Force. Todd. Thank you, Todd. (Applause.)

Rear Admiral Fred Kacher, Commander of Task Force 76. Thank you very much. (Applause.) Thank you very much. Great. Great leaders.

Captain Jim McGovern, Commander of the Amphibious Squadron 11. And Captain Jeffrey Kim, Commander of Fleet Activities, right here. Thank you very much. (Applause.) Thank you. Great.

Together, these officers are leading the most fearsome group of American warriors this side of the Pacific. We have more than 1,000 sailors and Marines from the Seventh Fleet here today, including hundreds who serve on this impressive assault ship, USS Wasp. (Applause.)

Also joining us are sailors from the following ships: USS Shiloh. (Applause.) USS Chancellorsville. (Applause.) USS Mustin. (Applause.) USS Barry. (Applause.) You love those ships, don't you? Huh? (Laughter.) USS McCampbell. (Applause.) USS ~~Benford~~ [Benfold]. (Applause.) Thank you, fellas. That's great. Great pride.

Finally, I want to recognize our many shore-based commands here today, including large contingents from Navy Region Japan. Thank you very much. (Applause.) We like them. We like them. The Fleet Anti-Terrorism Security Team. (Applause.) The Naval Intelligence Operations Center. (Applause.) Fleet Logistics Center Yokosuka. (Applause.)

The Ship Repair Facility. I'll bet you guys do a good job. Do they do a good jobs with the ships, right? (Laughter.) Repairing them. Huh? (Applause.)

So then, let me ask you a question. Catapult — right? The catapult system. Do you like electric or steam?

AUDIENCE MEMBERS: Steam!

AUDIENCE MEMBERS: Electric!

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Steam. Who said "electric"? There's one guy back there. (Laughter.) Okay, I really need this information because, you know, we're building carriers. We're building one. They're using an electric catapult and an electric elevator. Number one, I can't imagine, in the case of battle — it must be very delicate, okay? And, you know, steam has only worked for about 65 years, perfectly.

And I won't tell you this because it's before my time by a little bit, but they have a \$900 million cost overrun on this crazy electric catapult. I said, "What was wrong with steam?"

I would like to know — all of the folks that know exactly what I'm talking about, the catapult system — steam or electric?

Ready? Steam. (Applause.) Electric.

AUDIENCE MEMBERS: Yeah! (Laughter.)

PRESIDENT TRUMP: He works for the enemy. (Laughter.) He's all right. We'll — ooh, you might be in danger. I better be careful. (Laughter.)

No, we want to go with steam. You know, they're always coming up with new ideas. They're making planes so complex you can't fly them. (Laughter.) You know that. No, it's — I really mean it. They want to show next, next, next. And we all want innovation, but it's too much.

But there's never been anything like the steam catapults. And I went to the Gerald Ford, which is under construction now for a long time. They're having a problem with their electric catapult. And I was talking to the catapult people, and they said "steam." In the meantime, we're spending all that money on electric, and nobody knows what it's going to be like in bad conditions. You understand.

So I think I'm going to put an order. When we build a new aircraft carrier, we're going to use steam. I'm going to just put out an order: We're going to use steam. We don't need — we don't need that extra speed. You know, they were saying — one of the folks said, "No, the electric works faster. But, sir, we can only get the plane there every couple of minutes." So, really, what they did was wrong.

And we make mistakes, but, generally speaking, we get it right. But when we make them, we have to correct it. So we're going to put out an order: We want to use steam.

The military doctors and nurses from the U.S. Naval Hospital Yokosuka, and many more. (Applause.) So many people. So many great, great people.

Every Marine and sailor standing on USS Wasp is the face of American strength and power in the Pacific.

The Seventh Fleet is America's largest forward-deployed naval fleet. Together, you are 70 ships and submarines strong, with 140 aircraft, and 40,000 of America's finest sailors and Marines. Did you know that about yourselves? Not bad. It's very impressive.

With us today is Marine Staff Sergeant Daniel Patterson. Where's Daniel? Where's Daniel? Get over here, Daniel. (Applause.) Tough-looking guy.

Every single generation of Staff Sergeant Patterson's family has served in the United States military, all the way back to the Revolutionary War. But Staff Sergeant Patterson was the first to choose the Marines.

AUDIENCE: Oo-rah!

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Right? (Laughs.) After completing two tours of duty in Afghanistan, Staff Sergeant Patterson requested another overseas tour — this time wanted to go to Japan. He knows that America needs — and what they need is daring and mighty warriors in the Pacific, and he's a daring and mighty warrior.

Staff Sergeant Patterson, today, you and your fellow Marines and sailors of the Seventh Fleet are confronting this region's pressing security challenges with unmatched courage and valor. You know what's going on. You know where we're talking. You know what we're talking about. We really appreciate your being here.

Daniel, I'm going to do something that you didn't expect. Say a few words, Daniel. (Applause.)

STAFF SERGEANT PATTERSON: Well, it's such an honor and a privilege to be here with you, Mr. President. And I definitely didn't expect this. And it's an honor and privilege to serve with my fellow sailors and Marines and drive our mission forward that General Smith and the Commodore and Colonel Brodie has kind of laid out for us. And we know why we're here and we know what we — who we need to egress. Because if we don't, we let ourselves just sleep on it for even a second, then we won't be the ultimate power in the world.

So thank you very much and thank all of you. (Applause.)

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Good job, Daniel. He'll be running for political office within two weeks. Look. (Laughter.) Daniel, great. Thank you very much. Great job.

Every day, the men and women of the Seventh Fleet live out their motto: "Ready Power for Peace."

You face down terrorism and render aid in the wake of devastating natural disasters. And I've seen what you do. Incredible.

You proudly patrol the Yellow Sea, the Sea of Japan, the East China Sea, and the South China Sea. You defend your homeland and our allies against missile attack with our most advanced radar and weapons systems in the world. We have equipment, missiles, rockets, tanks, planes, ships. Nobody in the entire world can build them like we do. Nobody. It's not even close. You know that better than anybody.

Here in the Pacific and around the globe, we want our armed forces to have the tools, resources, and equipment you need and that you deserve.

That's why we have given our Seventh Fleet new, American-made, F-35B Marine fighter aircraft. Very stealthy. You know that, right? The enemy has a problem with it. You know what the problem is? They can't see it. (Laughter.) Other than that, it's a fair fight. (Laughter.) Just like my one, and this one right here. That just came out. Beautiful.

Last year, USS Wasp made history when it became the very first ship to deploy these cutting-edge aircraft. I want to congratulate you all. And you're getting a lot of brand new ones. We're getting brand new equipment.

You know, when I came two and a half years ago, we had planes that were so old they didn't make parts for them anymore. You don't have that anymore. You don't have that. We're getting all new beautiful equipment. We need it. We need it. Peace through strength, right?

In April, USS Wasp also became the first ship to deploy F-35Bs in the Balikatan Naval exercise with the Philippines and with Australia.

Later this year, the USS Wasp returns home. We will be sending the men and women of the Seventh Fleet our most formidable amphibious assault ship: USS America.

USS America will soon be sailing these Pacific waters, and I am pleased to say that she will also be carrying the most beautiful F-35Bs on her deck. Brand new. Brand new.

My administration is committed to ensuring that America's military strength forever remains second to none.

Over the past two years, we have made historic investments in our military with \$700 billion. Right, General? That's billions, right? No more millions. Not when it comes to our military. It's a little bit scary. With a "B." Scary. You know, it used to be millions; now it's billions. And that's the way it has to be, because we have to protect our country and we have to protect our allies.

And last year, \$716 billion. So, this year, we're going up. And in a very short period of time, our military will be completely rebuilt and stronger, bigger, better than ever before. Won't even be close. And we're very close. And when I took over, we were very depleted. And you people knew that better than anybody. We were depleted. It's the only word I can use to describe it. It was not a good situation. But we're going to be very close. Right now, we're very close. Very shortly, we're going to be at a level the likes of which we've never been before.

This includes money for five new guided-missile destroyers, four new nuclear-powered fast-attack submarines. That's the one you want? Okay. We got them. We've got four of them. You only wanted one; we got you four. And 163 brand new F-35 Joint Strike fighter jets.

As Prime Minister Abe and I discussed yesterday, Japan also plans to equip the Japanese Self-Defense Forces with 105 F-35 aircraft, which would make Japan's F-35 fleet the largest of any U.S. ally. The U.S.-Japan alliance has never been stronger. The relationship between your President and the Prime Minister of Japan — he's a great gentleman; great man — is a fantastic one.

This remarkable port is the only one in the world where we're — American naval fleet and an allied naval fleet, headquartered side-by-side — a testament to the ironclad partnership between U.S. and Japanese forces.

Together, you are advancing freedom on the high seas, shielding our nation from dangerous weapons, and preserving the peace that generations of valiant American warriors gave their lives to secure.

One of those intrepid Americans was Private First Class John Schaeffer. Born and raised in Tower City, Pennsylvania, Private Schaeffer was a member of a group of U.S. Army Special Forces who fought in the Pacific during World War II under the legendary command of General Frank Merrill. Good General? Good General? Pretty good, right? That's what they say. Are you better? Huh? (Laughs.) Just be as good.

Although Private Schaeffer sadly perished in the Battle of Burma, his deep love of country endures in someone very special with us today, his grandnephew, Senior Chief Petty Officer Daniel Schaeffer. Where's Daniel? Should I get him up? (Applause.) And I want to thank you

very much for the incredible job you've done. We picked a couple of people that are outstanding. Please say a couple of words.

SENIOR CHIEF PETTY OFFICER SCHAEFFER: Sure.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Please.

SENIOR CHIEF PETTY OFFICER SCHAEFFER: Thank you, Mr. President. This is amazing to have recognized my family. But I know a lot of others have families that served as well.

Memorial Day is that time where we honor our fellow Americans who pay the ultimate sacrifice. So, you know, thank you for all my shipmates and fellow Marines that are out here today, it's a great day. Thank you, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Thank you very much. (Applause.)

Two great jobs. And that's not easy. They don't know they're coming up. You didn't know, did you, huh? You had no idea. And you both did it. They didn't choke. We don't like chokers, do we? We don't like chokers. We don't like chokers.

On this Memorial Day evening in the United States, Americans are concluding a sacred day of remembrance, reflection, and prayer. Citizens all across the country came together to decorate the graves of our fallen heroes and to honor their selfless acts of courage.

The citizens of our country are incredible. They love our country, and they love you. They love you. You have no idea how much they love you.

Down through history, from America's earliest days, fearless Americans have said goodbye to their loved ones, gone off to war, and stared down our enemies, knowing that they may never, ever return. Memorial Day links every grateful American heart in eternal tribute to those brave souls who gave their last breath for our nation, from Concord to Gettysburg, from Midway to Mosul.

Today, the unbreakable resolve of these heroes lives on in every American who wears our great uniform. Each day that you serve on these rolling but beautiful seas, you honor their sacrifice, you carry on their righteous duty, and you continue their noble legacy.

Our republic endures because of brave men and women who are willing to lay down their lives to defend us all. Our freedom is earned through the blood, and sweat, and toil, and sacrifice of great American patriots just like you.

As we honor America's fallen warriors, we pledge our unwavering devotion to all of those who serve our nation in uniform.

Throughout this region — from Yokosuka, to Guam, to Singapore, to Okinawa, to Busan — the Seventh Fleet is holding the line and defending the peace.

Among the sailors and Marines the USS WASP, you serve as warfare officers, naval aviators, Marine riflemen, air-crewmen, corpsmen, machinist mates, avionics tech —

AUDIENCE: Ooh!

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Go ahead. You can do it. (Laughter.) Ordnance technicians. (Applause.) Okay. (Laughter.) Where are the avionics guys? (Applause.) And gals. Huh? Right there? Good. That's complicated business, right? Got to be pretty good. Cooks, fire control men and women, intelligence specialists.

You are the strongest, toughest, best, and bravest. Do you agree with that?

AUDIENCE: Yeah!

PRESIDENT TRUMP: You better. You are the ones keep going and striving, and keeping America safe, and strong, and proud, and free.

You defend our freedom, our families, and you defend our great American flag. (Applause.)

You show the world the force of American might and American heart. And you prove, across these perilous waters and far beyond, that there is no match on Earth for the awesome power and glory of the American Navy and the United States Marines. (Applause.)

To the men and women of America's Seventh Fleet: The First Lady and I have been deeply honored to be with you all today. On behalf of all Americans, we thank you, we salute you, we honor you, we cherish you, and we stand with you now and forever.

Thank you to the proud sailors and Marines of USS Wasp. (Applause.)

God bless you. God bless our military. And God bless the United States of America. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

END

11:55 A.M. JST

The White House