

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2017

Remarks on the 70th Anniversary of the United States Air Force at Joint Base Andrews, Maryland

September 15, 2017

Thank you very much. At ease, at ease. Please sit down.

Thank you, Melania, for that wonderful introduction and for being such an incredible emissary for the American people. She's become very, very popular, I'll tell you that. I'm very proud of her. Thank you.

Secretary Wilson, General Goldfein, Chief Wright, General Jacobson, Colonel Teichert: I'm honored to join you on this really, really historic occasion, the 70th anniversary of the United States Air Force, the greatest air force on the face of this Earth by far. *[Applause]* Nice job, fellas, nice job.

Before we begin, I want to say that our hearts and prayers go out the people of London who suffered a vicious terrorist attack today. I spoke with a wonderful woman, British Prime Minister Theresa May, this morning and relayed America's deepest sympathy, as well as our absolute commitment to eradicating the terrorists from our planet. Radical Islamic terrorism, it will be eradicated, believe me.

America and our allies will never be intimidated. We will defend our people, our nations, and our civilization from all who dare to threaten our way of life. This includes the regime of North Korea, which has once again shown its utter contempt for its neighbors and for the entire world community. After seeing your capabilities and commitment here today, I am more confident than ever that our options in addressing this threat are both effective and overwhelming.

Our thoughts also remain with those recovering in the wake of Hurricanes Irma and Harvey. I visited Florida yesterday, where the American people have once again shown the world how resilient, strong, and truly united we are. We're going to help our fellow Americans put their lives, their homes, and their communities back together because when Americans are in need, Americans pull together.

And we know we can always count on the courageous members of our Nation's military to be there every step of the way, just like more than 400 Air Force medical personnel who have deployed to Florida to help care for the sick and the injured. To the men and women who proudly wear the Air Force uniform, who keep our country safe, and who fill our hearts with pride, thank you for your service and devotion to America. Thank you.

I am truly thrilled to join you today at this really incredible milestone, 70 years since the founding of the United States Air Force. Congratulations. We're celebrating 70 years of history, 70 years of heroes, and 70 years of victory. I also want to thank all of the amazing family members and loved ones whose sacrifices make your service possible. We love you; we appreciate you and everything you do. Thank you. *[Applause]* Thank you.

For seven decades the United States Air Force has pushed the boundaries of science and technology, helped restore peace and stability to troubled lands, and kept Americans safe from those who threaten our very way of life. Nothing inspires more confidence in our friends or strikes more fear in the hearts of our enemies than the sight of American warplanes on the

horizon. You patrol the sky, protect the homeland, and deliver American justice to anyone who dares to threaten our people. From the earliest wooden biplanes, to the high-tech UAVs, to the awesome power and stunning beauty of the F-35, B-2, F-22,—and I saw a lot of them today—the F-15, the F-16, the F-18, I don't know which one I like the most. [Laughter]

But our aviators have given America total dominance of the air and space, no matter where we fly. Now when our enemies hear the F-35 engines, when they're roaring overhead, their souls will tremble, and they will know the day of reckoning has arrived. That is the way it's been since 1947, when the Air Force was born during a time of monumental change and uncertainty in the world. Unconditional victory in World War II had come at a terrible price. Millions of lives had been lost, empires had collapsed, and much of Europe laid in ruin.

The threat of global communism emerged from the void left by defeated foes. And the free nations of the world once again looked to the United States to secure the peace. It was at this crucial moment that America established the Air Force as a separate military service and a truly great military service. And from that moment, America has dominated both air and space like no other nation in history. Our air superiority is unquestioned, not merely because we have the best equipment, but because we have the best people by far.

From the Berlin Airlift, through the gauntlet of MiG Alley, to the skies of above the jungles of Southeast Asia and the deserts of the Middle East, American airmen have proven that they have no equal in courage, capability, or commitment. You are the ones who own the sky. You are our greatest weapon of all. In the last 64 years, American ground forces have not lost a single life to an enemy airstrike—pretty amazing—and that is truly a testament to the strategy and skill of American airmen and the essential role you play in our national defense.

As Commander in Chief, I am committed to keeping the United States military the best trained, best equipped, and most technologically advanced fighting force on the planet. One of my first acts as President was to direct the rebuilding of our Armed Forces and rebuilding we are. Congress took an important step this year by heeding my call for a \$20 billion increase in defense spending, and we're going to be doing even much more than that. But the service men and women who defend our Nation with their lives deserve the predictable and consistent funding that will help them win quickly and win decisively.

And I will tell you that the new equipment that we're ordering by the billions—by the absolute billions and billions—it's equipment like you've never even thought of before. There is nobody in the world that will have anything even close to us and what we're doing, and that's my great honor, believe me. I said it early on, and I say it again: There is nobody even close.

Our Armed Forces have endured continuous combat for the past 26 years, yet despite this, the number of airmen on Active Duty has dropped by one-third since the 1990s, and we've cut more than half of our fighter squadrons. Terrible. That is why I am calling on Congress to end the defense sequester once and for all and to give our military the tools, training, equipment, and resources that our brave men and women in uniform so richly deserve. And that is happening.

Each of you is fulfilling your duty to America, and now Government must fulfill its duty to you. And to you, right? Right? [Laughter] We will stop delaying needed investments in our readiness, and we will renew our commitment to the patriots who keep America safe. In so doing, we will continue the proud legacy of service that each of you has inherited, a legacy built over the generations by legends like Yeager, Wagner, Rickenbacker, Boyd, Grissom, and Schriever—the heroes who broke barrier after barrier to push America farther. And they really

did. They broke so many different barriers; they went farther, faster, and they always went on to victory.

Like them, each of you is a living, breathing symbol of our great country, the United States of America. The characteristics that define the Air Force aviator—boldness and bravery, action and instinct, power and grace—are woven deep into the American spirit and have defined our people since our Nation was founded. The legendary Air Force General Robin Olds immortalized those attributes when he said: "Fighter pilot is an attitude. It's cockiness. It's aggressiveness." It's self-cockiness—and you know that. "It is confidence. It is a streak of rebelliousness." Is that true? I don't know. [*Laughter*]

And I just met a lot of these folks. They're better looking than Tom Cruise, and we know they can fight better, and we know they can fly better. They'd better be able to. [*Applause*] Great people. They're truly, truly competitive. But there's something else: There's a spark. There's a desire to be good, to do well in the eyes of their peers.

That desire to do good, to soar past every challenger, to overcome every obstacle, and to win for your fellow citizens and the land that we love is the same desire that beats in the heart of every red-blooded American patriot. We are, and forever will be, a nation of pioneers and patriots, risk takers and renegades, aviators and astronauts. We crave adventure and achievement, exploration and enlightenment. We carved out a home in the New World, gave birth to the modern world, and we will shape tomorrow's world with the strength and skill of American hands. Because for America, the sky is never the limit.

That is why the United States Air Force will remain the most awe-inspiring flying force ever known to man. Like every part of our military, the Air Force is born from the will of our people to search, to explore, to reach new heights. It is the people's will that you reflect and their power that you project to every single corner of the globe.

Earlier this year, I had the honor of speaking with a great Army Air Corps and Air Force legend, Lieutenant Colonel Dick Cole, the last surviving Doolittle Raider and a true American hero. Like those who serve today, Dick Cole was a common American who answered to the call of duty with uncommon devotion. His place in the pages of history might have seemed unlikely prior to that fateful mission. He had never seen the ocean before boarding a ship that would take him halfway around the world. Neither he, nor anyone else, had ever flown a B-2 [B-25]^{*} into combat from the deck of an aircraft carrier. Nor had we ever seen anybody to use a parachute before bailing out thousands of feet above the Chinese mainland.

But he knew what his country needed, and what his duty required. And there was no barrier that could stop Colonel Cole and his fellow Raiders from accomplishing their mission. It is that spirit of daring, devotion, and duty, and love of our country that has defined the Air Force for the past 70 years and will lift each of you to new heights every day from this day forward. There is no distance too far, no speed too fast, no challenge too great, and no height too high that will keep the United States Air Force—or the American people—from total victory.

The American people are eternally grateful. We will stand with you always. And never forget: I am always on your wing. Happy 70th birthday to the United States Air Force. Happy birthday to everybody. We are so proud of you. Congratulations to each and every one of you. And thank you for keeping America proud, strong, safe, and free.

^{*} White House correction.

Thank you, may God bless the Armed Forces, and may God bless the United States of America. Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you. Congratulations. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Maj. Gen. James A. Jacobson, USAF, commander, Air Force District of Washington; Col. E. John Teichert, USAF, commander, Joint Base Andrews, MD; Brig. Gen. Charles E. Yeager, USAF (Ret.); and actor Tom Cruise. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : U.S. Air Force, 70th anniversary of establishment, remarks at Joint Base Andrews, MD.

Locations: Joint Base Andrews, MD.

Names: Cole, Richard E.; Cruise, Tom; Goldfein, David L.; Jacobson, James A.; May, Theresa; Teichert, E. John; Trump, Melania; Wilson, Heather A.; Wright, Kaleth O.; Yeager, Charles E.

Subjects: Air Force, Department of the : 70th anniversary of establishment; Air Force, Department of the : Chief of Staff; Air Force, Department of the : Secretary; Armed Forces, U.S. : Combat readiness, improvement efforts; Armed Forces, U.S. : Funding; Armed Forces, U.S. : Military families; Armed Forces, U.S. : Servicemembers :: Service and dedication; Defense, Department of : Joint Base Andrews, MD; Florida : Hurricane Irma, damage and recovery efforts; Maryland : Joint Base Andrews; Maryland : President's visits; Natural disasters : Hurricane Harvey; Natural disasters : Hurricane Irma; North Korea : Nuclear weapons development; Terrorism : Global threat; United Kingdom : Prime Minister; United Kingdom : Terrorist attack in London.

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