

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2019

Remarks at a Veterans Day Parade in New York City
November 11, 2019

The President. Well, thank you very much, Stanley. And thank you for your tremendous support of this wonderful parade. Today we come together as one Nation to salute the veterans of the United States Armed Forces, the greatest warriors to ever walk the face of the Earth. Our veterans risked everything for us. Now it is our duty to serve and protect them every single day of our lives.

It is truly an honor to come back to New York City, right here at Madison Square Park, to be the first President ever to attend "America's Parade." To every veteran here with us, to the thousands preparing to march on Fifth Avenue—it will be really something—and to the 18 million veterans across our country: The First Lady and I have come to express the everlasting love and loyalty of 327 million Americans.

I want to recognize Department of Veterans Affairs Deputy Secretary James Byrne for joining us. Thank you, James. Thank you, James. Great job. I'm pleased to report that our administration and all of the work that we've done—the veteran satisfaction with the VA is at 90 percent. It's the highest rate ever recorded in the history of this particular program. And that's awfully good, and we're very proud of you and the Secretary. Thank you very much. Great job.

Also with us is New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio. Thank you very much, Mr. Mayor. Thank you. Along with many other distinguished guests.

Thanks as well to everyone at the United War Veterans Council for putting on this incredible event, including Bill White, Doug McGowan, and a very special acknowledgement to someone who has devoted his life to this parade: Marine Vietnam veteran Vince McGowan. Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you.

Thank you, each of you, and all of the supporters whose generosity make this parade possible. Tremendous amounts of work has been done, and tremendous, frankly, amounts of money has been donated. And we appreciate it, and we appreciate Stanley.

We're very glad to be joined as well by the honorary grand marshal of the parade, Marine Corps Commandant General David Berger and the Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps Troy Black. Thank you very much. Thank you. Thank you very much. Let us also show our profound appreciation to the 2019 grand marshals of the parade who have served in World War II, Korea, Vietnam, the Gulf war, and Iraq.

This morning, as more than 30,000 patriotic Americans line the streets of Manhattan, we carry on a noble tradition that began one century ago. In 1919, the people of this city filled block after block to welcome home General Pershing and his 25,000 American soldiers after victory in World War I. Just a few years before, many of those soldiers had boarded ships not far from here at Hoboken Port. More than 4 million Americans fought in the Great War, and more than 116,000 made the ultimate sacrifice.

At the 11th hour, of the 11th day, of the 11th month, in 1918, the Armistice was declared, the war had come to an end, and the Allies achieved a great, great victory. Every year since, on November 11, we have shared our Nation's deepest praise and gratitude to every citizen who has worn the uniform of the American Army, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, and Marines.

We are profoundly moved to have with us veterans of World War II, including one of the grand marshals, Woody Williams. Thank you. Thank you, Woody. Thank you very much,

Woody. To each veteran of the war: The glory of your deeds will only grow greater with time. This city is graced by your presence. This Nation is forever in your debt. And we thank you all.

We're also pleased to be joined by veterans of the Korean war, the Vietnam war, the Gulf war, and the war on terror. You are the reason our hearts swell with pride, our foes tremble with fear, and our Nation thrives in freedom. Would you please stand so that we can honor your heroic service? Please. *[Applause]* That's great. Thank you very much. Thank you. Thank you all.

Each year, this parade highlights one branch of our military. This year, we honor the elite masters of air, land, and sea—the legendary Leathernecks, the feared Devil Dogs, the "first to flight [fight]"*: the United States Marines. Let's hear it. *[Applause]* That's great. Yesterday we celebrated the Marines' 244th birthday. That's pretty good.

Participant. Oorah!

The President. *[Laughter]* The Few and the Proud are always faithful, and they always win.

I also want to thank the Marine Corps Law Enforcement Foundation, which provides scholarships to children of our fallen heroes. To every Gold Star Family: We will stand by your side forever.

It is very fitting that the Veterans Day Parade begin right here in New York City. Since the earliest days of our Nation, New York has exemplified the American spirit and has been at the heart of our Nation's story of daring and defiance.

On July 2, 1776, the British Armada sailed into New York Harbor, numbering more than 400 ships and carrying more than 30,000 men. The British came here to snuff out what they thought was just a minor American Revolution. Didn't turn out to be that way. But the Redcoats did know—what they did know was they were going to have a problem, but they didn't know that New York would meet them with the fearsome power of American patriots.

In World War I, New York regiments like "Harlem Hellfighters," the "Lost Battalion," and "the Fighting 69th" were revered all over the globe. During World War II, 63 million tons of supplies and more than 3 million service members shipped out of New York Harbor. On September 11, 2001, the whole world saw the horror and responded to America's wicked enemies with unwavering [unwavering]* courage, unbreakable spirit, and resolve that is deeper than oceans, fiercer than fires, and stronger than steel.

Last week, I was honored to award the Presidential Citizens Medal to an extraordinary American: Rick Rescorla. Rick enlisted in the Army at the recruiting center in Times Square, became a great war hero in Vietnam, and then became head of security at Morgan Stanley in the World Trade Center. On September 11, he saved 2,700 lives before giving his own. Today we are immensely grateful to be joined by Rick's son Trevor. Thank you, Trevor. Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you. To Trevor and every 9/11 family, we pledge to never, ever forget.

The towering spirit of strength that we see in this city lives within the heart of every American warrior. From the snow of Valley Forge to the jungles of Vietnam, from the forests of Belleau Wood to the beaches of Normandy, from the mountains of Afghanistan to the deserts of Iraq, that spirit has helped our fighters defeat tyrants, conquer fascism, vanquish communism, and face down terrorism.

Just a few weeks ago, American special forces raided the ISIS compound and brought the world's number-one terrorist leader to justice. Thanks to American warriors, al-Baghdadi is dead, his second in charge is dead, we have our eyes on number three, his reign of terror is over, and

* White House correction.

our enemies are running very, very scared. Thank you. Thank you. Those who threaten our people don't stand a chance against the righteous might of the American military.

In a few weeks, we will mark the 75th anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge, our Nation's bloodiest battle of World War II. More than 47,000 Americans were wounded, and 19,000 gave their last breath for their country. We are proudly joined today by a veteran of the Battle of the Bulge, a native New Yorker who is 94 years old and still going very, very strong: Corporal Jack Foy. You look good, Jack. You look good.

Jack enlisted in the Army right out of high school. He fought through brutal months of the campaign in northern France. On Christmas Eve, after marching nearly 100 miles in the snow in subzero temperatures, he arrived outside the town of Bastogne in Belgium. For 2 weeks, Jack fought under ceaseless artillery fire and helped push the enemy back from a critical road. At one point, a mine blew up, and it destroyed his vehicle, badly hurting many. He was wounded three times, but he kept on fighting.

After the Allied victory at the Battle of the Bulge, Jack fought for the remaining 9 months of the war—across the Siegfried line, up the Moselle River, through the Rhineland, and all the way across Germany—until he reached the gates of Ohrdruf concentration camp, the first Nazi camp to be liberated. That was number one. That was a big, big event.

As Jack has said about the Battle of the Bulge: "When the chips were down and the situation was desperate, the American soldiers stood up to be counted. For a brief moment in history, these men held our Nation's destiny in their hands. We did not fail." Thank you very much, Jack. Great. And, Corporal Foy, we will forever be proud of what you and your fellow soldiers achieved for all of humanity.

Also here with us today is Lauren Mathews, the granddaughter of a Battle of the Bulge veteran who has since passed away. His name was Master Sergeant Roddie Edmonds. Like so many of our veterans, Roddie never talked about the war. Lauren never knew her grandfather's story until she embarked upon a school project about 10 years ago.

Roddie was in the 422d regiment, which was overwhelmed when the Nazis launched their surprise assault. He and his men fought for 3 treacherous days before being taken as prisoners of war. After they arrived at a prison camp, the German commander sent an order over the loud speaker. The Jewish American soldiers were all told to step out of line during the roll call the next day. Knowing the terrible fate that would come to his Jewish comrades, Roddie immediately said, "We're not doing that." He sent orders to have every American step out of line with their Jewish brothers-in-arms.

The next morning, 1,292 Americans stepped forward. The German commander stormed over to Roddie and said, "They cannot all be Jews." Roddie stared right back; he said, "We are all Jews here." At that point, the German put a gun to Roddie's head and demanded, "You will order the Jews to step forward immediately, or I will shoot you right now through the head." Roddie responded, "Major, you can shoot me, but you'll have to kill us all." That's something. The German turned red, got very angry, but put his down gun, and walked away.

Master Sergeant Edmonds saved 200 Jewish Americans—soldiers that day. So proud to be Jewish and so proud of our country. Lauren, thank you for being here today as we remember your grandfather's unbelievable and exceptional valor. Lauren, please stand up. Thank you very much.

One of the 200 Jewish American soldiers who was saved that fateful day is Staff Sergeant Lester Tanner. Lester is now 96 years old—and he joins us here. Boy, you guys are looking very good. Ninety-six. Lester—you're really 96, Lester? *[Laughter]* I don't believe it. You're looking

good. Thank you very much. Thank you also for your very noble service and for sharing this incredible story with the world. Thank you very much, Lester.

The men and women who have donned our Nation's uniforms are the bravest, toughest, strongest, and most virtuous warriors ever to walk on Earth. You left your families and fought in faraway lands. You came face-to-face with evil, and you did not back down. You returned home from war, and you never forgot your friends who didn't return, including prisoners of war and those missing in action.

Every day, you think of them and pray for them. But your greatest tribute of all is the way you lived your lives in the years since. You raised your families, you endured the wounds of war, and you endured the pains of that memory. Yet, you keep going, you keep serving, you keep giving, and you keep loving. You volunteer at your local veterans post, and you keep in touch with your battle comrades. You support our Gold Star Families, you take care of our wounded warriors, and you stand alongside of our service members when they return from war.

On Veterans Day, our Nation rededicates itself to our most solemn duty. While we can never repay our warriors for their boundless service and sacrifice, we must uphold with supreme vigilance our sacred obligation to "care for those who have borne the battle."

In just a minute, we will have a moment of silence and we will lay a wreath at the Eternal Light Monument. As we do, with God as our witness, we pledge to always honor our veterans and pay immortal tribute to those who have laid down their lives so that we might be free.

Together, we must safeguard what generations of fearless patriots gave everything to secure. We will protect our liberty, uphold our values, and defend our home. We will ensure that righteous legacy of America's veterans stands as a testament to this Nation from now until the end of time. To every veteran here today and all across our land: You are America's greatest living heroes and we will cherish you now, always, and forever.

Thank you, God bless our veterans, and God bless America. Thank you. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:33 a.m. at Madison Square Garden. In his remarks, he referred to Stanley Chera, founder, Crown Acquisitions, in his capacity as chairman of the Commander-in-Chief Host Committee for the Veterans Day Parade in New York City, who introduced the President; Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert L. Wilkie, Jr.; and Bill White, chairman and chief executive officer, Constellations Group, Ltd., in his capacity as chief fundraiser and Veterans Day coproducer, Douglas McGowan, board member, and Vince McGowan, president emeritus, United War Veterans Council. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist organization.

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