

*Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2019*

**Remarks to United States Troops at Bagram Airfield in Bagram, Afghanistan**  
*November 28, 2019*

*President Trump.* Well, thank you very much. That was great. And we just had a nice Thanksgiving dinner. I thought I was going to be having it someplace else, and Senator Barrasso is a great friend of mine, and he said, "That'll be great if we did it." I said, "You come with me, John." And he came with me. John, thank you very much. Great friend of ours. He's a great Senator and a great man.

And I want to thank General Milley. Special warrior. He's a special warrior. And I want to congratulate you also because I just saw some numbers that are incredible. ISIS, you're wiping them out left and right. There's almost nothing left in this area. You're not going to be lonely. And Al Qaida, the same thing. And tremendous progress.

And you know, we have a very special friend of ours that's here. We had a meeting a little while ago. I said, "Would you like to come over and say hello to the troops?" And he said, "That would be such an honor." And I think what I'll do is, before I start, I'll bring up the President of Afghanistan. President Ghani is here. So please, Mr. President, we'd love to have you say something. Thank you. Thank you.

*President Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai of Afghanistan.* In the name of the compassionate and merciful, this President, great American troops, great patriots: Happy Thanksgiving. It's an occasion for us to be especially thankful because the President of the United States is here. And he has been the architect of the South Asia strategy and the strategy for wiping out Al Qaida and Daesh.

Thanks to your support and the bravery of the Afghan soldiers, we have inflicted an incredible defeat on ISIS in Nangarhar. Last week, it was Nangarhar; in the next 3 months, it's going to be all of Afghanistan. Equally, with your support, what we have done to wipe out Al Qaida South Asia is tremendous. And thank you. President Trump, people talked a lot about bin Laden, but what you did to eliminate al-Baghdadi—who was an organizer and not a talker—is a much greater accomplishment. Congratulations.

I would also like to take this occasion to say thank you to the Gold Star families: 2,298 American men and women in uniform who have paid the ultimate sacrifice. This nation will always be grateful for that sacrifice, and we will always remember. And also, 20,585 have been wounded. But since President Trump has been President of the United States, fortunately, we still too high a number, but only 52 American men and women in uniform have died compared to thousands before. This is a tribute to our joint partnership and to the sacrifice that Afghan soldiers, your brothers and sisters in uniform, are making.

More than a million Americans have served here in uniform. We pay tribute to their families and to your families. I would like a special request: Please thank your families for agreeing to miss you at this special occasion at home and for being here, defending United States security and our freedom.

Together, we will succeed. We will never forget that 9/11 brought us, and we will never permit the repetition of 9/11 again. God bless you. God bless the President.

*President Trump.* Fantastic. Thank you very much. Would you like to stay here or would you like to go? Stay right up here? Please. Please.

*President Ghani.* Thank you.

*President Trump.* Well, thank you very much, Mr. President. Fifty-two, compared to thousands. And we're doing a tremendous job. And, as you know, a big part of that job is ISIS—certainly the biggest—and Al Qaida. And we've got them down to very low numbers. We'll have that totally taken care of in a very short period of time. And we'll see what happens.

The Taliban wants to make a deal. We'll see if they want to make a deal. It's got to be a real deal, but we'll see. But they want to make a deal. And they only want to make a deal because you're doing a great job. That's the only reason they want to make a deal. So I want to thank you, and I want to thank the Afghan soldiers for really—I've spoken to a lot of you today, and you say they're really fighting hard. I was very impressed with that, actually. So I want to thank you.

And, General Milley, again, to be at Bagram Airfield, I've heard so much about it. It's an incredible place. This is some airfield, some fortress.

I want to thank all of the Afghanistation troops. We have a lot of them here, actually. We have a number of them standing around, saying hello and waving. And we appreciate it. And I also say to you, just "at ease." Let's just enjoy ourselves for a couple of minutes. I'm going to introduce a few people.

But there's nowhere I'd rather celebrate this Thanksgiving than right here with the toughest, strongest, best, and bravest warriors on the face of the Earth. You are indeed that. You know, when I took office—if you can believe it, almost 3 years ago—we were very depleted. Our military was depleted, in terms of equipment. You see, right? They were all shaking their heads. *[Laughter]* That's right. We have all those brandnew planes and brandnew helicopters and brandnew ships being built now. Brandnew, incredible submarines. Probably the most powerful submarines—probably the most powerful weapon in the world, is what we're building, in the form of submarines. Nobody's—nothing is even close.

But we have things that nobody has seen, nobody has heard about. And we'll keep it that way. But we've spent \$2½ trillion—very close to that number. And very shortly, it will be at \$2½ trillion. And while I don't love that—you know, what that does to my budget, because I'm a budget person—we don't have a strong military budget, it don't matter much do they, huh? I, kind of, have to worry about budgets. So, with what's going on in the world today, very important, \$2½ trillion.

And nobody beats our great Army, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, Marines. And we think, soon, we're going to be adding a thing called "space"—you know about that, right? Space. We're going to have space covered very well. We're covering it now, but we have to cover it to a much greater extent. And you'll be hearing about that in the coming days and weeks.

I've just come from serving Thanksgiving dinner to some of you—I recognize already, some of you in the audience. And—with General Milley and the folks. And we had a good time. I then got down—I sat down. I had a gorgeous piece of turkey. And I was all set to go, and I had some of the mashed potatoes, and I had a bite of mashed potatoes. And I never got to the turkey, because General Milley said: "Come on over, sir. Let's take some pictures." I never got to my turkey. It's the first time in Thanksgiving that I've never had anything called turkey. *[Laughter]* But that's okay. But it looked awfully good, I have to tell you that. I should have started with that, instead of the mashed potatoes. I made a mistake.

But I hope everyone enjoyed the fantastic meal. It certainly did look good. And hopefully, everyone can get some well-deserved rest this holiday. Your family—they're home, and they love you so much.

We flew 8,331 miles to be here tonight for one simple reason: to tell you, in person, that this Thanksgiving is a special Thanksgiving. We're doing so well. Our country is the strongest,

economically, it's ever been. We have never done so well. We have the greatest economy anywhere in the world. So it's nice to know that you're fighting for something that is doing well, as opposed to something that was not doing well just a number of years ago.

Our stock market has reached the highest level ever in the history of the exchanges—all three, if you look. All three. It's incredible. It's incredible, what's happening. It just broke a record. I think it's close to 130 days. So we're less than 3 years, and 130 times, we've broken the alltime record. And to me, that doesn't mean an alltime record. It means something different; it means jobs. It means 401(k)s.

People come up to me with their 401(k)s, they say: "Sir, you've made me look like a genius. Thank you very much." You know, they're up 78 percent. They feel good.

So I would just want to say that we thank God for your health and all of the things that you've done. You are very special people. And you don't even know how much the people of our country love and respect you. And they do. It's why I'm here. I'm just bringing the message.

The courageous American warriors in Afghanistan and across the region are leading the fight to vanquish America's enemies and defeat forces of radical Islamic terrorism. I would say it so often during the campaign. That's what we're doing.

Together, we're making tremendous progress. Just a few weeks ago, as you know, and as President Ghani mentioned, U.S. special forces brought the world's number-one, most wanted terrorist to justice. When the President said more important than Usama bin Laden, I would say that, look, you know—different, in a way. He was an organizer. Al-Baghdadi was an organizer. He was the founder of ISIS. He was the father, if you want to call him that, of ISIS. I think he wasn't so happy, 3 weeks ago, when he saw those incredible 67 men, in that case, just come pouring down onto where he was staying. And that didn't work out too good.

And we have a new national hero. You know who that is, right? Conan. Conan is a new—is our new great hero. That was—and Conan was at the White House the other day. You might have seen it. And it was something.

But the animal known as al-Baghdadi—the founder, the leader of ISIS, the man that was trying to reinstitute ISIS, because we've defeated—we have a hundred percent of the ISIS caliphate in Syria is now ours—he is dead. His second is dead. His third—we have the sights on the third. I think the third doesn't want the job. *[Laughter]* The third is saying: "You know what? Maybe I'll go work in a store or something." *[Laughter]*

But Baghdadi was a savage and soulless monster who raped, tortured, and slaughtered the innocent, including many, many Americans. When you saw those folks—those great people in the orange jumpsuits, oftentimes standing on a beach with a thug behind them and a big knife—that was all al-Baghdadi. But he's gone. The American warriors hunted him down, they executed a masterful raid, and they punched his ticket to hell. That's what happened.

Shortly after we got Baghdadi, we focused on some other elements in the area. And we also started leaving the area, because it's secure. But we didn't leave it totally. We kept the oil. Makes sense, right? I've been saying for a long time, "Keep the oil." Hate to say it. I used to say it with a place called Iraq too. "Keep the oil." They didn't listen to me. I was a civilian; they didn't listen. Now they have to listen. *[Laughter]* But we kept the oil. And we kept it, and we can help the Kurds; we can help our partners; we can have it developed. It's where they got their wealth. That's where they got their money. We kept it. So we'll go back in when we have to, as it arises. But a hundred percent.

We have thousands of prisoners. We'd like Europe to take those prisoners. They have not stepped up to the plate at all. Many come from France. Many come from Germany. They come

from different countries in Europe. They have not stepped up to the plate. That's not good. We have to talk to them, John, because they should be taking those people back and trying them. And if we didn't do it, they'd go back to France, and they'd go back to Germany and to U.K. and to all of the places where they came. That's where they want to go back. And they should take them.

Weeks ago, we also announced that the forces are coming back. They're coming back home. We're reducing over here, but because of technology and all of things that we have, we're able to reduce, in Afghanistan—very substantially, actually reduce—and do even more devastating attacks on the enemy. So that's part of the \$2½ trillion that we have coming.

Finest equipment in the world. We build the greatest equipment anywhere in the world, by far. And we're selling that equipment now to many, many countries that are our allies. The enemies, we decide usually not to do it. History has said, "Don't sell the good equipment to the enemy."

Our message to the bloodthirsty terrorists is clear: You will not escape your wretched fate, because the long reach and the really awesome power of the United States military is unstoppable. We have the most powerful military in the world, by far. There's nobody close. And we're going to keep it that way. We're going to keep it that way.

This evening, as millions of families sit down at their dinner tables back home, they'll be saying a prayer for the men and women serving our Nation in Afghanistan and deployed all around the globe—great men and women, all around the globe. Many are coming home.

Our citizens know that you're standing guard, killing terrorists, crushing our enemies, and keeping America safe—really safe. But you're also keeping it strong and proud and mighty and free. And I'm here today to just really say, "Happy Thanksgiving." But also, "Thank you very much." Great job. Thank you very much. We appreciate it. Appreciate it. Very much appreciate it.

As President, I have no higher honor than to serve as Commander in Chief of the United States military, the greatest force for peace and justice in the history of the world.

This evening, I also want to express the profound and heartfelt gratitude of the entire American Nation for our amazing military families, because they really do make you what you are, when you think of it. Anybody here disagree with that? Raise your hand, please. Nobody has the courage to raise your hand. *[Laughter]* You have a lot of courage, but not that kind of courage, right? No, but it's true. The families, they make you great. The extraordinary commitment and the sacrifice of your loved ones make it possible for all of our families to live in safety and to live in peace.

I especially want to recognize several of the incredible patriots with us tonight. These are great fighters, great warriors, great people, great men and women. You've already met Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. It was my honor to appoint him. I had no doubt, from the day I met him—I met him very early on. And I said: "I like that man. He's a tough cookie, and he's smart."

You know, he went to Princeton. I said: "I don't know. I didn't know he was an academic." And he went to Columbia. I'm not sure: Was that a good thing or a bad? I don't know. Did I like it or not? I was, sort of—but that's pretty good. That means he's an academic. That means he's a smart cookie. And he is a smart—and he's a tough one. General Mark Milley. Thank you, General. He's an academic. I can't believe it. He's a great gentleman.

Commander of the Resolute Support and U.S. Forces Afghanistan, General Scotty Miller. He's done an incredible job. Thank you, Scotty. Thank you, Scotty. Incredible job. And I hope the word gets out. And I hope the press, which is right back here—they traveled with us—I hope

they're able to get the word out as to what Scotty and all of the folks have done, with respect to ISIS and with respect to Al Qaida.

He said: "They don't want to fight us, sir. They don't want to fight us." But you know, what we've done over the last 12 months—6 months and 12 months, but over the last 12 months—has been incredible. And I hope that the media is able to tell our families, tell our friends, tell our citizens, tell the people of the United States the success that we've had, because people don't read about that. They don't read about it.

Commander of Bagram Airfield, Brigadier General Brian Wolford. Thank you, Brian. Thank you, Brian. Great, Brian. Commander of the 455th Air Expeditionary Wing, Brigadier General Scott Jobe. Thank you. Thank you, Scott. Thank you, Scott. Commander of Area Support Group Afghanistan, Colonel David Raugh. Thank you, David. Good job, David. Thank you. U.S. Forces Afghanistan Chief of Staff, Colonel Chip Daniels. Chip, thank you.

And let's not forget our senior enlisted officers: Senior Enlisted Adviser to the Chairman, Command Sergeant Major John Wayne Troxell. John Wayne—thank you, John Wayne. Command Senior Enlisted Leader of U.S. Forces Afghanistan, Command Sergeant Major Timothy Metheny. Timothy, thank you. Thanks, Timothy.

Senior Enlisted Leader of Bagram Airfield, Sergeant Major Jason Huckabay. Jason, thank you. Thank you, Jason. And Chief Master Sergeant David Dickson of the 455th Air Expeditionary Wing. Where is he? Chief Master David Dickson. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you very much, David Dickson.

Also with us are National Security Adviser Robert O'Brien—doing a great job; Ambassador John Bass; and I introduced already one of the great, great patriots of our country, John Barrasso of Wyoming. Great State. Wyoming. Thank you, John.

With the help and the devotion everyone has given here tonight, America is winning again. We are winning like we have not won in a long time. And you know what? We're respected like we haven't been respected in a long time. America is winning again, and America is respected again and respected at the highest level.

We're investing so much money in our military, and we're not going to stop until it's totally rebuilt and complete. Along with a record investment in our military, we've also got your largest pay raise in over 10 years. And I'm very pleased to report that, starting January 1, you will be receiving another 3.1 percent pay raise. And if anybody doesn't want it—if anybody doesn't want it, just sign up at the door, and we'll take it away. Okay? *[Laughter]* Make it a contribution.

Here in the region, we're boldly confronting America's adversaries and pursuing a foreign policy focused squarely on our national interests.

Less than 3 years ago, ISIS controlled the vast reaches of territory in Iraq and Syria. Today, the U.S. Armed Forces and our allies have totally obliterated ISIS and its caliphate. And, you know, I was going to leave. We were down to 98 percent. And I have to say this: When I came in—again, less than 3 years ago—it was a mess. They were all over the place. And I was about set—"We'll leave now." We were at 97, 98 percent.

And I got a lot of—a lot of bite-back from people that, frankly, would have been very happy to leave if it was anybody else but me. They said, "Why don't you finish the job?" These are people that would have loved—but you know what? I said, "Maybe they're right." And we finished the job. We did it very, very quickly and very surgically. So that job is finished. We liberated more than 3 million civilians from that brutal reign.

I've also taken action to confront the corrupt and terror-supporting dictatorship in Iran. And, in Afghanistan, our warfighters continue to serve heroically to stamp out terrorism and to

eviscerate the enemies of civilization. Because that's what, really, they are; they're enemies of civilization.

Right here, at Bagram, you're our logistical hub for all forces in Afghanistan. You are absolutely essential to victory. From this base, the unrivaled aviators of the U.S. Air Force deliver unmatched firepower across the region. When our enemies hear the sound of your jets—those brandnew, beautiful jets—they hear the sound of those jets.

We don't put too many environmental controls on those jets. *[Laughter]* Because if it takes away 4 percent of what we need, we want the 4 percent. Do you agree with that, everybody? Is everybody—and we're all environment, but we're not heavy into environmental controls, and even pollution controls, on our aircraft when it's a fighting jet. We don't want to have any excuses.

But when our enemies hear the sound of those screaming engines through the valleys, their terrorist blood runs cold because they know that their demise is near.

In particular, I want to thank outstanding airmen from the 455th Air Expeditionary Wing, who deliver righteous American thunder anywhere, anyplace, anytime. Raise your hands. Let me see. Great. Great job. Helps to have new equipment, doesn't it? Does it help a little bit? You've got nice, new equipment.

Thanks as well to the skilled professionals of the Expeditionary Medical Group, who run the most capable trauma hospital in Afghanistan: Craig Joint Theater Hospital. Thank you very much. Great job you do. "Nobody"—I'll tell you what, there's a little phrase that I hear: "Nobody dies today. They live to fight another day." You've done a fantastic job.

And I'm told that, not long ago, a critically injured soldier was brought here in need of multiple blood transfusions. Within 15 minutes, more than 100 members of Bagram—the community, the base—showed up to give their blood. That says everything you need to know about the men and women who serve here. Thank you very much. It was incredible. They needed it fast, and they got it. They got it.

Every day, the fierce soldiers of the U.S. Army are carrying out harrowing missions across this land. The Army marches bravely into danger, traverses perilous terrain, and pumps stunning firepower straight into the face of evil.

In particular, I want to thank the men and women of the 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, who operate rotary—oh, I know what "rotary" is, right?—*[laughter]*—rotary-wing aircraft across Afghanistan, and fly magnificent Apaches like the one right next to me. That is magnificent.

And I was just at the—at Dover, because you had a terrible accident a week ago of two of your incredible people. And I greeted them as they came in on a very big plane. And I greeted their families. I heard they were fantastic people. So thank you very much for that. I know a lot of you asked about them. Their families are doing fine, but that was a rough night for them, I will tell you. It's a rough night for me; it's a rough night for everybody.

Thanks also to the 1st Armor Division's Resolute Support Sustainment Brigade for supplying our forces. The Brigade is incredible—so respected by everybody—keeping our military in top fighting shape. You are "Iron Soldiers," they say. "Iron Soldiers." Do you think so? Yes. Right? I think so.

And among those in RSSB are two sisters: Master Sergeant Eliana Gallardo and Captain Carla Gallardo. And I don't know—where are you? Where are you two sisters? Where are they? They're here someplace. Come here. Come. Have you ever spoken publicly?

*Captain Carla J. Gallardo, USA. Yes.*

*The President.* Give it a shot—[*laughter*]. She said, "Yes." That's pretty good. Please, say something please.

*Capt. Gallardo.* Hello, everyone. Happy Thanksgiving.

*Master Sergeant Eliana Y. Gallardo, USA.* Happy Thanksgiving.

*The President.* Thank you both. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you both very much.

I know that Senator Barrasso is very proud of the fact that Wyoming's National Guard is here at Bagram. Oh, you get them, huh? Where are they? Come here. Come here. Say a few words.

*First Sergeant Michael Clancy, USA.* Powder River.

*First Lieutenant Ira Werger, USA.* Let 'er buck.

*The President.* These people are all action, no talk. [*Laughter*] But I just want to thank you for being here.

And the Alpha Battery Second of the 300th Field Artillery Battalion, thank you very much. Your First Lieutenant Ira Werger and First Sergeant Michael Clancy, I want to thank you very much for doing such a great job in leading the unit.

Let me also recognize the terrific service members from Area Support Group Afghanistan; JTF Parwan; Task Force Cobalt; our Theater Reaction Force—"Fury"; Task Force Griffin; Task Force Hellhound EOD. Where are you? Task Force Loyalty. I like them. I like that name. Task Force Hiki No. Hiki No.

*Audience member.* Hiki No!

*President Trump.* Where are you, Hiki No?

*Audience member.* Hiki No!

*President Trump.* That's great. [*Laughter*] That's great.

Warfighters, keep up the great work. Really, keep up the great work. That's fantastic. And we're glad we could mention most of you. I know we left somebody out. Did we leave anybody out?

*Audience member.* [*Inaudible*]

*The President.* I agree. Who else? [*Laughter*]

Together, we're all very proud of the part the most feared and lethal fighting force ever assembled has played toward peace. America's military dominates the sky. Nobody can dominate the sky like we do. We have the new F-35s coming out, stealth and even superstealth. It's hard for the enemy because there's one problem they have: You can't see the planes. It's always tough to fight a plane when you can't see it.

But America's military dominates the sky. You dominate the sea. You dominate the land. You dominate space. You will not be deterred, and you will never, ever be defeated.

The United States never seeks war. We seek peace wherever peace can be found. We want peace. We do want peace. I want peace more than anybody. You know, they said, when I was elected, "Oh, we'll be in a war in the first day." Right? Remember that? No.

But when we do, and if we do—and I hope we never do—we will win. We're going to fight to win. We only fight to win. We only fight to win.

But if we are forced, we will avenge the enemy with overwhelming power, and we will win like—the old days, we won. Then, we went, where we sort of played for ties. But we don't play for ties anymore. We don't do the tie thing anymore. Is that okay with you folks? Is that all right?

Victory on the battlefield will always belong to you, the American warrior. In the long run, of course, the future of Afghanistan and nations across this region will not be decided on the battlefield. Ultimately, there will be—need to be a political solution, and we're working with the President, and we're working with a lot of people right now on a political solution decided by the people of the region themselves.

But rest assured that my administration will always be committed to annihilating terrorists wherever they appear, because we don't want them in our country. We're going to tell them, "Get the hell out." And we're doing it all the time. "Get them out." And we will continue to work tirelessly for the day when we can bring each and every one of you home and safe to your family. And that day is coming, coming very soon.

In the 18 years since the attacks of September 11, thousands of American patriots have left their everyday lives and cherished loved ones, put on their uniforms, and flown here to Afghanistan. Some of our brave warriors have made the ultimate sacrifice. We honor their memory today, and we will always honor their memory. Like all of them, each of you came to do your duty. You came to defend American liberty. You came because our Nation needed you, and they needed you right here. The men and women of our military are totally loyal to our country. And every day I am President, America will always be totally loyal to you.

I just want to finish by saying that, with your courage, we will continue to pursue America's enemies to ends of the Earth. Greatest in the world. We will chase them down. We will get the terrorists. We will break their will. We will not give them rest, no break and no way out. They won't have a chance. As long as America's soldiers, sailors, airmen, coastguardsmen, and marines are on the mission, our Nation's adversaries do not have even a small hope of victory.

Together, we will preserve our freedom, we will protect our homeland, and we will always defend and honor our great American flag.

I want to thank you, Bagram Air Base. This is a special place—a place that everybody talks about in our country. What you've done here and what you've built here is powerful. And I just want to say: Next year, we'll be having Thanksgiving together—it may be back in the United States—because you've done so much work here, and you've done it well.

God bless you, God bless our great country, God bless everybody in this room. Be safe. I will see you very soon. We will be back. We'll be back. And we are coming back as a country like nobody has ever seen.

When I'm greeted—and I'm often greeted—by leaders of the world, they start off by saying two things: "Congratulations on what you've done with your country, from an economic standpoint. We've never seen anything like it." And, "Sir, congratulations on rebuilding your military." And that's what we've done.

God bless you all. Thank you very much. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:45 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist organization, also known as Daesh.

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