

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2019

Remarks on Signing the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020 at Joint Base Andrews, Maryland
December 20, 2019

Well, thank you very much. And, thank you, Melania. And hello, Joint Base Andrews—special place. At ease. We have good news for you.

On behalf of the First Lady, Vice President Mike Pence, Mrs. Pence, I want to wish everybody a very merry Christmas, happy New Year.

This is a truly historic day for the American Armed Forces. In just a few minutes, I will proudly sign into law the largest ever investment in the United States military, in fact, I can say, the largest ever, by far. Today also marks another landmark achievement, as we officially inaugurate the newest branch of our military. This is a very big and important moment. It's called the Space Force. Most importantly, we are supporting you, the heroes who defend our families, secure our Nation, and protect our freedom.

The 2020 National Defense Authorization Act is about making sure our warfighters have the tools, resources, and equipment you need to fight and to win, all the time, to win. We're making our military stronger and more powerful than ever before.

We're joined today by Secretary of Defense Mark Esper, and our Service Secretaries. General Mark Milley—thank you very much, General. Fantastic job you're doing. And members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; many distinguished military leaders; and Representatives Mac Thornberry, Joe Wilson, Mike Rogers, Michael Turner, Michael McCaul, Robert Wittman, French Hill, Matt Gaetz, Greg Pence, and Michael Waltz. And I want to give a special shout-out to a very great gentleman who loves the military, loves this country: Senator Jim Inhofe. He's worked so hard on this. Thank you, Jim. Thank you all.

I want to extend a special thanks to commander of the Air Force District of Washington, Major General Ricky Rupp, and commander of the 11th Wing and Joint Base Andrews, Colonel Andrew Purath. Thank you, Colonel. And I am profoundly grateful to everyone at "America's Airfield." That's what they call it: America's Airfield. I use it often. *[Laughter]*

There is no greater honor than to serve as your Commander in Chief. I especially want to thank the incredible people who fly and maintain Air Force One. You are the best of the best. Thank you very much for doing such an incredible job.

Today's signing of the 2020 NDAA is a watershed event in the truest sense of the word. Before I came into office, the military endured deep and devastating budget cuts. Our military, quite frankly, was very depleted.

As a candidate for President, I promised to reverse these crippling cuts and to ensure our military remains unchallenged and unrivaled anywhere in the world. And right now there is no one—there is no country—that comes even close.

The law I am signing today provides \$738 billion—that's with a "b"—*[laughter]*—\$738 billion in defense funding for the 2020. That's an alltime record. In the history of our country, that's the highest amount we've ever spent on our military. And that's after \$700 billion in my first year, and \$716 billion last year. And it's all made right here in the U.S.A. That's very important.

And I have to say that we make the finest equipment, the finest planes, the finest missiles, the finest ships. We make the finest equipment anywhere in the world. It's not even close.

This brings our total investment in national defense, since my Inauguration, to almost \$2½ trillion. And what's the good of a budget if you don't have the best military in the world? And now we focus on the budget a little bit. Is that okay? We'll focus on the budget. Two and a half trillion dollars. So that's really something. And it's new, and it's beautiful, and within the next 12 months you'll have most of it.

In addition to massive acquisitions, in the past 2 years, this bill authorizes nearly 100 new F-35s; 24 brandnew F/A-18s; 155 Army helicopters, of all different types; 165 brandnew, beautiful Abrams tanks, said to be the best in the world; more than 50 Paladin howitzers; 2 new Virginia-class submarines; 3 new Arleigh Burke destroyers; a Ford-class aircraft carrier, and two others on their way; and much, much more.

But as we discussed earlier, our military is getting far more than just new equipment. For this first time—and I have to say, you know what happened last year? It was a good pay raise, but now you're getting another pay raise. And this will be the largest pay raise in more than 10 years, more than a decade. So if you don't want it, you don't have to take it.

For the first time since President Harry Truman created the Air Force over 70 years ago—think of that—we will create a brandnew American military service. That's such a momentous statement: 70 years ago, the Air Force.

With my signature today, you will witness the birth of the Space Force, and that will be now officially the sixth branch of the United States Armed Forces. That is something really incredible. It's a big moment. That's a big moment, and we're all here for it. Space. Going to be a lot of things happening in space.

Because space is the world's newest warfighting domain. Amid grave threats to our national security, American superiority in space is absolutely vital. And we're leading, but we're not leading by enough. But very shortly, we'll be leading by a lot. The Space Force will help us deter aggression and control the ultimate high ground.

I particularly want to thank Vice President Mike Pence. He was so involved in this with me. This was a real—we had the spirit, the love that—I think we can say, Mike, that we both had for this project. Because we realized how important it is to our military, to our future, to our defense—so important. And it's going to blend in magnificently with everything else that we have. So I want to thank Mike Pence. Mike, thank you very much. Thank you. Thank you. Great job, Mike.

It was nearly half a century from Kitty Hawk to the creation of the Air Force. And now it's 50 years after *Apollo 11* that we create the Space Force. With today's signing, I will proudly appoint General Jay Raymond the first Chief of Space Operations. And he will become the very first member of the Space Force. And he will be on the Joint Chiefs. He will be on the Joint Chiefs, which we're now expanding by one position. That's a very powerful position. So, General Raymond, congratulations, and thank you for everything you've done.

The 2020 NDA [NDAA]* also protects the vital legal tools we need to defend America's borders. The law improves education, childcare, and private housing for military families, and it ends the so-called "widow's tax," which blocked benefits for families of fallen heroes. The tax is gone. It was very important. That was very important to us. The "widow's tax" is gone.

After years of unrealized promises by other politicians, I honor my commitment today as I sign paid parental leave for the Federal civilian workforce. That's paid, into law. So thank you

* White House correction.

very much. That's a very big thing: paid parental leave. Another thing that they've been trying to get for many years.

As we head into Christmas, I am proud to report that we are giving every soldier, sailor, airman, coastguardsman, and marine a well-earned pay raise. In January, each of you will see the largest increase that you have had in such a long time. In fact, it goes back so far that a lot of people don't even know what that day it is. I can just tell you: It's a lot of money. And I say it, and I say it again: If you'd like not to take it, if you'd like to make a donation to your great country, please just let us know. We'll give you a little bit less. *[Laughter]* Any takers, by the way? I don't know. *[Laughter]* No, congratulations on that.

With this legislation, we show our undying commitment to the warriors who keep us safe. These are incredible warriors. These are brave, powerful warriors. And now they have the best equipment anywhere in the world and it's not even close.

Just weeks ago, U.S. special forces brought the world's most wanted terrorist to justice. The monstrous animal known as al-Baghdadi, the founder and leader of ISIS, is dead. And his second was just given the post of being in charge, and he is also dead.

Within 3 years of record military investment, our country has rejected a future of American decline and embraced our destiny of American dominance. Our military is now dominant, far ahead of any of our competitors. And if you saw where we started from, not so long ago, you'd really be amazed.

I want to thank everybody, but I want to also thank those great companies that really designed—made this equipment. Because I have seen it, and I've seen much of it in action, and I've, frankly, never seen anything like it in my life. So I just want to congratulate you all. Because together, we're protecting our people, our values, our traditions, and our glorious American flag. *[Applause]* Yes.

I want to just end by wishing our Armed Forces—our great people—a very merry Christmas and a happy New Year. God bless you, God bless our military, and God bless America. God bless America, everybody.

So it's now my honor to sign the 2020 National Defense Authorization Act into law. And again, congratulations. Thank you all very much. Very, very special people. Thank you very much.

Jay. Is Jay behind me someplace? I'm signing Jay's commission, right?

[At this point, the President signed the commission.]

So, Jay? Where is Jay? This is for Jay Raymond.

Commander of U.S. Space Command Gen. John W. "Jay" Raymond, USAF. Yes, sir, right here. Mr. President, thank you for that.

The President. This is for you.

Okay, we'll sign this. This is the thickness. *[Laughter]* Can you believe that? *[Laughter]*

[The President signed the bill.]

It's now signed.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:51 p.m. in Hangar 6. In his remarks, he referred to Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark A. Milley, USA. S. 1790, approved December 20, was assigned Public Law No. 116–92.

Categories: Bill Signings and Vetoes : National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020, signing remarks at Joint Base Andrews, MD.

Locations: Joint Base Andrews, MD.

Names: Esper, Mark T.; Gaetz, Matthew L, II; Hill, J. French; Inhofe, James M.; McCaul, Michael T.; Milley, Mark A.; Pence, Gregory J.; Pence, Karen; Pence, Michael R.; Purath, Andrew M.; Raymond, John W. "Jay"; Rogers, Michael D.; Rupp, Ricky N.; Thornberry, W. McClellan "Mac"; Trump, Melania; Turner, Michael T.; Waltz, Michael G.; Wilson, Addison G. "Joe"; Wittman, Robert J.

Subjects: Air Force, Department of the : Space Force, U.S., establishment; Armed Forces, U.S. : Funding; Armed Forces, U.S. : Military families; Armed Forces, U.S. : Servicemembers :: Pay and benefits; Armed Forces, U.S. : Servicemembers :: Service and dedication; Defense and national security : Border security; Defense, Department of : Joint Base Andrews, MD; Defense, Department of : Joint Chiefs of Staff; Defense, Department of : Secretary; Government organization and employees : Paid parental leave; Holidays and special observances : Christmas; Holidays and special observances : New Year's Day; Legislation, enacted : National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020; Maryland : Joint Base Andrews; Maryland : President's visits; Terrorism : Counterterrorism efforts; Terrorism : Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist organization; White House Office : Vice President.

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