

**Remarks at an Independence Day Celebration**

*July 4, 2023*

*The First Lady.* Thank you, Chaplain Barkemeyer. And thank you to the USO for helping to make this event so special and for being such a great partner to my White House Joining Forces initiative that supports military and veteran families, caregivers, and survivors.

Secretary Austin, Charlene, my fellow military families, welcome to the White House!

All across the country and at bases around the world, people are gathering with family and friends to celebrate the birth of our Nation.

But even as we laugh with our neighbors and enjoy the parades and cookouts and fireworks, we can never lose sight of the freedoms that this day represents or the families who make that freedom possible, families like all of you.

You are the brave and the bold, and the nearly 1 percent of Americans who have made the choice to keep us all safe. You miss births and birthdays, graduation and weddings, because you choose to put our country's security above your own.

And you're the spouses and children who serve as well, saying goodbye to friends and jobs, losing sleep when your servicemember is away, putting your chin up and your shoulders back no matter what this country asks of you. We are so grateful for all that you do. And our thoughts are with those serving overseas.

As a military mom and as your First Lady, I am honored and proud to share today with you, and I'm proud to be part of this military family.

God bless our troops and their families, and have a happy Fourth of July!

And now, your Commander in Chief, my husband, President Joe Biden.

*The President.* Well, happy Fourth.

*Audience members.* Happy Fourth!

*The President.* Today we celebrate our independence. We celebrate our liberty and our freedom. And Jill and I are honored to spend the day with so many military families. You represent a link in the chain of honor that stretches back to our founding days. You are the sinew, the backbone, the reality of why we're who we are. Unbreaking. Unbending.

Throughout our history, you remind us that democracy is never, never, never guaranteed. Every generation must fight to maintain it. We must always cherish it, defend it, and strengthen it.

You know, as we remember the extraordinary country this is, I hope we all rededicate ourselves to the essential work of our democracy, which is to unify—to unify—unify this Nation, to see each other not as adversaries, but as fellow Americans.

And let us remember that. While other—while the other nations were formed based on things like geography, ethnicity, religion, America is the only nation in history founded on an idea—an idea. And that is that we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all people are created equal—all people—endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, among them life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

We haven't always lived up to those words, but we've never walked away from them. And today, and all days, we have to say clearly: We never will. We never will.

Folks, this year, we honor the 50th anniversary of the All-Volunteer Force—50 years; 75th anniversary of desegregating the military; and the 75th anniversary of women's official integration into the military, full blown.

I've had the great honor of appointing some military commanders—haven't I?—that are women.

*Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III.* That's right.

*The President.* Yes. [Laughter] A lot. Any rate—this is a great guy, by the way.

[At this point, the President gestured toward Secretary Austin.]

This is a great guy. He has incredible, incredible integrity.

And though we've made enormous progress as a nation, and that's due to the people of this Nation—the people of this Nation—not the politicians, the people—we just have to keep going. You know, we just have to keep the faith. And we just have to remember who we are. We are the United States of America. And there's nothing—nothing—beyond our capacity if we work together.

Ladies and gentlemen, we've come out of every single solitary crisis stronger than we went in for 247 years. That's not hyperbole, that's a fact. We're the only nation that has.

So, folks, happy Fourth of July. God bless you, and may God protect our troops.

Thank you, thank you, thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 5:05 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In her remarks, the First Lady referred to Col. John H. Barkemeyer, USA, Senior Chaplain, White House Military Office, who gave the opening prayer; and Charlene Austin, wife of Secretary Austin.

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