

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2024

Remarks on Presenting the Commander in Chief's Trophy to the United States Military Academy Black Knights

May 6, 2024

The President. Well, good afternoon. Please—please have a seat.

Well, I can—you can tell the Academy grads in the audience; they've got bigger grins on their faces——

Audience member. Go Army!

The President. ——than the others. [*Laughter*]

Well, welcome. Welcome. We are here today to celebrate a tough team, a storied football program, this year's Commander in Chief Trophy winners, the Army Black Knights.

I'm impressed with your generosity, General. [*Laughter*]

It was an honor to have so many friends and fans with us here today. They include Secretary of Defense Austin, a proud West Point grad himself. You can clap. [*Applause*] The Secretary of the Army, Christine Wormuth. Christine, where are you? There you are.

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who's smiling anyway, C.Q. Brown—[*laughter*]—Air Force. He's an Air Force guy, but he's the best. And I was so honored—not to try to rub this in too much.

But I also welcome Representative Stanford Bishop—Sanford Bishop. Representative Burt—where—where is Brett? You here? There you are, Brett Guthrie. Good to see you, Brett. Representative Pat Ryan.

Representative Patrick K. Ryan. How you doing, sir?

The President. Pat, how are you, pal?

Rep. Ryan. Beat Navy! [*Laughter*]

The President. I ain't protecting you, man. You're on your own. [*Laughter*]

And Representative Steve Womack.

We're also joined by Army's football's biggest fans: Bill and Steve of the radio show "Crawdad's Countdown to Kickoff." Fellas, thanks for making the trip from Alabama.

Audience member. Go Army!

The President. [*Laughter*] And we finally have Coach Jeff Monken who—who has once again led the Black Knights back to the White House again.

Where are you, Coach? I'll make sure you—and some folks here know, over the past few seasons, the coach has restarted the old Army football tradition. Every time the team takes the field, they now carry the gold and black flag with a skull and crossbones. This flag represents everything the Black Knights stand for: toughness, tenacity, camaraderie, accountability. And you all certainly demonstrated that, Coach.

Over the course of this season, you faced setbacks, doubts, and uncertainties. Critics counted you out, but you never gave up. You never quit. Game by game, play by play, you ground it out together.

You beat Air Force, who was undefeated until you played them, forcing six turnovers and winning by 20 points. A month later, you beat Navy—[*applause*—second year in a row. Today you're taking home West Point's 10th Commander in Chief Trophy. You should be very proud.

And I want you to know I'm proud of you too, not just for the wins, but—not just for those forced turnovers; although they're impressive, Coach—but because every game, after you hang up that uniform, you immediately put on another uniform, one representing the United States of America.

Everyone—everyone—on this stage stepped up to serve, to lead, to join the long line of American servicemen, each a link in a chain of honor in America. You represent the very best of who we are as Americans, and I'm confident that in the years to come you will be willing to do—to see—you'll see the same toughness, tenacity, and camaraderie, and accountability to our country that you brought to the field in every single game.

Now, many of these cadets are going to have to hear me twice, so I'm going to make this shorter than usual, because I'm getting a—I'll have the honor of speaking again at West Point's commencement.

So let me just close with one brief final thought: Go Army.

Audience members. Beat Navy!

The President. I occasionally used to root for another club until my son joined the United States Army, spent a year in Iraq, became a major, won the Bronze Star and a few other things. And so I wasn't even allowed to mention any other team ever—[*laughter*]—ever.

Well, God bless you all. May God protect our troops. And, Coach, over to you.

Head Coach Jeffrey M. Monken. Thank you, sir.

Thank you, Mr. President and distinguished guests. On behalf of our Superintendent, Lieutenant General Steve Gillen; our Commandant of Cadets, Major General Lori Robinson; our Academic Dean, Brigadier General Shane Reeves; our Director of Athletics, Mr. Mike Buddie; the United States Corps of Cadets; the Long Gray Line of West Point graduates; and the nearly 1 million men and women who serve our Nation as members of the U.S. Army, Army Reserves, and Army National Guard, the Army football team is honored to accept the most coveted trophy in all of college football, the Commander in Chief's Trophy.

We're grateful——

The President. I want to know who the hell is going to carry it home. [*Laughter*]

Coach Monken. I carried it in here. I'll get—I'll take care of it, sir. [*Laughter*]

We're grateful for your invitation to the White House and for welcoming the members of America's team as your guests here today.

This is a team of tough, talented players and a team of gritty, intense fighters. And just as they battled to finish the season with four straight victories, including wins over rivals Air Force and Navy, as you had mentioned, to claim the service academy dominance in winning the CIC Trophy, these warfighters will lead our Nation's sons and daughters to victory on other fields on other days.

With us today are 48 soon-to-be-commissioned cadets who will later this month earn their diplomas, graduates of the world's preeminent leadership institution, the United States Military Academy. Soon after, they will enter the profession of arms prepared to lead and fight our Nation's wars.

Joining them today on the stage is the rest of our team, underclassmen who, in the next few years, will join these soon-to-be graduates as officers in the Army. Mr. President, these young men and women embody the values of duty, honor, country, and they represent the best our Nation has to offer.

We're incredibly proud to be here and grateful to you for this tremendous honor. On, Brave Old Army Team. And beat Navy. Thank you, sir.

We've got something for you. Sir, I'm going to call Cadet First Class Jimmy Ciarlo, who's one of our team captains, Ringwood, New Jersey, to present you with one of our game-worn jerseys from the Army-Navy victory.

[At this point, the President was presented with a team jersey. Holding up the jersey, he spoke as follows.]

The President. What do you think?

Coach Monken. Perfect.

The President. I want to—got to make sure you get my number right. *[Laughter]*

It's a great honor. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

What year are you?

Outside linebacker Jimmy Ciarlo. I'm a senior.

The President. See you at graduation.

Mr. Ciarlo. Sounds good, sir. Thank you.

The President. *[Inaudible]* *[Laughter]*

Well, thank you all very much. And by the way, are your—any parents here? *[Inaudible]* And to all the spouses of the guys running the show, God love you.

Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Guys, thank you very much.

Coach Monken. Thank you, sir. Beat Navy.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:09 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Bill Crawford and Steve Kreipe, hosts of the syndicated "Crawdad's Countdown to Kickoff" radio program.

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