

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2024

Remarks at an Independence Day Celebration

July 4, 2024

The President. Happy Independence Day! At least the rain helped the humidity a little bit.
[*Laughter*]

Jill and I, Secretary Austin, Mrs. Austin, we're honored so many of your families are here on this special day. I really mean it.

You represent only 1 percent—not quite 1 percent of the American population, but you keep 99 percent of the rest of the population safe. It's you. You're all volunteers. You do it.

You know, I got in trouble for saying this years and years ago, but I make no apologies for it. We have many obligations as a Government, but only one truly sacred obligation—sacred: to prepare those we send into harm's way and to care for them and their families when they come home—and when they don't, their families.

We've got a long way—we're all part of that long chain of patriots that stretches back to our Nation's founding that's given life to the very idea of America.

On this day, I think it's important we remember America is unique—and only—every—every President says this about their country, but we're unique in the world for a lot of reasons. But the one main reason is, we're the only nation on Earth founded on an idea—not ethnicity, not geography, not anything else—on an idea. And the idea was contained in the—we hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal, endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights.

We mean it. We've never fully lived up to it, but we've never ever, ever walked away from it. And it's because of you.

As your Commander in Chief, along with the Vice President and the Secretary of Defense, I want to thank you for your service and your sacrifice.

Let me close with this. Last month, Jill and I traveled to Normandy, France, to commemorate the 80th anniversary of D-Day. We met with American veterans, some of them—about 12 or 14—over 102 years old. Veterans who toured the—and we toured the battlegrounds, went to the cemeteries, and looked at what was—happened.

There should be no question—no question—about it. All those who served as members of the military were heroes, genuine heroes: heroes for freedom, democracy, and America.

Look, now, decades later, we have to look at ourselves and ask the question. Will we stand for freedom again? Will we stand for democracy? Will we stand together as Americans?

I believe we will and we can. And by the way, you know, I was in that World War I cemetery in France. And the one that my—one of our colleagues—the former President didn't want to go and be up there. I probably shouldn't even say it, but at any rate. [*Laughter*]

We've got to just remember who the hell we are. We're the United States of America. United—and there's nothing, nothing beyond our—and I mean this from the bottom of my heart—there is nothing beyond our capacity—nothing—when we do it together. Not a single thing.

We're the only nation in the history of the world that has gone through every crisis and come out stronger than we went into the crisis—every single time.

And by the way, I've been all over the world with you. I've been in and out of battles—anyway. You're incredible.

Understand: You are the finest fighting force in the history of the world. That's not hyperbole. In the history of the world, there's never been another military as powerful, as decent, and as giving as our military. I'm so damn proud to be your Commander in Chief.

Happy Fourth of July. May God bless you all, and may God protect our troops.

[At this point, the President left the podium to greet attendees. He then spoke as follows.]

Hey, folks. I just found out that if I keep—go around and when I'm—maybe I can come back and do—shake hands with all of you, which I want to do. There's 7,000 people waiting at the gate to get in. *[Laughter]* So, if I don't finish this, they can't come in. So maybe if you're hanging around, I'm going to sneak back out if that's okay. All right?

Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Remember that famous expression: "They also serve only stand and wait." I remember when our son was deployed, my wife would go to the—stand at the sink in the morning, drinking her coffee and saying that prayer, worried—worrying. Always concerned. And all of you.

So we owe you. This could not be done without the family support. So thank you, thank you, thank you. We love you, and I really mean it from the bottom of my heart.

Thank you. Thank you.

Audience member. [Inaudible]—President Biden. Keep up the fight! Keep up the fight!

The President. You've got me, man.

Audience member. We need you!

The President. I'm not going anywhere.

Audience member. Keep up the fight! Keep up the fight!

The President. All right. All right. I'll come back out when they let—open the gate. Okay? Thank you, thank you, thank you.

One last thing. You know, I used to think—when I was a Senator, there was—there were always congestion on the highways. There's no congestion anymore. None. We go out on the highway, there's no congestion.

And so what—the way they get me to stop talking, they'll say: "We just shut down all the roads, Mr. President. You're going to lose all the votes if you don't get in." *[Laughter]*

But anyway. I'll be back out. Thank you, thank you, thank you. I love you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:17 p.m. on the South Lawn of the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Charlene Austin, wife of Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III, who introduced the President; and former President Donald J. Trump. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 5.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Independence Day celebration.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Austin, Charlene; Austin, Lloyd J., III; Biden, Jill T.; Harris, Kamala D.; Trump, Donald J.

Subjects: Independence Day; Secretary of Defense; U.S. servicemembers, service and dedication; Veterans benefits; Vice President.

DCPD Number: DCPD202400569.