

Remarks With Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at a Dinner With North Atlantic Treaty Organization Allies and Partners

July 10, 2024

President Biden. Good evening.

This is a big night at the White House, celebrating 75 years of the greatest alliance the world has ever known. Jill and I are honored to have so many close allies and close friends all in the same room.

Seventy-five years ago, when our nations created NATO, former President Truman said, and I quote, "We are about—what we're about to do here is a neighborly act." A neighborly act.

The allies in this room not only share a common language—don't share a common language, we do not share a common border, but we are neighbors. We're neighbors because we all share common beliefs in dignity, equality, democracy, and freedom. And we're all neighbors because we're there for one another.

In the neighborhood I grew up in, that's what you do. When the neighbor needed help, you pitched in. When the bullies threatened the block, you stepped up. When a bad snowstorm hit, you shared supplies and made sure everyone was safe. When a new family moved into the neighborhood, you welcomed them with open arms.

And why did we do this? Because we knew we were in it together. We knew that our own house was safer when the entire neighborhood was as well.

This simple yet profound idea lies at the heart of our alliance. Over the last 75 years, it has allowed our people to reach for new possibilities. It's allowed our nations to meet any threat with strength and resolve. And above all, it allowed women and men of generations to know the lives of freedom, security, and democracy.

So please join me in raising your glasses.

[At this point, a White House aide handed a glass to President Biden.]

You've got one for the boss?

[President Biden gestured toward Secretary General Stoltenberg, and the aide handed him a glass.]

To NATO and to our neighborhood of nations: May we continue to grow stronger and closer in all the years ahead.

Now I'd like to invite my friend, Secretary Stoltenberg. But before, to NATO.

[President Biden offered a toast.]

It's all yours, boss.

Secretary General Stoltenberg. Thank you.

President Biden, dear Joe; Madam First Lady, dear Jill: Thank you so much for hosting all of us here tonight at the White House. This is an historic building. This is a special place with a lot of history and many decisions have been taken here that has shaped not only this Nation, but also shaped the North Atlantic Alliance, NATO. So it's great for all of us to be here tonight.

But this is more than an important political building. This is also your home, the place you live. So thank you for having us over for dinner tonight. *[Laughter]*

And as you know, in all cultures, at all time, sharing a meal, being together, having a dinner is one of the strongest expressions of trust, of friendship, and of family. And tonight we are a family—the big transatlantic NATO family—with our closest friends, with our friends from Ukraine, with our friends from the Asia-Pacific. So, therefore, this is really a big extended family dinner.

And we are so happy also because we are here together with our spouses and our partners. And it's not always easy to be married to a politician. But, therefore, we are extremely grateful that you have joined us tonight and during the summit and that we can spend this evening together.

We are not a normal family with totally normal friends and partners—*[laughter]*—because we are a military alliance with close partners that we work together with every day. So, therefore, a toast for the most successful, the strongest, and the longest lasting alliance in history.

Yes. Okay. A toast, then. *[Laughter]* Thank you so much.

Yes. Okay, okay, okay, okay. Thank you.

[A White House aide handed President Biden and Secretary General Stoltenberg glasses.]

Okay.

So cheers for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, NATO.

[Secretary General Stoltenberg offered a toast.]

President Biden. All right. Hear! Hear!

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 8 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 11.

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