

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2025

Commencement Address at the United States Military Academy in West Point, New York

May 24, 2025

The President. Well, I want to thank you very much. This is a beautiful place. I've been here many times, going to high school not so far away. Good—a good place. Also a military academy—not quite of this distinction, but it was a lot of fun for me.

And I just want to say hello, cadets. And on behalf of our entire nation, let me begin by saying congratulations to the West Point Class of 2025. You are winners, every single one of you. Thank you.

And now we want you to relax, and I'm supposed to say, "At ease," but you're already at ease. [*Laughter*] You're at ease because you've made a great choice in what you're doing. Your choices in life has been really amazing. So this is a celebration, and let's have a little fun.

I want to thank your highly respected Superintendent, General Steven Gilland. And he is really something. I got to know him backstage with his beautiful family, and his reputation—his wife is just incredible. His reputation is unbelievable. And thank you very much. And your daughter is a winner also, just like everybody out there. A real winner. Thank you. Thank you.

I also want to thank your Commandant, General R.J. Garcia; Secretary of the Army, Dan Driscoll; Army Chief of Staff, General Randy George; Senator Ashley Moody; Representatives Steve Womack, Bill Huizenga, Pat Ryan, Mark Green, Keith Self; Acting U.S. Attorney Alina Habba; and very much, just, all of the friends.

We have a lot of friends in the audience today, and I just want to thank them all for being here. We have a tremendous amount of my friends. They wanted to come up, and they wanted to watch this ceremony. And they wanted to watch you much more so than me. So I just want to thank so many people are here.

Over the past 4 years, an extraordinary group of professors, teachers, coaches, leaders, and warriors have transformed this class of cadets into an exceptional group of scholars and soldiers. And so let's give the entire group, the entire West Point faculty, the staff, for their incredible love of you and outstanding devotion to the corps, let's give them a little hand.

And importantly, we can't forget all of those people beaming with pride. Look at them in the audience. Oh, they're so proud. They're in the stands. So thank your parents, your grandparents, and family members who made this all possible for you. Thank you. And I think they must have done something right, based on what I'm looking at.

America loves our military moms and dads. Nearly one-third of the cadets graduating today are themselves the children of veterans. So, to everyone with us this morning who served America in uniform, no matter your age, please stand so we can salute your service. We'd like to see who you are. [*Applause*] Congratulations. Great job.

Every cadet on the field before me should savor this morning, because this is a day that you will never, ever forget. In a few moments, you'll become graduates of the most elite and storied military academy in human history, and you will become officers in the greatest and most powerful army the world has ever known. And I know, because I rebuilt that Army and I rebuilt the military. And we rebuilt it like nobody has ever rebuilt it before, in my first term.

Your experience here at West Point has been anything but easy, but you do not come to the U.S. Military Academy for the word "easy." You came for excellence. You came for duty. You came to serve your country. And you came to show yourselves, your family, and the world that you are among the smartest, toughest, strongest, most lethal warriors ever to walk on this planet.

Looking out at all of you today, I can proudly say: Mission accomplished. *[Applause]* Great job.

But now you have to go on. You have to forget that, because now you have another. It's a sad thing, isn't it? You know? Can't rest on your laurels. No matter what, you just have to keep going. You take it, you take a little day off, and you go on to the rest, because you have to have victory after victory after victory, and that's what you're going to have as you receive your commissions as second lieutenants.

Each of you continues down the same hallowed path walked by titans and legends of U.S. military lore—giants like Ulysses S. Grant, John "Black Jack" Pershing, Dwight David Eisenhower, the one and only Douglas MacArthur, "Old Blood and Guts" George Patton, and "Stormin'" Norman Schwarzkopf. All great. So many more.

They and countless other patriots before you have walked out of these halls and straight into history. And today, you officially join those immortal heroes in a proud ranks of the Long Gray Line. You know that term. So beautiful. The Long Gray Line.

Among the 1,000 cadets graduating today, 26 of you wear the prestigious Star Wreath, signifying the highest level of academic achievement. Please stand up. Twenty-six. Let's see if somebody stands who shouldn't be standing.

Congratulations. That's a big honor.

This class includes an incredible four Rhodes Scholars. Stand up, please. Four. Wow. That's tied for the most of any West Point class since 1959. That's great. Four. Congratulations. Boy, oh, boy, oh, boy. I want to bring them right to the Oval Office. *[Laughter]* I don't want to have them go too far away from me.

Eight cadets here today took on the challenge of designing their own hypersonic rocket. Oh, we can use you. *[Laughter]* We're building them right now. You know, we had ours stolen. We had—we are the designer of it. We had it stolen. During the Obama administration, they stole it.

Audience members. Ohh!

The President. You know who stole it? The Russians stole it. Something bad happened. But we're now—we're the designer of it, and we're now building them and lots of them. And earlier this year, they launched it into space, setting a world record for amateur rocketry. Can't get you in there fast enough.

This class excelled not only mentally, but also physically.

Last January, when more than 1,000 cadets volunteered for an 18½-mile march on a freezing winter night, Cadet Chris Verdugo completed the task in 2 hours and 30 minutes flat, smashing the international record for the competition by 13 minutes. Where is he? Where is he? Come up here. Come up here, Chris. Get up here, Chris. Wow. Come here. That's—by 13 minutes? Come here, Chris. I want to see this guy.

Wow. Thirteen minutes. That's *[inaudible]*.

Say something. Come here. Come here.

Cadet Chris Verdugo. *[Laughter]* It's been a long 5 years, but I couldn't have done it without any of these guys. Love you, guys, all. All right. Thank you. Thank you.

The President. Wow. That's great. Keep it going, Chris. That really is the definition of "Army Strong," isn't it? Beat international—international.

This class includes 513 graduates who completed air assault school, 70 who completed airborne school, 8 who made it through the ultra-elite Army diver school, among the most difficult and grueling programs anywhere on Earth.

That includes the first two women in West Point history to complete diver school, Cadets Megan Cooper and Clara Sabo. Where are you? Stand up. *[Applause]* Where are they, huh? Wow. Great job. That is not easy. Congratulations, Megan, Clara. That's a job well done. Fantastic. Thank you very much.

Some of you achieved a different kind of distinction here at the academy, including seven "Century Men"—*[laughter]*—who completed 100 hours of marching for disciplinary—oh, no—infractions. No, don't tell me I'm doing this. Oh, I'm so sorry. Would you like to stand up? I don't know. *[Laughter]*

I think I saw Chris standing up. Chris, what—*[laughter]*—what's going on here? Well, you had one good, one not so good. Right, Chris? Can't believe Chris is standing up.

But we want everyone to leave here today, Chris—so you're going to be okay, because I'm going to do something—with a clean slate. So, in keeping with tradition, I hereby pardon all cadets on restriction for minor conduct offenses, effective immediately. So you're all okay. You're all okay.

The class of 2025 is a lot to be proud of, including your first-rate athletes and athletics. You are something. I've been watching too. I watch. I love the sports stuff. What you've done is pretty amazing.

Last year, for the first time ever, Army lacrosse became the number-one ranked men's lacrosse team in the entire country. Look at that. Those of you on the team, stand. That's a big honor. Stand. Great. That's a tough sport too. That's number one in the country.

Your sophomore year, Army football beat Navy 20–17. And the next year, you did it again, beating Navy 17 to 11 and dominating Air Force 23 to 3. But this year, the Black Knights fought your way into the top 20 nationally and racked up your longest winning streak since 1949 with the help of graduating quarterback Cadet Bryson Daily, or, as you call him, "Captain America." Captain America. Stand up, Bryson.

Where is Bryson? We've got to get him up here, right? Come on, Bryson.

Come one. Man, oh, man.

I heard—I heard he some—well, I came to a game, and he was—I said, "Yes, he can get into the NFL, can't he?" But he chose this life. And you know what? *[Laughter]* I think he made a good choice. Come on up here, Bryson. Come on up. Wow.

Congratulations. *[Inaudible]* Say something, please.

Cadet Bryce Daily. Go Army football. Shout-out to Hogs, H4. Can't wait to graduate. Love you, guys.

The President. Fantastic. Anything we can do, let me know. Okay? It's a great honor.

Cadet Daily. Thank you. *[Inaudible]*

The President. What a great guy.

Boy, I just tapped his shoulder. It's like I hit a piece of steel. *[Laughter]* Guy is in good shape. There's a reason—you know, there's always a reason for success. Thank you, Bryson.

At a time when other top college quarterbacks were thinking about going pro, Bryson's mind was on something else. As he told an interviewer earlier this year, "I'm focused on my career as an infantry officer." That's what he wants to do.

So, Bryson, you did the right thing, and that's service at its finest. Thanks, Bryson. That's amazing. He's an amazing guy with an amazing team.

Each of you on the field today is among the most talented members of your generation. You could have done anything you wanted. You could have gone anywhere. You could have gone to any school. This is one of the hardest schools to get into.

And writing your own ticket to top jobs on Wall Street or Silicon Valley wouldn't be bad, but I think what you're doing is better. Instead of sports teams and spreadsheets and software, you chose a life of service—very important service—instead of stock options. And I do that stuff. It's sort of boring. *[Laughter]* Honestly, compared to what you're doing, it's real boring.

You chose honor, and you chose sacrifice. And instead of business suits and dress shoes, you chose muddy boots and fatigues, keeping yourself in shape, because West Point cadets don't just have the brightest minds; you also have the bravest hearts and the noblest souls. You're amazing people.

I could not be more proud to serve you as your Commander in Chief. And our country is doing well. We've turned it around. Very quickly, we've turned it around.

I just got back from the Middle East. And I was at, as you know, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, U.A.E. And I will tell you, they said—all three leaders, great leaders of those three nations—they all said the same thing: The United States of America is hotter now than we've ever seen it, and a year ago, it was as cold as it gets. And it's true. It's true.

We have the hottest country in the world, and the whole world is talking about it. That's an honor for all of us.

I cannot wait to see the glory that is still ahead, however, for the West Point class of 2025. And we're going to help you a lot, because we're going to give you a nation as good or better than it ever was. That's what I promise you.

All the victories that you've had together on these grounds will soon pale in comparison to the momentous deeds that you'll perform on the mission you're accepting today and as a future leader of America's Army.

And we have that army geared up. We have ordered—you know, we just—one—\$1 trillion military budget, General. Do you know that? One trillion. Some people say, "Could you cut it back?" I said, "I'm not cutting 10 cents. There's another thing we can cut. We can cut plenty of others." Right, Dan? We can cut plenty of other things.

And you have a good man in Dan, too, General. I think you're going to find that.

It's a very different warfare out there today. Now they've introduced a thing called "drone." A drone is a little bit different. It makes—you have to go back and learn a whole new form of warfare, and you're going to do it better than anybody else. There won't be anybody close.

Generation after generation, the men and women of the Army have done whatever it takes to defend our flag, pouring out their blood onto the fields of battle all over the world, and all over the world, you're respected like nobody is respected. Our soldiers have sprinted through storms of bullets, clouds of shrapnel; slogged through miles of dirt and oceans of sand; scaled towering cliffs of jagged rock. And time and time again, the American soldier has charged into the fires of hell and sent the devil racing in full retreat.

No task has ever been too tough for America's Army, and now that 250-year legacy of glory and triumph belongs to you, the 1,000 newest officers of the greatest fighting force in the history of the world. And that's what you are, and that's what you're being thought of again.

You are the first West Point graduates of the golden age of America. This is the golden age, I tell you. Promise. We're in a new age. This is the golden age.

And you are the—going to lead the Army to summits of greatness it has never reached before. And you see that. You see what's happening. You see what's going on in the world.

Each of you is entering the officer corps at a defining moment in the Army's history. For at least two decades, political leaders from both parties have dragged our military into missions it was never meant to be. It wasn't meant to be. People would say: "Why are we doing this? Why are we wasting our time, money, and souls, in some case?" They sent our warriors on nation-building crusades to nations that wanted nothing to do with us, led by leaders that didn't have a clue in distant lands, while abusing our soldiers with absurd ideological experiments here and at home.

All of that's ended. You know that. All of it's ended. It's ended. Strongly ended. They're not even allowed to think about it anymore.

They subjected the Armed Forces to all manner of social projects and political causes, while leaving our borders undefended and depleting our arsenals to fight other countries' wars. We fought for other countries' borders, but we didn't fight for our own border. But now we do—like we have never fought before, by the way.

But under the Trump administration, those days are over. We're getting rid of the distractions, and we're focusing our military on its core mission: crushing America's adversaries, killing America's enemies, and defending our great American flag like it has never been defended before.

The job of the U.S. Armed Forces is not to host drag shows, to transform foreign cultures, or to spread democracy to everybody around the world at the point of a gun. The military's job is to dominate any foe and annihilate any threat to America, anywhere, anytime, and anyplace.

A big part of that job is to be respected again, and you are, as of right now, respected more than any army anywhere in the world. And that's happening, and I can tell you, you are respected like nobody can believe.

As President, I am laser-focused on our core national interests. My preference will always be to make peace and to seek partnership, even with countries where our differences may be profound.

As you know, we're working on a lot of things right now. When I left office 4 years ago, we had no wars; we had no problems. We had nothing but success. We had the most incredible economy, the greatest—single greatest economy for a President in history. I think we're going to beat it this time by a lot, if you want to know the truth. But we had something going on very special.

But if the United States or its allies are ever threatened or attacked, the Army will obliterate our opponents with overwhelming strength and devastating force. That's why my administration has begun a colossal buildup of the United States armed forces, a buildup like we've never had before. Peace through strength. You know the term. I've used it a lot.

Because as much as you want to fight, I'd rather do it without having to fight. I just want to look at them and have them fold. And that's happening. That's happening.

And I've approved a \$1 trillion investment, and that will be, again, the largest ever in the history of our country. And we are buying you new airplanes—brandnew, beautiful planes; redesigned planes; brandnew planes; totally stealth planes.

I hope they're stealth. I don't know. That whole stealth thing, I'm sort of wondering. "You mean, if we shape a wing this way, they don't see it, but the other way they see it?" [Laughter] I'm not so sure, but that's what they tell me.

We have the best tanks anywhere in the world. We're going to start shipbuilding again. We're going to start ship—we used to build a ship a day. Now we don't build them anymore. We had a lot of people that didn't know much about getting things built, but that's all I've done in my life is build.

We're going to have the best missiles—we already do—drones, and much, much more. And earlier this week—I think you'll like this—I announced that we are officially building all in America, made in America, designed in America. We're the only ones that could do it, because we're the only ones with the great technology.

We're building the Golden Dome missile defense shield to protect our homeland and to protect West Point from attack. And it will be completed before I leave office.

And you know, you wouldn't think this, but our enemies are very unhappy about it. You've been hearing, you've been reading: "Why are they doing that? Why?" Well, we're doing it because we want to be around for a long time. That's why we're doing it.

We're also restoring the fundamental principle that a central purpose of our military is to protect our own borders from invasion. Our country was invaded for the last 4 years, and they've allowed people to come into our country that shouldn't be. They shouldn't be here. Criminals walk in—no vetting, no check-in, no nothing. Where are they coming from?

And they were taking people out of prisons, they were taking gang members, they were taking the mentally insane and allowing them to come in. And we're getting them out of our country. We have no choice. We're getting them out and bringing them back where they came from. Have no choice.

And it's not easy. It's not easy. But hopefully, the courts will allow us to continue.

You know, we had the greatest election victory. This was—November 5 was—we won the popular vote by millions of votes. We won all seven swing States. We won everything. We won 2,750 districts against 505—2,750 against 505. We had a great mandate, and it gives us the right to do what we want to do to make our country great again, and that's what we're going to do.

And on day one, I deployed our military to the southern border, and since that day, we've reduced the number of illegal border crossings. Where there used to be hundreds of thousands of people coming into our country a day, we had nobody come in. In the last week and a half, we were at 99.999 percent—99.999. Think of that. That was with the help of our military.

We had one person come in. One. You know why? He got very sick, and we brought him through to have him brought to a hospital. One person. And for that, please don't hold me responsible. But that's okay. They did the right thing.

Gone are the days where defending every nation but our own was the primary thought. We are putting America first. We have to put America first. We have to rebuild and defend our nation.

And very shortly, you're going to see a nation better than it's ever been.

And you see that with the trade. For years, we've been ripped off by every nation in the world on trade. We've been ripped off at the NATO level. We've been ripped off like no country has ever been ripped off.

But they don't rip us off anymore. They're not going to rip us off anymore. And you're seeing it. You have to watch what we're doing on trade. I know it's not your primary thing, but it's quite important, in all fairness. But watch. You'll see what's going on. You've been reading about it over the last few days.

We're making deals with other nations that were not even—nobody thought it would be even possible. And the reason is very simple: They respect us again. They're respecting our country again. That's what you want.

In everything we do, we are bringing common sense back to America. It's all about common sense. We can say we're liberal, we're conservative. The new word is "progressive." They don't like using the word "liberal" anymore. That's why I call them liberal. But—[laughter]—but whatever you are, you know, most importantly, you have to have common sense because most of it—General, most of it's about common sense, when you get right down to it. And we have a lot of people with a lot of—lot of very smart people, but they have to have common sense.

And we've liberated our troops from divisive and demeaning political trainings. There will be no more critical race theory or "transgender for everybody" forced onto our brave men and women in uniform or on anybody else, for that matter, in this country. And we will not have men playing in women's sports, if that's okay.

I mean, I wouldn't want to have to tackle, as an example, Bryson as a man, but I don't think a lot of women want to tackle him. [Laughter] I don't think so. How crazy is it? Men playing in women's sports, how crazy is it? So ridiculous. So demeaning. So demeaning to women. And it's over. That's over. We've ended it.

And promotions and appointments will not be based on politics or identity. They'll be based on merit. We won that case in the Supreme Court of the United States. We're allowed to go back to a system of merit. We're a merit-based country again.

Today, morale in the Armed Forces is soaring to the highest levels in many decades. After years of recruiting shortfalls—and we had years and years of recruiting shortfalls, and just last year was the worst of all. The last year of the Biden administration, we couldn't get anybody to join our military. We couldn't get anybody to join our police or firefighters. We couldn't get anybody to join anything.

And right now, just less than a year later, we just set a brandnew peacetime recruiting record, the most people joined, and we are brimming. In fact, be careful. There's somebody going to try and take your job. Be careful. You'd better be good. We are brimming with confidence, and we're brimming with people.

We had the most—best recruiting month that we've had in memory. Nobody remembers anything like it. And that's all because they have spirit now. They have spirit. They have a spirit for our country.

And now everybody wants to be doing what you're doing. Think of that. So, it's really a great honor, I will say.

And I'm pleased to report that by next week, the Army is expected to surpass its recruiting targets for the entire year, something that hasn't happened in 28 years, where we've had that. So, that's pretty good.

And it's nice to know that you're doing something that everybody wants to do. Isn't it really nice?

It wasn't—I hated to hear that. During the campaign, I was hearing that, that the—you couldn't get people to enlist, but now we're getting people. And it's sad, because we're telling so many people: "I'm sorry. We can't do it."

My administration is doing everything possible to forge the most powerful military ever built. But ultimately, the task of keeping America strong and safe in the years ahead is going to belong to you.

Among you are the lieutenants, majors, colonels, and generals who will lead the Army for the next 10, 20, 30, and even 40 years. So, as Commander in Chief, let me offer a few words of advice as you begin your Army careers. And I thought I'd do this, and I can make this to a civilian audience or to a military audience. It's pretty much the same. And I did this recently at Ohio State [University of Alabama; White House correction], and they really liked it. I gave them a little advice as to what I see for what you want to do and some tips.

And first of all—and you've already done it. Different from civilians. They're making their decision right now. You've already made your decision—I love your decision. You have to do what you love. You have to do what you love. If you don't love it, you'll never be successful at it. And you've done this, and you really—many of you in the audience, many of you that are graduating, you come from military backgrounds or you love the military. It's what you want to do. It's what you want to talk about.

One thing I see about people that love the military, that's all they want to talk about. I'll be out to dinner, and generals, if they—if they love their job—usually the only good ones are the ones that want to talk about it all the time. *[Laughter]* But if they talk, that's what they want to talk about. I really, very rarely see somebody who's successful that doesn't love what he or she does. You have to love what you do.

In your case, the military is what you chose. And I'll tell you what, you cannot go wrong. You're going to see it too. You're going to love it more and more with time.

You know, I work all the time. That's all I do, is I work, whether it's politically or before that, I did—I was a very good businessman, in case you haven't heard. Really good. But I was good because I loved it. I loved it.

I learned from my father a little bit. My father was a happy guy and all he did was work. He'd work Saturdays, Sundays. He'd work all the time. And he was a happy guy. He just loved life.

And I learned that. I'd say, "You know, it makes him happy." I've seen other people that never work, and they're not happy. But you've got to love it. Otherwise, you won't be successful.

In the Army, there are a lot of different paths you can take, so follow your instincts and make sure that you take the path that you love, that you're doing something that you love within your military. You will be happier, and the Army will be far stronger for it.

Second is to think big. Always think big. If you're going to do something, you might as well think big, do it big, because it's just as tough, and sometimes it's a lot easier thinking big than doing a small task that's more difficult.

One of your greatest graduates, General Eisenhower, used to say, "Whenever I run into a problem that I can't solve, I always like to make it bigger," to solve it and solve more of it. If you're going to solve a problem, it might as well be a big problem, as opposed to a small problem that lots of people can take advantage of and solve.

So you can achieve something really amazing. Think big.

Third, though—you've got to do this. Brain power, you have to have. Potential, you have to have. But to be really successful, you're always going to have to work hard.

An example is a great athlete, Gary Player, great golfer. He wasn't as big as the other men that were playing against him—great, big, strong guys. Gary was a smaller guy. I don't want to say too small. He's a friend of mine. He gets a little angry at people because he hits the ball just as far. He said: "I hit the ball further than them. Why am I small?"

But he worked very, very hard. He was always doing exercise. He was always—he was well ahead of his time. He never stopped. He won 168 golf tournaments. He won 18 majors, 9 regular and 9 on the senior tour—18 with 168. That's the most tournaments—internationally, the most tournaments anybody's ever won.

But he made a statement years ago, and I heard it. I heard it. He's the first one. I think I've heard it a couple of times since, but he was the first. He said, "It's funny, the harder I work, the luckier I get." And think of that. "The harder I work, the luckier I get."

And he worked hard, and you're working hard, and the harder you work, the luckier you're going to get.

Fourth is don't lose your momentum. Momentum is an amazing thing. Keep it going.

I tell a story sometimes about a man who was a great, great real estate man. He was a man who was admired for real estate all over the world, actually, but all over the country. He built Levittowns. He started as a man who built 1 house, then he built 2, then he built 5, then he built 20, then he built a thousand, then he built 2,000 and 3,000 a year. And he got very big. Very big. He was great at what he did. You see them all over the country, still—Levittowns. This was a long time ago.

But he was the first of the really, really big homebuilders. And he became very rich. Became a very rich man. And then he decided to sell. He was offered a lot of money by a big conglomerate, Gulf and Western—big conglomerate. They didn't do real estate. They didn't know anything about it, but they saw the money he was making, they wanted to take it to a public company, and they gave him a lot of money—tremendous amount of money, more money than he ever thought he'd get. And he sold his company.

And he had nothing to do. He ended up getting a divorce, found a new wife. Could you say a trophy wife? I guess we can say a trophy wife. It didn't work out too well. But it doesn't—and that doesn't work out too well, I must tell you. *[Laughter]* A lot of trophy wives, doesn't work out. But it made him happy for a little while, at least.

But he found a new wife. He sold his little boat, and he got a big yacht. He had one of the biggest yachts anywhere in the world. He moved for a time to Monte Carlo, and he led the good life. And time went by, and he got bored. And 15 years later, the company that he sold to called him, and they said, "The housing business is not for us."

You have to understand, when Bill Levitt was hot, when he had momentum, he'd go to the job sites every night. He'd pick up every loose nail. He'd pick up every scrap of wood. If there was a bolt or a screw laying in the ground, he'd pick it up, and he'd use it the next day in putting together a house.

But now he was spoiled, and he was rich. He was really rich. And they called, and they said: "This isn't for us, this business. We need to do other things. Would you like to buy it back? We'll sell it back to you cheap." And they did. He bought it. He bought it. He thought he made a great deal, and he was all excited.

But it was 15 years later. He lost a lot of momentum. Remember the word "momentum." And he lost everything. It just didn't work. He lost everything.

And I was sitting at a party on Fifth Avenue one night a long time ago, and you had the biggest people in New York, the biggest people in the country, all in that party, and they were all saluting each other, how great they were. They were all telling each other, "I'm greater than you." Gets to be really—gives you a headache sometimes. But they had all these people there telling their own stories about how fantastic—a cocktail party.

And I looked over—and I was doing well. I was—I don't know, I was invited to the party, so I had to be doing well. I was very, very young, but I made a name in real estate. And I looked over, and at the party, sitting in a corner all by himself—nobody was talking to him—was Mr. Levitt. He had just gone bankrupt, lost everything. He had lost everything—his home, everything.

And I went over and talked to him, because he was in the real estate business, and I loved real estate. And I said: "Hello, Mr. Levitt. How are you?" He said: "Hello, Donald. It's nice to meet you." He knew me from being in the business. I said, "So how's it going?" He goes: "Not well. It's really not going well, as you've probably read. It's been a very, very tough period for me, son."

And I said: "So what happened? It's just—anything you can do?" He goes, "No, there's not a thing I can do." He said—I'll never forget. He said: "I've lost my momentum. I just didn't have it. I used to have it, but I lost my momentum."

So it's a story I tell, and you have to know when you have the momentum, but sometimes you have to also know when you've lost the momentum. And leaving a field sometimes, leaving what you're doing sometimes is okay. But you've got to have momentum, but you have to know if that momentum is gone. You have to know when to say it's time to get out.

And it's a very sad story. I remember that story so well, like it was yesterday.

Fifth, you have to have the courage to take risks and to do things differently. Eisenhower, again, was threatened with court martials as a young officer for advocating a new doctrine of tank warfare. Billy Mitchell was thrown out of the Army for pioneering the use of air power. They said: "What do you mean air power? Don't be ridiculous."

People willing to try and do things differently, it's never going to be easy for them, but they're the ones that are going to really do the important things. They're the ones who are going to make history. So don't be ashamed, and don't be afraid.

This is a time of incredible change, and we do not need an officer corps of careerists and yes-men and people that want to keep it going the way it's been, because it changes rapidly, especially what you're doing, because, believe it or not, you're in a business and profession where things change as rapidly, like warfare—the type of warfare.

Unfortunately, we're getting to see it with Russia and Ukraine, and we're studying it, and it's a very terrible thing to study. But we're seeing the different forms of warfare. We're seeing the drones that are coming down at angles and with speed and with precision. We've never seen anything like it. We've never seen anything like it. And we're learning from it.

But your profession changes very rapidly. You've got to keep—you've got to be at the top of it. You've got to be right at the—at the head of the needle.

We need patriots with guts and vision and backbone who take personal risks to ensure that America wins every single time. We want to win our battles.

You know, I defeated ISIS in 3 weeks. They told me it would take 5 years. And the general that did it—you know that story—was named "Razin" Caine. His name is Dan Caine, but his

nickname was "Razin" Caine. I said, "Your name is 'Razin' Caine? I love that. Is that a nickname?" "That's what they call me, sir." "I love you, General. I think you're the guy I'm looking for. I want to know a guy named "Razin" Caine." And he is now the head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and he's a highly respected man.

And we defeated—think of it. ISIS, they said—I said, "How long?" in Washington. "Sir, it will take 4 years to defeat them, maybe 5. And maybe we won't, because they're all over the place." And then I met a man that said we can do it in 3 weeks, and he did it. Three weeks. And that's why he's the head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff right now.

And we did things that nobody thought were possible. We've had great military success. When you have the right leader and you have the right people—and we have the right people—you're going to have tremendous success.

Sixth, never lose your faith in America and the American people, because they're always going to be there for you. I went through a very tough time with some very radicalized, sick people. And I say I was investigated more than the great, late Alphonse Capone. Alphonse Capone was a monster. He was a very hardened criminal. I went through more investigations than Alphonse Capone, and now I'm talking to you as President. Can you believe this? *[Applause]* Can you believe it?

So you've got to fight hard, and you got to never give up. And don't let bad people take you down. You've got to let them—you've got to take them down. Got a lot of bad people out there, and those people, you have to figure it out. But you also have a lot of great people.

Finally, hold on to your culture and your traditions because that's what makes something really great, and that's what's made the Army great, the culture and the tradition.

Whether we're talking about a battalion, a business, a sports team, or even a nation, history has shown that, in many ways, culture is destiny. So, do not let anyone destroy the culture of winning. You have to win.

Winning is a beautiful thing. Losing, not for us. It's not for us. Not for anybody here. If it was, you wouldn't be here.

From the earliest days of our Nation, this supreme tradition of American military service has been passed down from soldier to soldier and generation to generation, and it's a beautiful thing to watch. Graduating today is Cadet Ricky McMahon. Ricky's great grandfather—stand up, wherever you are, Ricky, because you're going to like this. Ricky's great-grandfather served in World War I. His grandfather served in World War II. And his uncle, father, and mother all graduated from West Point. Where is Ricky?

In 2004, when Ricky was just a little, little tiny boy—who would think about that? Ricky, a little, tiny boy—his dad, Lieutenant Colonel Michael McMahon made the ultimate sacrifice for our nation in Afghanistan. Today, Lieutenant Colonel McMahon rests not far from here in the West Point Cemetery.

Last year, two decades after losing his father, Ricky placed a gold chip from his dad's 1985 class ring into a crucible, along—87 other rings were with it—of past West Point grads that were melted down to forge those now worn by the class of 2025. Do you all know that? Do you know that, what you're wearing? I want one. Ricky, I want one.

Each of you will carry Michael's memory with you always, as you continue the legacy he gave you. And gave you something that would be so proud—he would be so proud. He is proud, as he looks down.

To Ricky and his mom Jeanette, you embody what this place is all about. And I know Michael, he's up there—he's smiling broadly, so proud. He's so proud of you today. You know that. And he's a man that couldn't be—and he is a man that couldn't be more proud.

And I want to just—I just love that story. And everybody's ring, they're going to remember you. They're going to remember your family. And most importantly, you're going to remember a great tradition. It's a great tradition of West Point and of winners.

Thank you very much. It's great to meet you. Thank you. You can sit down. You want to come up? If you want to come up, come up. Come on up. Come on up here.

That's nice. You're a handsome guy. They're all good-looking here. I don't know what's going on. The whole crowd is beautiful. Thank you very much.

What a great—fantastic. Say a few words.

Cadet Dennis "Ricky" McMahon IV. I'd like to thank my mother. I'd like to thank my family. And I'd like to thank G3. Go Gophers.

Thank you, sir. [*Inaudible*]

The President. These are good-looking people, I'll tell you, General. What's going on over here? Look like all a bunch of male models. I can't stand it. [*Laughter*]

For two and a half centuries, our Republic has endured because of heroes like Michael, who've laid down their lives for America, and because young people like all of you have picked up the banner of service and carried forward the flag of freedom.

From Lexington to Yorktown, from Gettysburg to Sicily, and from Inchon to Fallujah, America has been won and saved by an unbroken chain of soldiers and patriots who ran to the sound of the guns, leapt into the maw of battle, and charged into the crucible of fire to seize the crown of victory, no matter the odds, no matter the cost, no matter the danger.

All over the world, our soldiers have made sacred the ground where they shed their blood and showed their valor, from Seminary Ridge to San Juan Hill, Belleau Wood, Omaha Beach, Leyte Gulf, and Ardennes Forest, Chosin Reservoir—all over—and even a place called Pork Chop Hill. And in all of those battles and so many more, some of the best, brightest, and bravest have come from right here at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, one of the great, fabled places anywhere in the world.

America's Army has never failed us, and with leaders like the West Point class of 2025, the Army will never fail. We will never let you down.

And over the last week, I had the honor of speaking to the heads of many countries, and they would say—2 weeks ago, they say—the 8th. They said, "Sir, we're celebrating the victory today of World War II." And I said, "Wow. That's nice." Then I'd call another one, unrelated, "Sir, we're celebrating the victory of World War II." Then I called up the President of France on something also unrelated. He said, "Sir, we're celebrating our victory over World War II." I said, "Whoa, whoa. What have we here?" [*Laughter*] We helped them a lot. [*Laughter*]

And I had this—Russia, I talked to Putin about ending that terrible war that's going on. And he said they're having a big victory march. And they did lose, in all fairness, 51 million people.

But they were all celebrating. The only country that wasn't celebrating was the United States of America. And I said, "Isn't that amazing?" We were the ones that won the war. And we were helped. We were helped. In some cases, we had to help them. But we were helped by some of the nations, and we were strongly helped by a couple of them. But every one of them was celebrated.

They had Victory Day. They called it Victory Day in Europe, Victory Day all over. And we weren't even thought about. Nobody had a Victory Day.

And so I named that special day and another special day, from now on, as a holiday, but a holiday where we work, because we don't have enough days. We're going to be having so many holidays, we're not going to be able to work anymore. But I named it for World War II and a separate day in November, as you know, for World War I.

I said, "You know, all of these countries that participated in the war are celebrating, but the greatest country of them all and the country that won the war, nobody even talked about." And so, we're going to be talking about it too from now on, and I think you'll appreciate it.

We won the First World War. We won the Second World War. And you know where we won them from? Right here at West Point. West Point won the war. You won two world wars and plenty of other things, but you were—think of it. We don't want to have a Third World War, but we won the First World War, we won the Second World War right here from West Point. And that's something.

And we're going to be talking about it. You know, they can talk about it. And in some cases, as you know, they didn't do too much to help. They were ground down, but they were celebrating victory. No, we're going to celebrate victory because we're the ones that won that war.

Standing before you today, I know that you will never stop, you will never quit, you will never yield, you will never tire. You will never, ever, ever surrender. Never give up. Remember that: Never give up. That's another little factor I could have added. Never, ever give up.

Raise your right hand. "I pledge I will never, ever give up." You can never give up. You can never give up. If you do, you're not going to be successful, because you'll go through things that will be bad. You're going to have great moments. You're going to have bad moments. You can never give up.

Through every challenge and every battle, you'll stand strong, you'll work hard, you'll stay tough, and you will fight, fight, fight and win, win, win.

So I want to just congratulate you all. I'm going back now to deal with Russia, to deal with China. [*Laughter*] What's that all about? That's an—and to get you lots of victories.

And we're going to keep winning. This country is going to keep winning. And with you, the job is easy.

I want to thank you all. Congratulations to the class of 2025. God bless you all. Incredible people.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:16 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Betsy Gilland, wife of U.S. Military Academy Superintendent Lt. Gen. Steven Gilland, USA; Sarah Cao, Shepherd Dzina, Gabriella Sorrentino, and Ava Spinar, 2025 U.S. Military Academy cadets who were named as Rhodes Scholars; King Muhammad bin Salman bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia; Amir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani of Qatar; President Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan of the United Arab Emirates; President Emmanuel Macron of France; and President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist organization. The transcript was released by the Office of Communications on May 27.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : U.S. Military Academy in West Point, NY, commencement address.

Locations: West Point, NY.

Names: Biden, Joseph R., Jr.; Caine, J. Daniel; Cao, Sarah; Cooper, Megan; Daily, Bryson; Driscoll, Daniel P.; Dzina, Shepherd; Garcia, R. J.; George, Randy; Gilland, Betsy; Gilland, Steven; Green, Mark E.; Habba, Alina; Huizenga, William P.; Macron, Emmanuel; McMahon, Dennis "Ricky," IV; McMahon, Jeanette; Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan; Moody, Ashley B.; Obama, Barack; Player, Gary J.; Putin, Vladimir Vladimirovich; Ryan, Patrick; Sabo, Clara; Salman bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud, King; Self, Keith A.; Sorrentino, Gabriella; Spinar, Ava; Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Amir; Verdugo, Chris; Womack, Stephen A.

Subjects: 2024 Presidential election; Armed Forces, U.S., funding; Armed Forces, U.S., recruitment efforts; Border security; France, President; Illegal immigration; Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist organization; Joint Chiefs of Staff; New York, President's visit; New York, U.S. Military Academy in West Point; North Atlantic Treaty Organization; President, President; Qatar, Amir; Russia, conflict in Ukraine; Saudi Arabia, King; Secretary of the Army; Sports, efforts to restrict transgender participation; Tariffs; Transgender athletes, efforts to restrict participation; U.S. attorneys; U.S. Military Academy in West Point, NY; U.S. military readiness, improvement efforts; U.S. missile defense, improvement efforts; U.S. servicemembers, service and dedication; Ukraine, Russian invasion and airstrikes; United Arab Emirates, President; Veterans, service and dedication; World War I Victory Day; World War II Victory Day.

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