

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2025

Remarks on National Purple Heart Day

August 7, 2025

The President. Thank you very much. Thank you. Please.

Nice crowd. I even hear a young, beautiful voice in the background, and that's good. That makes us all feel young. *[Laughter]*

The President's 200th Day in Office

I want to thank everybody for being here on the 200th day in office. This is 200 days already. Time flies. But we have a country that's the hottest country right now anywhere in the world. A year ago, it was in a lot of trouble. It's the hottest country, and a lot of the people in this room made it that way.

Perhaps the most successful and consequential first 200 days, they say, in—of an administration in history. So let's hope they keep saying it. There they are right there.

[At this point, the President motioned toward the press.]

And I hope they keep saying it. *[Laughter]*

National Purple Heart Day

But even more importantly, this is also National Purple Heart Day, and we're here to honor and celebrate the unyielding patriotism and grit and devotion to America's Purple Heart veterans. There's great emotion and great love. The Purple Heart dates back to August 7, 1782—that's a long time—when General George Washington awarded a heart-shaped purple cloth to three soldiers for outstanding gallantry and service in battle.

This afternoon, we're joined by dozens of Purple Heart recipients and their families. And, just as General Washington did 243 years ago, today we give our everlasting thanks to you and your unbelievable families. We want to thank you very much for being here. It's my great honor.

We're also joined by American patriots who love our military and our veterans, including Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth. You're doing a great job, Pete. Thank you. We're working hard together.

The Secretary of Veterans Affairs, with—Veterans Affairs, with 92-percent approval rating, I hear—that's a record—*[laughter]*—Doug Collins. Thank you very much, Doug.

The Director of National Intelligence, Tulsi Gabbard. She's got a lot of interesting things happening in the last—2 months. Lot of—keep it coming, Tulsi. Keep it coming.

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Dan Caine—my friend, who I knew a long time ago. He got rid of ISIS in record time. They said it was going to take 4 to 5 years. He did it in 4 weeks. That's when I said, "If I get into this again, I'm going to make him the chairman of the Joint Chiefs," and that's what happened. *[Laughter]* Great job. And he did an incredible job in Iran. I want to thank you very much. Great job, General.

Deputy Secretary of Energy and Purple Heart recipient, James Danly. James. Thank you very much, James. Great job.

And we have a Medal of Honor recipient, Captain Paris Davis. Thank you. Where—are you? Where might he be?

Medal of Honor recipient Paris D. Davis. Right here, sir.

The President. Oh, look at you. *[Laughter]* You're better looking than I am, I'll tell you that. Thank you very much. Thank you very much.

We're also joined by the Marine Corps veteran who comanaged my 2024 campaign, a fantastic talent in many ways, after he was wounded in battle for our country in Operation Desert Storm. Chris LaCivita. So, where is Chris? Where is Chris? Chris. Stand up, Chris, with your beautiful daughter Victoria.

Thank you very much for being—thank you very much for being with your father. It's very nice.

Every Purple Heart tells a story of courage, sacrifice, and purpose. It speaks of a price paid for the soldier beside you, the country behind you, and the generations of Americans yet to come, and we have some great generations to follow. It's going to happen.

Those who wear this medal ran into bullets, faced ferocious bombs, and shed their blood on the field of battle. We will never forget what they did. We will always use them as an example of bravery and courage and strength, and we will also always think, when we look at them, of our great American flag. We want our great American flag to be strong, and it's stronger than ever.

Since day one, my administration has used every power we have to fight for those who have fought for America. In 6 months, we have reduced the backlog of veterans waitings—and that waiting list was very long, Doug, wasn't it, huh?—for the benefits. And by—it's 37 percent. So it's just the—is that all you did, Doug? Thirty-seven? *[Laughter]* I don't know, huh?

That's incredible, actually. They gave me—you're getting tremendous marks, and we appreciate it very much.

We processed more than 2 million disability benefit claims this fiscal year, on track for the most ever. In fact, not even close. We're slashing wait times at the VA medical centers, and we're bringing back VA Choice and VA Accountability.

As you know, we had it, and then the previous administration—let's call it the Biden administration—they decided to get rid of it. And you know, Choice is where, if you wait in line for an extended period or you're not going to see a doctor for a while, you have the right to go out and get a doctor, and we'll pay for it, and you get yourself all fixed up real fast. You don't have to wait 6 weeks, 8 weeks, months, like they were doing.

And VA Accountability—I'm very proud of those. We got them passed. Actually, Doug, you were a Member of Congress when we did. You helped us a lot. But we got them passed in the legislature so they're with us forever, and yet Biden found a way to not use them.

But VA Accountability, that's when we have bad people in the veterans association that were taking advantage of people, hurting people. And they weren't in prime time. In prime time, they wouldn't have touched them, but they weren't quite in prime time, and they were doing bad things. They were sadists. They were thieves and some bad people. We had 9,000 of them. We fired every one of them, and it was a great thing.

And then he put some of those people back. I don't know why they did that, but they did it. But we got them out again, I think, Doug, right? So it's good. So we had VA Choice, VA Accountability—something we're very proud of.

I'm also working to keep my promise to end veterans' homelessness in America. In May, I signed an Executive order to open the National Center for Warrior Independence in Los Angeles, California, which will house up to 6,000 homeless vets. It's going to be beautiful.

And just last week, I signed the VA Home Loan Program Reform Act—a big deal—to help ensure no veteran is kicked out of their home for a late payment. If you're a little bit late, don't worry about it. And frankly, if you're a lot late, you don't have to worry about it either. You just—*[laughter]*—you just get it in when you can. Get it in when you can.

And America's veterans have done their duty for us, and under the Trump administration, we are doing our duty for you. Okay? That's the way it's supposed to be.

One of our brave soldiers with us today is Army veteran Specialist Kevin Jensen. In 2008, Specialist Jensen was a gunner in a Humvee, racing to support a platoon ambushed by the Taliban in Afghanistan. His vehicle was hit by a roadside bomb, flew 10 feet—he flew 10 feet up into the air—and exploded in flames. The whole—place was on flames, including, unfortunately, Kevin. But he suffered deep, third-degree burns and—all over his body. He was in trouble—big trouble.

Despite the agony, he selflessly ran to the aid of his platoon leader, who was engulfed or—just absolutely—everyone thought he was gone. He was engulfed in fire. "Sir, I've got you. I've got you, sir," Kevin shouted and pulled his friend to safety.

Specialist Jensen earned the Purple Heart, and he's here today with the platoon leader whose life he saved and our newly sworn-in VA Under Secretary for Medical Affairs, Captain Sam Brown. Kevin and Sam, please stand. And I know Sam very well. Sam is great. *[Inaudible]*

What a combination. He's okay, right? Huh?

Great, Sam. You look good. Thank you very much.

You got a—really, you did a great thing, because I got to know him and his really beautiful wife. You know, you're not allowed to say "beautiful" anymore. It's political suicide, they say. *[Laughter]* But I'll say it anyway. And the most beautiful family you've ever seen. And I just want to thank you for having done—and you for your great bravery. It's really great. Thank you both for being here. Appreciate it. Thank you.

Also with us is 24-year Army veteran Brian Willette. In 2010, Staff Sergeant Willette was conducting a resupply mission in Afghanistan when his vehicle was struck by a roadside bomb. You know who did the roadside bomb, right?

Audience member. Soleimani.

The President. Soleimani. Where is he? Where is he? Where is Soleimani? *[Laughter]*

[The President looked up toward the ceiling.]

He did. He was the father of the roadside bomb. They say 92 percent of the people who got either killed or badly hurt, it was Soleimani. He was the one that did it, more than anybody else by far.

Leaving this person very seriously injured. Seven months later, Brian's teenage son, Private Kevin Willette *[Nieves; White House correction]*, who was also deployed to Afghanistan, was standing guard when insurgent forces attacked with heavy fire. The grenade knocked him out and knocked him right to the ground. He was in big trouble, but Kevin rose to his feet and successfully repulsed the attack on his camp, earning both the Purple Heart and Bronze Star for valor.

And I'd like to ask Brian and Kevin to please stand, wherever you may be. Hi. How are you? How are you? Good job. *[Laughter]* Good job.

Two great people. I would say, these are different types, right? *[Laughter]* These are different types, right? But same blood. That's all we care—

Staff Sgt. Brian Willette. I'm Massachusetts. He's West Virginia. [Laughter]

The President. That's very good. You both—you both look great. Thank you both very much. Appreciate it.

We're also joined by Marine Corps veteran, Staff Sergeant Thomas Matteo, wounded six times during two tours in Vietnam. At the end of his first tour, shrapnel sliced open his abdomen, and he was left bleeding, and they thought he was gone. He was on the jungle floor for a long period of time, but he recovered and chose to go back and fight.

Thomas later continued to protect our citizens as police chief of Hialeah Gardens and Inverness. That's two good places. We love those places. We love Florida. Every time I ran there, I won, so I got to love it, right? [Laughter] Set records. We have the alltime record, Thomas.

And he was one of the very rare six-time recipients of the Purple Heart. Boy, you got hit. Where's Thomas? Six times. You've got to be kidding. That's pretty tough stuff. And look at you. You look fantastic.

So did it have any negative impact on you, would you say, now that you're recovered—fully recovered, would you say? Are you—do you get any extra aches and pains or anything?

Staff Sgt. Thomas Matteo. [Laughter] Two prosthetic knees, sir. [Inaudible]

The President. That's it. That's called an ache and a pain. [Laughter] That's right. I know. I have the whole list. It's amazing, and you look great.

Mr. Matteo. Thank you.

The President. Thank you very much. That's some list. Thank you. It's amazing. Amazing.

Last year, after an assassin tried to take my life in Butler, Pennsylvania, Thomas generously mailed me one of his Purple Hearts. Many of the other veterans showed me the same unbelievable gesture of kindness, including three-time Purple Heart recipient, John Ford and Gerald Enter, Jr., who also came along with us and did us a great, great favor.

Gerald, John, and Thomas, I want to thank you very much. What a great honor to get those Purple Hearts.

I guess, in a certain way, it wasn't that easy for me, either, when you think of it. But you went through a lot more than I did, and I appreciate it all very much. Thank you. Thank you all. Where are you? Stand up, please. Please. Thank you very much. Thank you very much. Thank you. Thank you. Great.

That was some day. That was some day we had together, though, huh? That was some day we had together. Thank you both very much. Thank you all.

From the very beginning, our Nation's fate has depended on heroes like those in the room who placed their bodies between the enemy fire and, really, that fire and the American freedom that we all love so much. Because of their sacrifice, today, our flag is still waving proudly, and our freedom is still safe and secure, and our future is looking brighter and greater than ever.

Our country is doing really well, and we're very proud of our country.

We had that mission—I watched those B-2 bombers with those pilots. We had them in the Oval Office, celebrating their incredible bravery and talent—pure talent. Every single bomb hit its mark perfectly, and then we had Tomahawks coming in—30 of them coming in from submarines that were 300 miles away. They all hit their mark too.

Look at the smile on you. You think that's—[laughter]—he's—that's your boy. He—look at his smile. [Laughter]

But it's pretty good, right? Pretty good. We had them, and we celebrated all together. We actually had 52 tankers. Can you imagine? We had a lot of the people over to the White House, to the gardens, and it was an incredible day. It was a day of celebration.

They've been looking to do that for 22 years. One of the pilots came up, said to me, "You know, we've been waiting for 22 years—my predecessors," because he was a young guy. But he said, "We've been practicing this three times a year for 22 years." Who knew that, Pete?

I said, "You mean you knew exactly what to do?" He said, "Every single year, three times a year, we'd practice for that specific event, and you were the one that had the guts to do it, send us on our way." And I said, "Were you happy or unhappy about the fact that I sent you?" He said, "We couldn't get into the planes fast enough," right? *[Laughter]*

Secretary of Defense Peter B. Hegseth. Yes, sir.

The President. I said, "Well, you guys are different." But they're really talented people and special. We've had some incredible success.

But I want to give a very special thanks to all of the Purple Heart recipients that are with us today and all over the country and all over the world, frankly. And I'll now sign the proclamation officially declaring this as National Purple Heart Day. A very special day.

Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you. Thank you.

[The President moved to the signing desk.]

I know who I'm giving this pen to. That guy right there, right? *[Laughter]* Right? He's six times.

[The President signed the proclamation.]

And that is not done by an autopen. *[Laughter]* It'd be nice, but no autopens, right?

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:56 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to White House Regional Communications Director Victoria LaCivita; former President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.; and Amy Brown, wife of Under Secretary of Veterans Affairs for Memorial Affairs Samuel B. Brown. He also referred to Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist organization. The transcript was released by the Office of Communications on August 8.

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