

Remarks on Signing a Proclamation on the Fourth Anniversary of the Terrorist Attack at the Abbey Gate in Kabul, Afghanistan, and an Exchange With Reporters
August 25, 2025

The President. Thank you very much.

This is a very special group of people. I've been with them from the beginning. Abbey Gate. You know Abbey Gate? One of the dumbest days in the history of our country, by a previous administration, getting out of a place that we shouldn't have been.

At a minimum, they should have been at Bagram, the big field——

Participant. That's right.

Participant. Mm-hmm. It's true.

The President. ——where, you know, we have hundreds of acres around it. Nobody's going to get near it. They left from a small airfield, and the consequences were horrible.

And these people have been my friends. They've been with me, and I've been with them a hundred percent. And we meet more than once a year, actually. I think our alltime meeting was in Bedminster when we played music, right?

Participant. Right.

Participant. Yes.

The President. Late into the night. They thought I'd be there maybe for 5 minutes, maybe not at all, and I showed up for, like, 4 hours. We're listening to music all night long. And they were all crying because they lost their loved ones, but—it's a lot of—it's 4 years. It's the 4-year anniversary.

So we're signing a proclamation honoring them and—honoring you and honoring your loved one. And so sad and so unnecessary.

And you know, what people don't know: There were a lot of other people killed, from the other side. I call that—you know, that's people killed. And the people that we also contact are—we have, like, 32—maybe more—but approximately 32 who lost their arms and their legs. And you know, it's—your kids didn't make it. They made it, but, boy, they got to go through hell. And we have 32—at a minimum 32.

And then you had hundreds of people killed, overall. You had hundreds of people killed that day. That was a rough day. We had 13 of our great ones, right?

Participant. Yes, sir.

The President. And somehow this group is just—we get together every once in a while.

So I just want to thank you.

We're 4 years now into this nightmare—we're—just a nightmare. I think that—that date also helped start the war with Putin and Ukraine, because he saw how incompetent our military was under Biden and under Milley and all these dopes—these dopey people.

And that's not our military. You see what our military is now: We knock the hell out of people, if we have to, or we settle because they don't want to play games with us.

But I just want to say I'm really honored to be with you again, and we'll be with each other for a long time. And your loved ones are looking down, and they're very proud.

This is the new and improved Oval Office. We had an Oval Office, which was still the Oval Office, so I don't want to disrespect it, but now it's very special. And you see what's happened, and everyone loves it. It's all the real-deal, 24-karat gold, and people come from all over. And I do believe they're serious. They're not rolling their eyes, you know—the roller of the eyes. But we don't have any of them.

And we brought the pictures up. They were in the vault. So those are pictures of some of our great presidents, a lot of them, they were in the vaults for over a hundred years, in many cases, and they were just there. Beautiful pictures, works of art.

Lincoln—that's Lincoln, Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Jackson. That's Monroe, of the Monroe document.

All mostly great Presidents. We have a couple of non—you have Benjamin Franklin, not a President, but we figured he'd make the cut. You know, right? *[Laughter]* You know, I would say—you know, he discovered electricity, a couple of other things too.

But we have a lot of great Presidents.

But think of it, they've been down there—there's George Washington, the big one—they've been down there for, in some cases, much more than a hundred years. And we brought them out. I went through the vaults myself. I spent hours down there looking.

That's in between Russia, Ukraine, China—*[laughter]*—all the other stuff. We do it.

I want to thank Doug Collins for being here, the secretary, who's done an unbelievable job. Thank you very much.

And, J.D., thank you very much.

Vice President James D. "J.D." Vance. Yes, sir.

The President. You've been fantastic. And all of the others.

Pete, good. We did a little thing with Pete about "Secretary of War" today, and it seemed to be well received. *[Laughter]* We'll do it a couple of more times, and, if everyone likes it, we'll make that change, Pete. You'll decide.

But I just want to thank everybody for being here—very special to me—a very special day. Four years is a very special time. And now it's lightening up, but it will never be really light. But there are some great souls that are looking down on you right now, and they're very proud of their parents and brothers and sisters and—but moms and dads, especially. That's what I seem to have dealt with, mostly. It's a tough—there's nothing tougher.

So thank you very much.

And the media, I want to thank you because you've been very respectful of this group of people, and they deserve it. They went through hell for no reason. It should have never happened.

And I'm going to sign the proclamation now, and we will have our—we will have a very special proclamation done and completed. Okay?

[At this point, the President signed the proclamation.]

Oh, that's a good one. *[Laughter]* That's a good one. We rate them. *[Laughter]* I don't put them under the autopen. I don't say, "Here, have the auto—here, have the autopen sign it." Right? We don't do that. I don't know how anybody was allowed to do that. They actually weren't.

Participant. Thank you, sir.

The President. Good one, right?

Participant. Yes.

The President. He asked a couple of good questions today. He's been very fair, actually. Okay.

Do you have any questions on this subject, please?

Department of Defense Review of U.S. Withdrawal From Afghanistan

Q. Mr. President——

The President. Yes.

Q. ——the Defense Secretary has ordered a review of the Afghanistan withdrawal. That is ongoing. I'm curious if you have any update on that review.

And then for the families: I know that there was frustration with previous investigations on Capitol Hill. Are you satisfied with the speed of this investigation thus far?

The President. Yes. Pete, do you want to answer that?

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

The President. Go ahead, please.

Secretary Hegseth. On behalf of this beautiful group, on behalf of these families, on behalf of your loved ones who fought for our Nation, America deserves answers as far as what happened in Afghanistan. The military needs to answer for what happened in Afghanistan.

So, upon the President's direction, immediately, we initiated an investigation, which showed that there needed an even deeper dive. So, Sean Parnell, our Pentagon spokesman, who himself is an Afghanistan veteran, is leading this effort. It's a top priority for us. We're getting access to all the documents necessary, why decisions were made, why they weren't made, why certain force protection measures were ignored.

Again, there's never been accountability for this. It's something that Joe Biden allowed to happen that never should have happened. Anybody who—any objective observer knows that's not how you leave a country.

And certainly, these families know better than anyone else. These families deserve answers. We're going to be honest about it. We're going to get to the bottom of it. Sean Parnell, an Afghanistan vet, is leading it, and we're doing it on behalf of the American people.

So I would anticipate middle of 2026. That's how thorough of a review we're doing. Hopefully, a little bit sooner, but we're going into everything to get an understanding of what happened.

The President. So we remember these great 13 souls, but we also remember the people that were so badly injured, our soldiers—32 of them, approximately. And we're in contact with them always also. But they lost arms and legs, and their faces were blown to pieces. And they're incredible. And they suffer with it. And so we understand that.

It should have never happened. It should have never been allowed to have happened. And they were in the wrong place. Bagram was the place to be—big, massive airfield with hundreds of acres surrounding it. Nobody could get near it. And who would not have done that? But we had a bunch of incompetent people running our country.

So we are going to talk for a little while. We'll talk about the people that I've gotten to know, the sons and daughters and others that died.

And there were hundreds of people that died that day. Hundreds from—many from the other side, needlessly, also. They did nothing to hurt anybody.

But that was a terrible day, and it—I think it was the worst day and, in many ways, the most embarrassing day in the history of our country.

And yet, at the same time, we learned so much that it's—you know, we call it a big lesson. It won't happen again. A thing like that can never be allowed to happen again.

Doug, would you like to say something, please? You've been so fantastic at the VA. I appreciate it.

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Douglas A. Collins. Well, thank you, Mr. President.

For these families here, I think you expressed the Nation's grief of what happened. And we saw the—just a tragic mistake that was there, as someone who has been in the military. I was in Iraq and others. But Afghanistan, when you saw that withdrawal—but what you've suffered and went through.

And for those that you've mentioned, Mr. President, who are injured who took—

The President. Right.

Secretary Collins. —[inaudible]—the VA, the Department of Defense, we're taking care of those folks—

The President. Good.

Secretary Collins. —and we're going to continue to do so at your direction.

But with the families, it's just one of those things. It's a place that never goes away.

But I know from this President is, he's made a commitment that that memory will not be forgotten, and the Cabinet understands that, and our American people understand that because of what you've done.

The President. And this is actually our biggest gathering today. So you must have heard "Oval Office," and you said, "I want to get there and be with Trump in the Oval Office." [Laughter] But it is—and it is a special place. But this is our biggest gathering in terms of the numbers, everybody here, because there was always be—you know, somebody couldn't be. Everybody's here. And that's—that's a great honor. I think it's a great honor.

J.D., do you want to say a couple of words, please?

Vice President Vance. Oh, sir, I just echo what you said. We're so honored to have all of you here. I know that days like today can't make the hurt go away, but hopefully, 4 years on, we can start to remember with fondness and with a little bit of joy the people that were taken from us.

We're so proud of you. We're so proud of your loved ones for giving their life for our country.

And I think importantly, today, this is a rectification of a wrong. The fact that the President of the United States lost your loved ones through incompetence, but never acknowledged it and your government never actually put pen to paper to say, "We're grateful for your sacrifice," we correct that wrong today. And we're to keep on fighting to understand, as Pete said, what happened so it never happens to another the family again.

But God love you all. God bless you. We're so thrilled to have you here in the people's Oval Office.

Participant. Thank you so much for having us.

Participant. Thank you.

The President. And I don't think they ever heard from Biden or anybody—

Vice President Vance. Nope.

The President. —did they ever?

Participant. No. No.

The President. You never speak to——

Vice President Vance. No, they did not.

Participant. No, they never—[inaudible]——

The President. Nobody ever even called you, right?

Participant. No.

The President. It's a terrible thing we suffered through for 4 years so needlessly.

Yes, ma'am.

Veterans Health Care

Q. I wanted to ask about veterans. And I wanted to say, I'm so sorry for all of your loss. And I know we've covered it in the media, but I can't imagine what you all have been through. And thank you for being here.

I wanted to ask, just on behalf of those veterans who served in Afghanistan and Iraq—and I know we talked about this in the Oval previously, about making sure care for those, for example, exposed to burn pits while serving——

The President. Yes.

Q. —making sure that they have the care. Are you considering maybe a streamlined service like the World Trade Center Health care Program? And maybe the Veterans Secretary can comment too. But are you considering something like that to make sure, because it seems like they're——

The President. We're considering a lot of things.

Q. —struggling to get care?

The President. We take care of our vets. Nobody loves our vets more than me, and we take good care of our vets—great care of our vets.

Do you want to just say a couple of words about what we're doing, Doug, please?

Secretary Collins. Yes, sir, Mr. President. Through the PACT Act and through others, with the burn pits, which is something I've been under as well, we're streamlining, following the Congress's direction, but we're also adding more services. We've included a lot who have been—who have applied.

We're also streamlining our backlog. Under President Trump's direction also, we took that backlog that was—under President Biden was up at over 260,000. We're down now, Mr. President, I get to tell you that, under 150,000——

The President. Yes.

Secretary Collins. —in just a little over 6 months. So, we're making sure that—that what was bogged up in a bureaucratic system—we're streamlining it so they get that care quicker, and we're making sure that it is what they need.

And then we're also doing that in our hospitals as well so they get that care quicker in—not only in our hospitals but in our community as well. That's been the biggest difference. We're about the veteran at VA, not about the bureaucracy. So we are making progress there.

The President. And the VA has a 93-percent approval rating. It was down in the low 40s when we take—so I had pretty close to that in the first term. We had a great first term, and it was pretty close to that. And then they took over, and it went down into the 30s and 20s and 40s. But it went down at one point to 28 or 29 percent, which is terrible.

They gave away Choice and Accountability. Choice, meaning you have the way to—as a veteran, you can go and you can choose who your doctor is, et cetera, et cetera. They gave that up. And Accountability is getting rid of the people that were sadists and really bad people that abused our veterans and really badly abused them. And they got rid of both of them, and we put them back. I couldn't believe when they did it.

And anyway. But we're now—you've blown everybody away, Doug, at 93 percent. So we're 93 percent approval for our vets. And I like that, so that's good.

Secretary Collins. Well, you said—you told me to take care of them.

Proposed Renaming of the Department of Defense

Q. And on the Department of War, how do you plan to do that? It requires an act of Congress to rename the Defense Department to the "Department of War," or do you—

The President. We're just going to do it. I'm sure Congress will go along, if we need that. I don't think we even need that. But if we need that, I'm sure Congress will go along.

You know, we—that was the name when we won our—we won World War I, we won World War II, we won everything. And it just, to me, seems like just a much more appropriate—the other is—"defense" is too defensive. And we want to be defensive, but we want to be offensive too, if we have to be. So it just sounded, to me, better.

Q. Following—

The President. Really like a better name.

Yes.

Q. Mr. President, following up—

The President. Steve [Steve A. Holland, Reuters], go ahead.

South Korea–U.S. Trade/European Union/Tariff Revenue/China/Japan

Q. —on your meeting with President Lee of South Korea. Did you end up talking about trade, and did you reach any conclusions?

The President. Yes, I think we have a deal done. They had some problems with it, but we stuck to our guns. We are going to—they're going to make the deal that they agreed to make.

And he's a very good guy, a very good representative for South Korea.

It's a very big trade deal. You know, it's the biggest deal they've ever made by far, but it's one of the biggest deals ever made.

The biggest deal ever made is the one with the European nations, as you know. The Europe deal is the biggest deal ever made. I think it's the biggest deal ever made, period. And they pay us \$950 billion coming into this country and lots of other things. They're going to buy 750 billion dollars' worth of our oil and gas and all of the other things.

So it's amazing. Our country is doing so well. We're so strong now.

And you saw where the tariffs came in at \$4 trillion—\$4 trillion—and they just—the CBO, they just announced it. I told them that was going to happen, but they refused to give us credit for it. Now, they're giving us credit because the money is flowing in.

They just found \$31 billion that nobody knew where it came from. And they—I said, "Check the tariff shelf." And they said, "How did you know that's where it came from?" Well, we're taking in a lot.

Look, we were abused by tariffs for many years. Nobody in this country got it. Nobody—no President got it. Until I came along, nobody got it. We were abused by other countries. We're—China—I mean, take a look—that's what they—what they did is essentially what I'm doing. But we're doing it at a better scale, and we're making up for lost time.

And we're also making sure a lot of countries—these countries respect us for doing it. They couldn't believe what they got away with. I mean, I was told—I told a couple of people, "What do you think?" He said—one of them, a Prime Minister, he said to me, "I can't believe we got away with it so long." Just couldn't believe it.

I'll tell you what, Prime Minister Abe—who was great—of Japan, who was unfortunately assassinated, he used to say, "I can't believe we got away with this for so long." You know, they'd send millions of cars in, and we weren't allowed to send one car. They wouldn't accept one car in Japan, and yet they would send millions and millions of cars into our country—no tax, no nothing.

So, no, we're just doing the right thing. And it's making our country rich and beautiful, and it's very important.

I felt so foolish for years watching this take place. You know, we did it in my first term with China. We took in hundreds of billions of dollars of tariffs, but when COVID came back, we focused on that.

We did a really good job. But it—the whole world suffered with that one. That was a terrible thing, so we couldn't be tariffing countries. And if you looked at what happened to France and Spain and Italy and all, I'm not going to go say, "By the way, we want tariffs."

So—but now we do say that, and it's tremendous, and we're respected. We're the most respected we've ever been.

Thank you very much, everybody. I appreciate it. Thank you.

White House aide. Thank you, press. Thank you, guys.

The President. Thank you very much. Good job.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:51 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia; and former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark A. Milley, USA (Ret.). The transcript was released by the Office of Communications on August 26.

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