

**Remarks During a Christmas Eve Telephone Call With Deployed United States Servicemembers From Palm Beach, Florida**

*December 24, 2025*

*The President.* Well, I'd like to wish a very big hello to all of our wonderful servicemembers and a very, very merry Christmas. It's a great Christmas for this country. We're doing better than ever. Financially, we're setting records. You saw 4.3 percent GDP yesterday. That was a big one. It was 2 points more than anyone expected, but we knew it.

On behalf of the First Lady and our entire country, let me thank each and every one of you for your extraordinary devotion and service to America. I also want to salute your wonderful families, and it's amazing how much they sacrifice. You understand it better than anybody, but they sacrifice so much and especially during these beautiful holidays. I know it's not easy when duty separates you from your loved ones, but you have earned the gratitude of all Americans for keeping our country safe, strong, and free.

And tonight and tomorrow countless millions of Americans have you in their prayers. We are praying for all of you. You have no idea how respected you are, how loved you are. You don't see it because there's no way of you seeing it, but you are respected and loved more than anyone.

As your Commander in Chief, I also want to thank you for your incredible backup. You've backed up everything I've wanted to do, and you've made our country stronger and more prosperous than ever before.

But I have your back also, because, by now, I hope most of you have received your special warrior dividend of \$1,776, right? One thousand seven hundred and seventy six dollars. And you know, in case you're not aware of it, it's tax free. You don't have to pay tax. In other words, you don't have to send half of it back to the Government 15 minutes after you get it. You don't have to send anything back. So that \$1,776; it's tax free.

And we've distributed just about all of it in time for Christmas, and you've earned it. Nobody else is going to do that for you—that, I can tell you. It was seven—it was \$1,775, and I said, "You know, if you had \$1, it's \$1,776." And everyone said, "Well, we never thought of it." But that \$1 was pretty cool.

Last week, I also signed a 3.8 pay raise for every soldier, sailor, airman, coast guardsman, space guardian, and marine. So it's been a good time for you.

The country is doing well. We're taking in hundreds of billions of dollars from tariffs that have really made us stronger and much richer and given us great national security. So, you are a beneficiary of that. We have six units joining us today, one from each branch of our military.

And joining us all the way from Iraq is the U.S. Army 2nd Brigade Combat Team and part of the 34th Infantry Division. That's a big deal. Thank you to Brigade Commander Colonel Eric Soultis and the entire unit for your extraordinary work to crush the ISIS terrorists, which you're doing. And it was a big attack, and you really did a big job. I know you will continue to show no mercy. You can't show mercy because they show no mercy to us.

I also want to recognize the crew of the USS *Gerald Ford* aircraft carrier. That's an interesting place to be right now, in the Caribbean Sea, helmed by Captain Dave Skarosi. And I was honored to commission the Ford in 2016—2016 and 2017. It was under construction for a long time. I won't tell you how many billions it cost, but it's a lot, but it's the latest and the greatest.

And I'm tremendously grateful for the work that you're doing to stop drug trafficking in our region. As you probably heard, drug trafficking by sea is down 96 percent. Think of that. Ninety-six. Now we're going after the land. The land is actually easier. But by sea, it's down 96 percent. And what we're really trying to do is figure out who are the 4 percent, because we have it stopped pretty cold.

Representing the Marines today is the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit serving all the way from the Philippines under Colonel Robb McDonald. Thank you, Colonel. You did an outstanding job helping the Philippines recover from two devastating typhoons recently that—they got hit hard. And you're also an unstoppable symbol of American power in the Pacific. So I want to thank you.

Let me also congratulate the men and women of the United States Air Force for their work to support our campaign to stop drugs from pouring into our country through the Caribbean, including all of the work that you've done with the Sixth Expeditionary Air Refueling Squadron led by Lieutenant Colonel Daniel McLaughlin. You're currently deployed in the U.S. Virgin Islands, and you've been away from home for Christmas for a while actually, but you're going home soon. And the Virgin Islands are very beautiful place to be. You have to be someplace—not so bad to be in the Virgin Islands. So I want to thank you for the great job you've done.

And let's also salute our amazing Space Force. That's very close to my heart. The Space Force—because I was the one that started it, and it's turned out to be a tremendous success, invaluable. You have a team which is working for the, really, American dominance in outer space. When we started, we were third, behind China and Russia, and now we're leading both by a lot.

The 42nd Electromagnetic Warfare Combat Detachment. How about that name? It's so great. That's what it's about. That's called modern-day warfare. But under the command of Captain Kaleigh Cunneff, it's currently performing cutting-edge defense activities at an undisclosed location. I'd like to tell them where you are. I know, but I won't do that. But I just want you to keep up the great work.

And I'm very, very honored by Space Force. The job you've done, what you've done is incredible in a very short period of time. I always said it's going to be one of our most important—one of the most important things I ever did.

Last but not least, let me thank the members of the United States Coast Guard who are also involved in the fight against drugs. Our fantastic crew on board the Coast Guard Cutter Glenn Harris, led by Lieutenant Hunter Blankenship, is doing a great job stopping narcoterrorists and keeping trade flowing off the coast of Bahrain.

So, once again, I want to thank you all. I want to wish you a merry Christmas. And I look forward to hearing from you.

And I just have to say that it's really great having our First Lady here. She's been an inspiration to so many people. She's loved by so many people. And thank you very much.

First Lady, would you like to say something?

*The First Lady.* Thank you all for your service. Please stay safe, and I wish you and your families a merry Christmas. I'm sure they miss you at home, but they're rooting for you, and they are very proud of you. So are we. The Nation is proud of you.

And merry Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year.

*The President.* Okay. So do we want to go ahead? Is it on? Is everything fine with the picture and et cetera?

*Air Force Aide Major Kaitlyn Tinkham, USAF.* They can see you.

*The President.* They can? Okay.

*Maj. Tinkham.* So first we're going to turn it over to Colonel Eric Saltz of the United States Army.

*The President.* Okay, Eric.

*2/34 Infantry Brigade Combat Team Commander Colonel Eric Soultz, USA.* Hey. Merry Christmas from Iraq, Mr. President.

*The President.* Thank you.

*Col. Saltz.* It's an honor to be here to talk to you about the 2nd and 34th Infantry Brigade Combat Team. Myself and Sergeant Major Josh Luck are responsible for over 3,400 Iowa National Guardsmen. We currently have over 1,800 here in Iraq and Syria and Jordan and Kuwait, performing primarily based defense operations, counter-UAS missions, security forces, and then also doing some partnering with Syrian partners.

And we're here through—until about April timeframe, and then we'll be going through our—  
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*[At this point, the videoconference was disconnected.]*

*The President.* *[Inaudible]*

*White House aide.* We just lost the connection, sir. We're going to try to bring it back up.

*The President.* The sound was cut off; the picture was cut off. I think that's the enemy doing it.

*[Members of the press pool were ushered out.]*

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:10 p.m. from the Mar-a-Lago Club. In his remarks, he referred to Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist organization. The transcript was released by the Office of Communications on January 2, 2026.

*Categories:* Addresses and Remarks : Deployed U.S. servicemembers, Christmas Eve telephone call from Palm Beach, FL.

*Locations:* Palm Beach, FL.

*Names:* Blankenship, Hunter; Cunneff, Kaleigh; McDonald, Robb; McLaughlin, Daniel; Skarosi, Dave; Soultz, Eric; Tinkham, Kaitlyn; Trump, Melania.

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