

*Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2026*

**Remarks on Presenting the Medal of Honor to Command Sergeant Major Terry P. Richardson, USA, and Posthumously to Master Sergeant Roderick W. Edmonds, USA, and Staff Sergeant Michael H. Ollis, USA**

*March 2, 2026*

*The President.* Thank you very much, Chaplain Green. Wonderful job. Appreciate it. And thank everybody for being here. And please, feel free to sit.

*U.S. Military Operations in Iran*

So, before we begin this important ceremony—and there's no ceremony that can be much more important than this—let me provide a brief update on Operation Epic Fury.

Today the United States military continues to carry out large-scale combat operations in Iran to eliminate the grave threats posed to America by this terrible terrorist regime.

Following our obliteration of Iran's nuclear program in Operation Midnight Hammer a short while ago, we warned Iran not to make any attempt to rebuild at a different location, because they were unable to use the ones that we so powerfully blew up, but they ignored those warnings and refused to cease their pursuit of nuclear weapons.

In addition, the regime's conventional ballistic missile program was growing rapidly and dramatically, and this posed a very clear, colossal threat to America and our forces stationed overseas. The regime already had missiles capable of hitting Europe and our bases, both local and overseas, and would soon have had missiles capable of reaching our beautiful America.

The purpose of this fast-growing missile program was to shield their nuclear weapon development and make it extraordinarily difficult for anyone to stop them from making these highly forbidden, by us, nuclear weapons. We were the ones that were complaining. We were the ones that wanted it stopped, but everybody was behind us. They just didn't have the courage to say so.

An Iranian regime armed with long-range missiles and nuclear weapons would be an intolerable threat to the Middle East, but also to the American people. Our country itself would be under threat, and it was very nearly under threat.

I was very proud to have knocked out the Iran nuclear deal by President Barack Hussein Obama. That was a horrible, horrible, dangerous document. They would have had nuclear weapons 3 years ago, and they would've used them, but I'll not let that happen.

For almost 47 years, this regime has been attacking the United States and killing Americans. Every time you see someone with missing arms and legs or a face that's been absolutely shattered violently, it was almost certainly caused by an Iran roadside bomb. They were put there by General Soleimani, who was the father of the roadside bomb. Very proudly, he thought, but I terminated him in my first term.

This was our last best chance to strike, what we're doing right now, and eliminate the intolerable threats posed by this sick and sinister regime. And they are indeed sick and sinister.

Our objectives are clear. First, we're destroying Iran's missile capabilities—and you see that happening on an hourly basis—and their capacity to produce brandnew ones, and pretty good ones they make.

Second, we're annihilating their navy. We've knocked out, already, 10 ships. They're at the bottom of the sea.

Third, we're ensuring that the world's number-one sponsor of terror can never obtain a nuclear weapon. Never going to have a nuclear weapon. I said that from the beginning: They're never going to have a nuclear weapon. They were on the road to getting one legitimately through a deal that was signed foolishly by our country.

And finally, we're ensuring that the Iranian regime cannot continue to arm, fund, and direct terrorist armies outside of their borders. And we thought we had a deal, but then they backed out. And then they came back and we thought we had a deal, and they backed out. I said, "You can't deal with these people. You got to do it the right way."

Today we grieve for the four heroic American servicemembers who have been killed in action and send our love and support to their families. In their memory, we continue this mission with ferocious, unyielding resolve to crush the threat this terrorist regime poses to the American people, and a threat indeed it is.

We have the strongest and most powerful, by far, military in the world, and we will easily prevail. We're already substantially ahead of our time projections, but whatever the time is, it's okay. Whatever it takes, we will always—and we have, right from the beginning, we projected 4 to 5 weeks, but we have capability to go far longer than that. We'll do it, whatever.

Somebody said that today, they said: "Oh, well, the President wants to do it really quickly. After that, he'll get bored." I don't get bored. *[Laughter]* There's nothing boring about this. Do you agree with that, Pete? I don't think there's anything, Mr. General, I think there's nothing boring about it. Somebody actually said, from the media, "I think he'll get bored after about a week or two." No, we don't get bored. I never get bored. If I got bored, I wouldn't be standing here right now. I guarantee you that. To go through what I had to go through.

We also projected 4 weeks to terminate the military leadership and, as you know, that was done in about an hour. So we're ahead of schedule there by a lot.

But please join me in thanking every American servicemember who bravely is standing in harm's way. They really are incredible, and I just want to thank you. We have a lot of them right here. *[Applause]* Thank you very much. Thank you. Thank you, everybody. We have a lot of great servicemembers here with us too in this beautiful building.

### *White House Renovation Work/New White House Ballroom Construction Project*

Isn't it beautiful? We're adding onto the building a little bit. We're improving the building. See that nice drape? When that comes down, right now you see a very, very deep hole. But in about a year and a half from now, you're going to see a very, very beautiful building. And there's your entrance to it right there. In fact, it looks so nice I don't think I'll even—I think I'll save money on the doors, because it can't get more beautiful than that. *[Laughter]* I picked those drapes in my first term. I always like gold. But I think we can save a lot of money. I just saved curtains.

But, and it will be. It will be spectacular. It will be the most beautiful ballroom. I believe it, because I built many a ballroom, I believe it's going to be the most beautiful ballroom anywhere in the world. And when you hear all that hammering out there, you know why the First Lady is not thrilled exactly. *[Laughter]*

She said, "Will the pile drivers ever stop?" You know, they go from 6:00 in the morning till 11:30 in the evening. Can you imagine? You hear? *[Laughter]* You know what? To me, that's a beautiful sound. She doesn't like it. I love it.

You know what? To me, other than here, because we're donating it, not a penny to the taxpayer. It will be under budget, ahead of schedule. It will be \$400 million or less. Most people say, "\$400 million or more." No, it will be less.

But when I hear that sound, that beautiful sound behind me, it means money, so I like it. But my wife isn't thrilled. She said, "This is getting crazy." It will, I said, "Don't worry about it. We'll be all finished up in a few months."

### *Medal of Honor Presentation Ceremony*

But now, for the reason that we're gathered this morning: to recognize the unsurpassed courage of three really incredible American heroes, one living and two no longer with us.

So, together, we recognize the exceptional valor of Master Sergeant Roderick Edmonds. And maybe I could ask your families to stand, because they're beautiful families. I got to meet them and. please. So, Staff Sergeant Michael Ollis and Command Sergeant Major Terry Richardson as they receive our Nation's highest military award, the congressional Medal of Honor.

And we're pleased to be joined by Secretary of War Pete Hegseth. He's busy. He's busy. Very busy guy. In fact, I said, "If you want, Pete, you can avoid it. General "Razin" Caine also." And they said, "We don't avoid this one." This is one you wouldn't avoid for anything, right? So we appreciate that you're here.

Secretary of Veterans Affairs, who's doing an incredible job. Veterans Affairs, Doug Collins. Doug, thank you. You, stand up, Doug. You're doing such a good job. Ninety-two percent approval rating.

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Dan Caine, who's known as "Razin" Caine. I liked him when I heard that name, "Razin" Caine. I said, "If it's true, you're my guy." And it's true, it's turned out. *[Laughter]* It's very true. He's a great guy and a great general.

Secretary of the Army Dan Driscoll and Army Chief of Staff Randy George, thank you. Thank you both. Dan. As well as Senators Tom Cotton and Bill Hagerty. You guys were great on television this weekend, I'll tell you what. You can't have a better representative than both of you. Thank you very much.

And Representatives Tim Burchett, Jack Bergman, and Nicole Malliotakis. So we have a few others sitting here, but I'm not going to go through it because we have far more important people to honor today.

Oh, we have Tom Homan. I got to at least mention Tom Homan. *[Laughter]* I would be—stand up, Tom. What a job. Zero. Zero people coming in. We had millions and millions of people pouring into our country. Now that, I mean, I'm not even sure I can believe this number—zero. But it is given out by Democrats, or Democrats from the last—and they're rated, for the last 9 months, we had zero people come illegally through our border. Right, Tom? So I want to thank you very much.

And I also want to salute six former Medal of Honor recipients: William Swenson, Jim McCloughan, Walter Marm, Thomas Payne, Sammy Davis. That's an interesting guy. *[Laughter]* Sam, where is Sammy Davis? Steve, we have a big story here. Sammy, you've heard that all your life, I'll bet, huh? And Edward Byers. Stand up, please.

Great. Great. You all look good. You all look good. We remember the ceremonies. All great. It's a great honor. There's no greater.

I tried for myself. I've tried numerous times to get one by myself. I keep getting shut down. They say: "You can't do it, sir. Bad protocol. Very bad." I would say the worst. But I'm only

kidding. You know, I have to say I'm only kidding. Otherwise, the press will come out with—which they actually did once. [Laughter] "Donald Trump wants the congressional Medal of Honor, but he's been shut down."

But no, you are brave, amazing people, and I want to thank you all.

In 1941, Roddie Edmonds of Knoxville, Tennessee, enlisted in the U.S. Army and soon rose to one of the youngest master sergeants in the military. In 1944, he sailed to Europe to fight in World War II, and he was so enthusiastic and young and full of vim and vigor.

Roddie soon found himself on the front lines of the Battle of the Bulge—that was a big one—massively outnumbered by enemy forces. His 1,200-soldier unit fought valiantly until they were completely overrun. The force was massive on the other side, many times that number.

After a 4-day death march, one that was covered very well by the history books, through bitter cold, they were put into a German POW camp. Roddie was the top-ranking infantryman in the camp. He was number one, meaning he was responsible for the lives of his fellow servicemembers.

On July 26, 1945, a Nazi SS officer issued an order over the camp loudspeaker, loud and strong. He said that only American Jews were to show up to roll call following this morning. He added, "All who disobey this order will be shot immediately."

There were more than 200 Jewish American soldiers in the camp, and Roddie knew their separation from the group would mean certain death. So, that night, he summoned his team and devised a plan. The next morning, all 1,200 American men fell in line together, shoulder to shoulder.

Enraged, the Nazi commandant rushed forward, drew his Luger pistol, and pressed the barrel between Sergeant Edmonds' eyes. He barked at Roddie. "They cannot all be Jews," he screamed loud and again and again. And staring straight back into the raging face of evil, Sergeant Edmonds replied, fearlessly, "We are all Jews here."

The Nazi officer lowered his weapon, and the soldiers erupted in cheers. With total disregard for his own life, Roddie had saved over 200 of his fellow servicemembers. Their camp was liberated 2 months later.

We're honored to be joined today by Roddie's son Chris. Please stand up as—thank you, Chris. Today your father gets the honor he so courageously earned. And really amazing, right? It's an amazing story. Congratulations to the family of Master Sergeant Roddie Edmonds.

The next two we recognize today served in the First Battalion, 28th Infantry Regiment of the First Infantry Division, better known as "Big Red One." Do you know about that, Pete? Right?

Command Sergeant Major Terry Richardson, we are honored to have you with us. On September 12, 1968, 102 brave men of Terry's Alpha Company were asked with securing Hill 222 deep behind the enemy's line in Vietnam. They didn't know it at the time, had no idea, but the area was totally infested with nearly 300 enemy bunkers and many, many enemy soldiers, far outnumbering them by at least 4-, 5-, even 6-to-1.

As Terry led Lima Platoon up Hill 222, the enemy launched an ambitious and violent attack, unleashing a withering fire of machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades. Just didn't stop. It just kept coming.

Pinned down and hell on Earth, Terry summoned unimaginable courage. Three times, he exposed himself to enemy fire to rescue severely wounded comrades, and three times, he dragged them back to the group.

Terry soon realized that the 82 remaining men had one chance of survival, and that was air support. Acting without regard of his own life, he grabbed a radio and charged up Hill 222 alone. He needed to be there. It was the only place you'd get reception.

He withstood a storm of enemy bullets, eventually reaching the top, where he spent the next 8 hours calling in tactical strikes, completely exposed. An hour in, an enemy sniper's shot rang out and the bullet tore through his right leg violently. He was in bad shape, but Terry disregarded that and pushed through.

And after 7 more hours of calling in American fire from above, the enemy retreated. Later that day, his team found him with both eardrums totally ruptured and a mangled right leg and foot, but still barely living. But living, nevertheless. Due to Terry's actions above and beyond the call of duty, 82 men of Alpha Company survived this battle, including two in this room, Norm Meier and Dave Himmer.

Where are you? Are—do you want to stand up, Norm and Dave? Where's Norm and Dave? [Applause] That's pretty good. Pretty good.

And that story is a hundred percent correct, isn't it, huh? See, pretty—it's—how much have you paid him over the years? Have you—[laughter]—have you said, "Take everything we have. We wouldn't be here." Right? That's great. That's a great story.

Terry, today you enter the ranks of the bravest warriors ever to stride the face of the Earth. Please stand up. Please. Thank you.

That's great, Terry. That's a great, brave man. I met him back there. I said, "He's central casting." Look at him. He looks great. He looks great. You feel like fighting? We could—I think we could take him today. What do you think, Pete? [Laughter] We make a little—we'll make a little deal with him, as you are a brave man.

Finally, we honor one more American soldier, a fallen warrior of world of wars. And really, of really, terror, Staff Sergeant Michael Ollis.

Born in 1988 on Staten Island, Michael grew up seeing the World Trade Center across the bay. I know Staten Island so well. The people in Staten Island are amazing. After 9/11, Michael enlisted in the Army, and by 24 years old, he was in. He was locked in. He loved it. He wanted it so badly. He was a squad leader serving in Afghanistan with the 2d Battalion, 22d Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team of the legendary 10th Mountain Division.

On August 28, 2013, terrorists detonated a 400-pound car bomb on the east wall of the Forward Operating Base Ghanzi [Ghazni; White House correction], ripping open a 60-foot-wide breach into a compound that housed NATO coalition forces. A lot of them.

Ten Taliban fighters wearing suicide vests swarmed through. From across the compound, Michael saw the pillar of white smoke rising and ran to join the fight, rushing, without his gear. Wearing almost no gear, no Kevlar helmet, no body armor, just one magazine in his rifle.

Along the way, he encountered a Polish soldier, and together, they advanced under heavy fire—very, very heavy fire. At one point, shrapnel ripped through the Polish soldier's legs, rendering him unable to walk. Very, very severely hurt.

In that chaos of gunfire, explosions, and charred human remains, a terrorist insurgent appeared, rounding a corner with his suicide vest fully armed. And you could see it. It was going to happen. He charged the wounded Polish soldier.

Without hesitation, Michael raised his gun and forced himself between the insurgent and the man he just met, shielding him with his own body. He knew what was going to happen. He shielded him with his own body.

You know, bravery is amazing. You never really know who's brave, who's not until they're really tested. We think some people are brave, Pete, and they're not. We think others aren't, and they are. You never know. But he was tested. That's called the ultimate test, right?

And, at perhaps his final heartbeat, Michael fired his weapon, and the terrorist detonated his vest simultaneously. Staff Sergeant Ollis was killed just weeks before his 25th birthday, and nobody was any more brave than that.

In his final act on Earth, Michael absorbed the blast, sparing the life of that Polish warrior, who we are grateful to have in the room with us today, Second Lieutenant Karol Cierpica. Karol Cierpica. Where are you, Karol? Hey. Would you like to come up? Please. Please. I'd love to have you come up. Thank you, Karol.

*Polish Army Second Lieutenant Karol Cierpica.* Mr. President. Minister of War. My Minister, Polish of National Defense. Distinguished guest. Everyone gathered here today. Dear—my Basia, Michael, and Jacob. Especially dear Linda and Robert and the entire Ollis family.

What do you have that you did not receive? This is how I would like to begin these few words, to speak to you all here in this special place and on the—on occasion of this incredibly important ceremony, one that is significant for many, but truly especially exceptional for me.

It is a particular privilege and a great honor. Above all, however, it is my commitment. It is a part of my new mission, which began 13 years ago.

A soldier is not something you are from time to time. It is who you are forever. It is just like you are not a mother or father, a sister and brother or as—only for a moment. These are not roles given to us for a while. They are a great gift, but also a great lifelong commitment. Yes, today, my commitment and my greatest gift is to cultivate the memory of true heroic act of courage that I witnessed, performed by your beloved son, Michael.

Please forgive me if my words have not fully captured what I truly feel today. However, sometimes words are simply not enough. I am deeply moved, happy, and grateful to God for my service; for my parents; for my family; for my beloved homeland, Poland; for my second family from Staten Island; and for my second home in America. God bless you all.

Michael, thank you for your service, and I will see you in our heavenly homeland. Thank you for your service. Thank you so much.

*The President.* And Karol is joined by his wife and their two wonderful sons Jacob and Michael. Michael is named after the American hero who saved his father's life. So stand up, Michael. Let me see. Wow. That's great.

We're also pleased to be joined by several members of the Polish Government, including representatives of the President, who I think is a fantastic man, by the way. I must be honest with you. I endorsed him and he won. And he came from behind. He won, and it was the biggest story in Europe. And he's going to be a great President. He already is.

But as well as Poland's Minister of Defense, to honor the blood and sacrifice that has helped seal the Polish-American bond. We have a great bond. We have a great relationship with your country.

And I just want to, thank you to Michael's parents Bob and Linda. Your son's selflessness in the face of real evil reminds us of the courage that keeps our country free. And I just said the genetics in that family are very strong, right? I said that before, all three families. I said, "Good." I see some of the young ones today. And I said, "You have good genes." They were asking me, "What does that mean?" I said: "Don't worry about it. You'll figure it out." [Laughter] But you have the best genes you can have, actually. So thank you for giving America your beloved son.

And now I would like to ask the Military Aide to come forward and read the citations, and then we will do the honors. Thank you all very much. This is a tremendous honor for me to be here. Thank you. Please, Military Aide.

*[At this point, Cmdr. Kasey L. Arguelles, USCG, Coast Guard Aide to the President, read the citations, and the President presented the medals, assisted by Lt. Col. Rudolph T. Bowen, USSS, Space Force Aide to the President. Following the presentation of the medals, Maj. Gen. William Green, Jr., USA, Army Chief of Chaplains, said a prayer.]*

*Audience members. Amen.*

*The President. Thank you, everybody, very much.*

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:48 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Capt. Cody A. Khork, USA, SFC Noah L. Tietjens, USA, SFC Nicole M. Amor, USA, and Sgt. Declan J. Coady, USA, who died on March 1, 2026, in Port Shuaiba, Kuwait, during an unmanned aircraft system attack; White House Border Czar Thomas D. Homan; Basia Cierpica, wife of 2d Lt. Cierpica; President Karol Nawrocki and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defense Władysław Kosiniak-Kamysz of Poland.

*Categories:* Addresses and Remarks : Medal of Honor presentation to CSM Terry P. Richardson, USA, and posthumous presentation to MSgt. Roderick W. Edmonds, USA, and SSgt. Michael H. Ollis, USA.

*Locations:* Washington, DC.

*Names:* Amor, Nicole M.; Arguelles, Kasey L.; Bergman, John W.; Bowen, Rudolph T.; Burchett, Timothy F.; Byers, Edward C.; Caine, J. Daniel; Cierpica, Basia; Cierpica, Jacob; Cierpica, Karol; Cierpica, Michael; Coady, Declan J.; Collins, Douglas A.; Cotton, Thomas B.; Davis, Sammy L.; Driscoll, Daniel P.; Edmonds, Chris; Edmonds, Roderick W.; Hagerty, William F., IV; Hegseth, Peter B.; Himmer, Dave; Homan, Thomas D.; Khork, Cody A.; Kosiniak-Kamysz, Władysław; Malliotakis, Nicole; Marm, Walter J., Jr.; McCloughan, James C.; Meier, Norm; Nawrocki, Karol; Obama, Barack; Ollis, Linda; Ollis, Michael; Ollis, Robert; Payne, T. Patrick; Richardson, Terry P.; Swenson, William D.; Tietjens, Noah L.; Trump, Melania.

*Subjects:* Iran, nuclear weapons development; Iran, terrorism sponsorship; Iran, U.S. airstrikes on nuclear facilities; Iran, U.S. military operations; Joint Chiefs of Staff; Medal of Honor; Poland, Minister of National Defense; Poland, President; Poland, relations with U.S.; Secretary of the Army; Secretary of Veterans Affairs; Secretary of War; U.S. servicemembers, service and dedication; White House Ballroom construction project; White House Border Czar.

*DCPD Number:* DCPD202600141.