

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2026

Commencement Address at the United States Coast Guard Academy in New London, Connecticut
May 20, 2026

The President. Thank you very much. Thank you very much. That was beautiful. He's a fantastic man. He is a special—very special man. He always has been. And, Markwayne, thank you. Appreciate it.

And hello, Cadets. And let me begin by saying a very big congratulations to the class of 2026. Special class. It's a true honor to be here on this magnificent day at one of the most prestigious military academies anywhere in the world. And I'm thrilled to become the first President to ever give a second keynote address to this storied institution. I am very proud of that honor. We'll have to try it a third time. We're going to have to try it maybe a third time too to keep that record intact.

And a few moments from now, every graduate on the field will go forth with an even greater honor, one of the highest distinctions anyone can attain. You'll become commissioned officers in the United States Coast Guard.

And our country is hot. This is a great time. Our country is hot. I hate to say it, but I will. A year ago, a year and a half ago, 2 years ago, the last administration—we were a dead country. Right now, we're the hottest country anywhere in the world. We're respected all over the world.

You saw that with China just recently. You saw that in Venezuela. You saw that right now in Iran; everything's gone. Their navy's gone. The air force is gone. Just about everything. The only question is, do we go and finish it up, or are they going to be signing a document? Let's see what happens.

But we're a hot country. We're the hottest country. Hottest country anywhere in the world. We're the strongest, most powerful military anywhere in the world. And there's nobody close.

I want to thank our new Secretary of Homeland Security, Markwayne Mullin, a fantastic man, for the introduction, along with Coast Guard Commandant Admiral Kevin Lundry [Lunday; White House correction]. And he is—he is something. He's a special guy. You know, when you get to that position in the Coast Guard, you're very something. I don't have to ask, "Gee, how good is he?" They have to be very good. It goes with the territory.

And the President of the Republic of Palau, Surangel Whipps, Jr.—I want to thank you very much, and you're here, and we appreciate you being here. Thank you very much.

Over the past 4 years, this class has been mentioned by an exceptional team of professors and coaches and military professionals who have shaped you into leaders. You came with very good quality, but they've shaped you nevertheless—and warriors who revere honor and, really, honor duty. You honor duty like very few others can even think about it.

So let's give a big round of applause to the entire faculty and staff that made this possible. And I especially want to thank Academy Superintendent Rear Admiral Greg Rothrock. Come on. Get up here, Greg. Come here. Come here, Greg.

Superintendent Rear Admiral Gregory C. Rothrock, USCG. [Inaudible]

The President. He does a hell of a job. [Laughter] You don't want to mess with him. Don't mess around with him. Thank you very much, Greg. Fantastic.

Also, your Assistant Superintendent, Captain Jess Rozzi-Ochs. Rozzi-Ochs. Where is she? Where? *[Laughter]* Nice. Very nice. Thank you.

Commandant of—Cadets, Captain Aaron Casavant. Hi, Aaron. Hi, Aaron.

Command Master Chief Evan Burch. Evan? Where are you, Evan? Good job up here, Evan. It's never easy, Evan, up here, right? You feel more comfortable in the water. *[Laughter]* And Class Adviser Christy Rose. Christy. Thank you, Christy.

And of course, where would you be without the wonderful friends and family in the stands—and there are a lot of them here—who loved and supported you? And they were with you every single step of the way. And they do love you. They do love you. Sometimes, they're not forthcoming with that statement. They are so—they're up there. Half of them are crying, look.

Their boy, their girl, right? Their boy or their girl. They call them girl, by the way. And they call him boy. And in 30 years, they'll be calling you boy and girl too. They love you—your parents and your family. Please.

To all of the moms and dads, grandparents, and family members here on this joyous occasion, thank you for everything you've done to raise such amazing American patriots. We really appreciate it. What a group.

And today is all about the incredible class of 2026—that you've achieved and all of the things that you've achieved and the exciting future that awaits. You have an amazing future. Very soon, you'll swap your shoulder boards, and you'll join the long blue line of legendary rescuers, seafarers, and servicemembers that fill American hearts with admiration and pride.

I've watched it. I've watched you during those hurricanes in Texas, and you got out there, and you were going through waves that nobody else would have done. I wouldn't have done it. I would've said: "Captain, I'm not feeling too good today." *[Laughter]* "Think I'll have to take a day off." But you would have no—you would have none of it. You are really something. I watched it. You saved so many lives.

During my first term, we had one of the worst hurricanes ever in Texas and the Gulf, and the bravery that you displayed was incredible. You saved thousands. I think the number was 16-, 17,000 lives you saved.

Through every generation, the heroes of the United States Coast Guard have lived by a creed of honor and bravery and sacrifice that have defied every storm, shipwreck, and every single enemy attack. In the hour of need, our coastguardsmen have brought hope to the hopeless and swept the innocent from the jaws of a raging sea—seas like nobody's ever seen before, in some cases.

Coast Guard warriors piloted the famous Higgins boats and delivered American liberation to beaches of Normandy and sailed through smoke and flame and gunfire to put the marines on the Guadalcanal very much into play. And they patrolled the distant shores of Manila Bay and Mekong Delta and the Red Sea, and they patrolled them like nobody has ever been able to patrol them before or since.

For decades, the men and women of this noble service have repeated an unofficial motto of pure, unyielding courage. It says: "You have to go out, but you don't have to come back." That's a statement. "You have to go out"—think of that. "You have to go out, but you don't have to go back." And you know what that means? That means danger, and it's a statement that you live by.

This is the unbelievable heroism and exceptional selflessness that lives in the soul of every single cadet on this field. Every single one of you. And you've all been tested. You'll be tested further and probably at higher levels as your career goes on, but you've been very strongly tested,

and you have what it takes. You're America's first defenders. You are America's first responders. You are the living standard bearers of America's "first fleet."

As your Commander in Chief, I could not be prouder of the great class of 2026. Congratulations. Congratulations. Amazing. And I have no doubt to say—and just like those Coast Guard legends who came before you—you will always put America first. We put America first now.

We haven't done that for a long time, but we do that under the Trump administration, I will tell you. And the whole world is saying: "Well, America's first, and they put America first." And we help others too, but we put America first.

Four years ago, most of the cadets here today could have gone to almost any school that you wanted. It's so hard to get into the Coast Guard. I had so many people: "Sir, could you get my son, he wants to go to the Coast Guard Academy." And I look at the son. I say, "He's not going to make it." [Laughter] Terrible. I lost a lot of friends. I lost a lot of friends.

But, every once in a while, I'll call up with somebody outstanding, and they'll generally take care. If they don't take care, they're fired. So, you know, they have no choice. [Laughter] But he's—you really have outstanding people coming in.

But you chose New London. You chose Cape May. You chose Kodiak Island. You chose the great service of God and country and the U.S. Coast Guard. And it was the best decision of your lives. One of the great decisions.

You will say it. It's hard to say it now, but you will say it as time goes by: This will be the best decision of your life, what you—where you decided to learn, go to school. This incredible, beautiful place.

You came as strangers and American teenagers. You leave as officers, American warriors, and friends forever. You're always going to be friends with each other. Hopefully, with me. Today this field is full of some of the smartest minds, the toughest athletes, and the most tenacious leaders our Nation has to offer. It really is. It is very hard to get into this particular place. It is very, very hard. It is—a lot of broken hearts. People don't do it. Good people, smart people—they can't quite make it.

Many of you have excelled academically, but 49 cadets have studied longer and harder than anyone else: the very accomplished Coast Guard Academy Scholars. Would you please stand? These are the really brilliant people. You're all brilliant, but these are perhaps slightly more brilliant.

Don't feel guilty. Don't feel guilty. Never feel guilty about success. Right? But I think it's great.

And at the top of your class with the highest score in both military and academic achievements is distinguished graduate Matthew Lanzilotta. Where is he? Where is he? Come here. I—get up here. Come on. Come on. Get up. Get up here. I want to see this guy. Fantastic.

Cadet Matthew Lanzilotta. It's an honor.

The President. Fantastic. That's a great achievement.

Cadet Lanzilotta. Thank you.

The President. Take care of yourself. Okay?

Cadet Lanzilotta. I will.

The President. I hate good-looking men. [Laughter] Very good. Matthew, that's great. Thank you very much. It's a great honor.

We also have the only cadet who earned a perfect score on every single fitness test. Now we're talking fitness. Do you know who this is already? Wow. This guy must be something. I mean, I think we'll have to invite him up. I want to check it out. [Laughter]

For the last 4 straight years, which they think may be an alltime record. Congratulations to Thomas Rhodes. Thomas, get up here, please. I want to see. I want to check him out. Whoa! Whoa, that—oh, he's—we're not going to fight with him. I'm not fighting him. I'm not—this is not UFC. Please understand that, Thomas. Look at this guy. Look at the muscles on this guy. [Laughter]

Secretary of Homeland Security Markwayne Mullin. He's a wrestler too, sir.

The President. Thank you.

Cadet Thomas Rhodes. Thank you.

The President. That's a big honor, huh?

Cadet Rhodes. Thank you.

The President. Thank you very much.

Just hit him on the shoulder. I hurt my hand. It's like hitting a rock. [Laughter] That's great. Thomas, that's fantastic.

Another member of this class is making history as well. Today Mike Kettish becomes the first Coast Guard Academy graduate to ever go straight from the Corps of Cadets into the Coast Guard Special Forces. What was that all about? Come on up here. Come on. Let's go. Come on up here, Mike. I want to see what these guys—I like to see, like, what these guys are like because, you know, it's competition for me too. I have to compete with you now. I'm not liking that.

How are you? Fantastic. Wow. That's a big achievement.

Cadet Dhiren Michael Kettish. Thank you, sir.

The President. These are special people. Thank you very much, Michael.

For the past 4 years, you've been led by your brilliant class president, Savannah Riera. Where is—where is Savannah? Where are you, Savannah? Where are you, Savannah? Where is Savannah?

Secretary Mullins. To your left, sir.

The President. Savannah, come on up here. I have to. If I didn't invite her up, they'd accuse me of discrimination. That would not be—I'd be—"Ladies and gentlemen, the President got sued today."

Savannah, come on up. I have to get her up here. And she looks so fantastic. This is ridiculous. [Laughter] Nothing like having a little fun. Do you agree? This is your big day. We got to get Savannah up here. Congratulations.

Cadet Savannah Riera. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Good job. Fantastic future.

Cadet Riera. Thank you.

The President. Fantastic.

Cadet Riera. Thank you so much.

The President. Thank you, Savannah.

Cadet Riera. Thank you.

The President. Thank you, Savannah. Wow.

This class has also been blessed with many tremendous athletes, including the Academy's alltime leader in receptions, yards, and touchdowns. Wide receiver Broock Desta. Where is Broock? Wow. That's a pretty good record, Broock. I'll let you come up if you want. You want to come up? Come on up here, Broock. *[Laughter]* Come on. You can see they want you up here, Broock.

Cadet Broock Desta. *[Inaudible]*

The President. *[Inaudible]*

So do we have a little NFL future here maybe? I don't know. Usually that can happen when you're leading by that much. That's a lot of achievement. Thank you.

You know, we've made it possible—I did this. We made it possible for people like Broock that really have a great ability at sport and, in some cases, will be drafted by the NFL or have a chance of getting into the NFL or baseball or basketball or whatever it might be.

The problem is they had to serve, as you know. They had to serve 5 years, and that's not exactly conducive to being drafted very high if you had to go away. So I made a decision in my first term, and we adhere to it very strongly, that when somebody has the ability going to Coast Guard, or West Point, Annapolis, Air Force, any of them—if you have a student with extreme ability that gets drafted and can play in professional football, we allow you to go immediately and you serve your time in the Coast Guard or whatever after your professional career is over.

And it has made such a difference. It's also made a big difference in recruiting. That's why your teams are better today than they used to be. So I make these little contributions. I don't know if people know I made those contributions, but—so, Broock, I want 25 percent of everything you earn. Thank you, Broock. I appreciate—*[laughter]*—so it's a little—it's a little bit of a help.

But it actually—what we didn't expect, it made your recruiting much better, because you're able to now recruit the top—the top people, people that really have a chance of getting into professional sports, and one of the reasons you have such good teams.

We also have your alltime leader in points and the assists for women lacrosse, Abby McAllister. Abby. Abby. Where are you, Abby? Stand up, Abby. Oh, are you that good, Abby? Do you want to come up, Abby? Come on, Abby. Come on up, Abby.

See, we throw them a little off on timing when I do this, but what the hell? We have time, right? This is your day. And when somebody achieves what these people—we should give them a little extra recognition, right?

That's a tough sport, Abby. I don't know. I'm not going to mess with you. That's great. That's a big record. How's it going?

Cadet Abby McAllister. Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you so much. *[Inaudible]*

The President. You have a good life. Okay?

Cadet McAllister. Yes, sir. Thank you.

The President. Thank you, Abby.

Of course, there are those of you who have made your mark on the school in many other ways, like the "mayor of the class," Freddie Wheaton; the founder of Phi Kappa Granny, Evan Granahan; and the leader of the e-sports club, Aidan Rostkowski. They've done a great job. That's good. That's also called leadership.

While everyone has worked and studied hard, some may have spent a little bit too much time at a place called Mr. G's. I don't know what Mr. G's is. I don't know what it is, but I don't like the sound of this. I'm not—where am I going with this one?

But we want you all to have a clean slate as you begin your career. So, therefore, Mr. Superintendent, I hereby absolve all cadets who are on restriction for minor conduct infractions, and even somewhat major infractions—[laughter]—effective immediately. Okay? Oh, you guys—you got away with murder. I was just in a good mood. I was in a very good mood to do that.

Every branch of our Armed Forces protects American lives, but the Coast Guard is the only service explicitly dedicated to saving them. You're saving lives. You never leave an American behind, and you never would. In the past year, our Coast Guard heroes have saved over 5,200 lives at least, and helped carry out and carry over 19,000 people to safety. Amazing.

One of the special cadets in this class has already saved his first life during his First Class summer, providing lifesaving care to the person in distress off the coast of Alaska. A job well done. That's Mason White. Mason, thank you. Stand up please. Thank you. Thank you, Mason. Great job. That was early on, right? And that was—great job. Thank you very much.

When you leave here today, every cadet on the field will be stepping into a critical role in the defense of our country. To protect our maritime infrastructure, 12 of you will be going to Coast Guard Cyber Command. That's a big deal. Twenty are heading to Coast Guard Flight School. Twenty-three will join prevention and response. And a whopping 181 cadets will become afloat officers in a fleet because, as you like to say, "underway is the only way." And that's a pretty cool statement.

And you know, I don't know if you know this, but I was telling your leaders before that we have 11—you know, we're way down on icebreakers. And we've ordered 11. We're working with Finland. They make icebreakers. They make the best icebreakers.

We're going to learn everything we can learn. We're going to shortly make them ourselves. But we're making, right now—currently under construction, we have 11. Beautiful. And I said: "Come on, when's the first one coming?" They said, "In '28." I said: "I'm going to be here in '28." Maybe I'll be here in '32 too. I don't know. [Laughter] Maybe I will, but I'm going to be here in '28. And I'll tell you, I said: "That's great because I'm going to be there at the dedication." They have been trying to get icebreakers for years and years, and no President was able to provide them with what you need to get it done.

And I want to thank the country of Finland because they are known to make the best icebreakers. And I thought going there for starters—you know, we tried making one, but it was too front-heavy. It wouldn't have worked, because an icebreaker has to come crashing down, and when the front weighs four times more than the back, bad things happen. So I realized we didn't know what the hell we were doing.

I went to Finland and was with the President of Finland, and we worked out a deal, and we're making 11 total. Some of them are going to be made right here. We're going to learn the craft, and we're going to have so many icebreakers.

You know, Russia has 48, and we have one very old one. It's ridiculous. And we have the whole Arctic. We have the whole region, and we're going to have a whole big fleet very shortly.

And they're starting to come in a very quick fashion. And after that, we're going to go way up higher. We'll have at least 55 within a short period of time. So that will be great. And you're going to be operating them and running them. And it's another—probably another category.

The class of 2026 is graduating at an incredible, exciting time for our Nation and the Coast Guard, in particular. As you enter the office corps of the greatest military in the history of the world, our national strength is back, our morale is back. We are a confident country again. We have—confidence is back. And above all, America is back, bigger and better and stronger than ever before. We have a strong, great, respected country again. We went off course. We went very sadly off course. For years, Washington, DC, was run by foolish politicians who thought they could defy the laws of world history, violating every commonsense principle purpose—you know, for preserving national power and national security. And they surrendered our industrial capacity to other countries, crippled our energy production, threw open our borders.

We had borders, where two—just, they were open borders, they called them. People came in totally unchecked and unvetted. You know how many people over 4 years in the last term? Twenty-five million people. They came in as murderers. They were coming in from other countries. They came in from prisons. They were drug dealers. They came in from mental institutions and insane asylums. They allowed them to just flow into our country, and we're getting them out.

We've got a lot of them out. Eleven thousand eight hundred and eighty-eight murderers. Think of that. Fifty percent—more than 50 percent committed more than 1 murder. They were allowed in our country. We can never forget the sins of what they did to our country. But we're getting them out.

In fact, we've gotten them to the extent that we just had the best crime numbers in history. The best crime numbers—meaning the lowest crime numbers in history—were just, last month, released. Lowest number of murders since the year 1900. A hundred and twenty-five years.

So what they did to us is terrible. But we are getting it back into shape really properly. And now we have—we went from the worst border in history to the strongest border we've ever had. In 11 months, not one illegal alien was able to get into our country. When you think of that, that's pretty amazing.

And they can come in, but they have to come in legally. They have to come in through a process. They have to love our country. They have to show us that they can love our country, not that they want to blow up our country. I think that everybody agrees with that.

Under this administration, we don't apologize for American power or wealth. We—what we do, really, is we want to maximize it. We take advantage of it. We unleash it. And we wield it to pursue our country's glorious destiny and our beautiful American Dream.

We have the American Dream back. You didn't hear about the American Dream too much for 4 years, and now the American Dream is back. This is truly the golden age of America. We are in, now, the golden age.

We have more production, more people—we have more people working today than at any time in the history of our country, by far. We have more people having great jobs today than at any time in the history of our country. Our country is respected all over the world.

The men and women of the Coast Guard have a vital role to play in this resurgence. This is a great resurgence. We have \$18 trillion being invested in the United States. That's many, many times more than ever before. In fact, you'd have to go back more than 10 years.

Another country, a long time ago, had \$3 trillion. We have \$18 trillion. The last administration, for 4 years, had less than \$1 trillion. We have \$18 trillion being invested in our

country in 11 months, because the numbers for the 12th have not come up. So, that's going to increase it yet further. So that's an honor. It's a great honor. To me, that's something special.

We're building plants—auto plants, every kind of plant you can imagine—all over the country. And they're coming in from Canada. They're leaving other countries. They stole our auto business. They stole our chip business.

We'll have close to 50 percent of the chip business by the time I leave, and right now we have none, practically. And we'll have—it was taken by other places. It was taken by Taiwan. I'm not knocking them, I'm saying if they can get away with it—but if you had the right President, that would've never happened. It wouldn't have been allowed to have happened. You would have put tariffs on. And you say: "That's okay. You can steal our business. But if you're going to sell—if you think you're selling those chips back into us with no tax, you can forget it." And if we did that, we wouldn't have lost those businesses. The autos, the chips, the semiconductors—we would—all of that would be here.

But it's all pouring back into our country right now because of the word "tariff"—as you know, one of my favorite words.

I got into big trouble. I said: "This is my favorite word in the dictionary. My favorite word. The word 'tariff.'" And the fake news—look at all of them back there—[*Laughter*]*—they said: "What about 'God'? What about 'wife,' 'family'?* What about other things like 'Bible'?" So, I was in deep trouble, because I said "tariff" is my favorite. So I made it number five, and now I'm okay. Now I'm okay. [*Laughter*] They think I'm kidding, by the way. They gave me a hard time.

But with your help, we're reasserting one of the most time-honored principles of our national security—that the American dominance in Western Hemisphere will not be threatened under any circumstance. As an example, we will not let Iran have a nuclear weapon. That's all. It's very simple. We will not let that happen. And we have great support. You wouldn't know that by reading the fake news, but we have great support.

People don't want them to have a nuclear weapon, and they will not have a nuclear weapon. And they want to make a deal so badly. We'll see what happens. But we will—we hit them very hard, but we may have to hit them even harder, but maybe not. But we are not going to let Iran have a nuclear weapon and blow up the entire Middle East—Israel, the entire Middle East—and then come here for you. Not going to happen.

So, just as no family can be truly secure in a violent neighborhood, we will not allow chaos, instability, or danger to fester in America's own backyard. We're not going to let it happen.

One of the reasons we have Markwayne and one of the reasons that I feel so good about things: He is a tough cookie. You know, he was a great fighter too. A great fighter. He was a tough cookie and a very successful fighter. His sons are all-American fighters. So they have good genetics in that family. But Markwayne is a tough guy with a—I always say: "He's a tough guy with a great heart." And that's a good combination.

So, from the Gulf of America to the frozen waters of the Arctic, from the shores of Havana to the banks of the Panama Canal, we will drive out the forces of lawlessness and crime and foreign encroachment, just like we've been doing.

You know, we have only 3 percent coming in. It was—we were getting tremendous—you would understand this because you were involved in this: We were having tremendous amounts of drugs brought in by sea, by ocean, by water. And a tremendous amount. A tremendous amount. And we've now reduced that to 3 percent. So it was a big percentage, and now it's all the way down to 3 percent.

And we've hit them very hard, as you know. Not that it's something we wanted to do. And we never miss. We never miss. We hit them very hard. And actually, people are trying to figure out, who are the 3 percent, because they happen to be the bravest people perhaps anywhere in the world—the 3 percent that's left. But I don't even think they have 3 percent.

We virtually stopped it, and now we're going to stop the drugs coming in by land. And that's the easy one to do. That's the easy one. I want to thank the Coast Guard, because you've been unbelievable in that endeavor. Think of it. We had a majority—we had a majority of drugs were coming in by the sea, by the ocean. And we have virtually stopped that.

And now for the easy part: the land, the—much easier. And it will be equally quick. And we are going to have very, very—drugs are down by 61 percent, but we want to get them down to almost nothing, because they've destroyed so many families, so many people, so many lives.

Our Coast Guard cutters, our elite tactical teams were the pivotal is—enforcing our successful blockade. And you just have to see this. We have a blockade that's—they call it the "wall of steel." Nobody goes through them, and you're a big part of it. Nobody goes through them—the Navy, the Coast Guard.

We have ships that tried to go through, and they're saying—young captains from Coast Guard Academy; the Naval Academy, Annapolis—and they're saying, "Do not proceed further." They have the greatest loudspeaker system, much better than this one. Huh? Let me tell you. *[Laughter]* It goes over the water. It bounces on the water. And you have this young, handsome captain saying: "Do not proceed further. You are in enemy territory. Do not proceed further, or we will shoot."

And you have a ship that's, like, two football fields long that carries 2 million barrels of oil. Think of that. Two million barrels. And, on occasion, they'll try and disobey. And last week, you saw one shot—not a missile shot, a bullet. A very large bullet. A bullet from 4 miles hit the rudder of the ship, and the rudder of the ship fell into the ocean. It was a beautiful thing to see. *[Laughter]* It just fell in. I said: "What the hell kind of a shot was that?" And the man said: "No, no. We are going back to Iran."

See, now I say, "Iran." I don't use—because he obviously has a correct pronunciation.

"We will go back to Iran," and it took—with a broken rudder—with the rudder that was laying at the bottom of the sea, it took 10 miles just to turn that ship back.

But nobody violates it. Nobody.

And I was with, as you know, President Xi of China 2 days ago. We had a tremendous meeting, a very successful meeting. And he agrees, our military is phenomenal. I don't want to go beyond that, but I will tell you, he respects our military tremendously. Our military is respected. We have, as I said, the greatest military anywhere in the world. And we're going to keep it that way.

We have a budget this year of \$1.5 trillion. That's the biggest budget we've ever had. That includes the Coast Guard. Don't worry about it. Look, they're getting a little bit concerned. Don't worry. It includes you. You're going to have so many Coast Guard cutters, you're not going to know what to do with them.

You'll have a cutter that's 2 years old. You'll say, "Captain, I want the new one." Didn't used to be that way, but you're going to—we have a lot of money coming your way—you know that—because of these people and people like them. They made a great case for it. And I'm a big fan, so, you know, we've—take care of it while I'm here, because we're going to take care of the Coast Guard like you wouldn't believe.

And in a flawless—[applause]—thank you. And in a flawless operation last January supported by the Coast Guard, America's Armed Forces captured the outlaw Nicolás Maduro and brought him back to American justice. He's awaiting trial from Venezuela. An attack that took less than 1 day, and it was an amazing—I think it's one that's going to be studied for a long time. Great—great, smart country. Very tough military country. But it all took—it really took 48 minutes and 13 seconds, to be exact, but let's give it 1 day. And he's now awaiting trial.

And now we have a great joint venture with Venezuela. We have millions of barrels of oil coming into Houston and coming into parts of Texas and Louisiana and Alaska. And it's been an amazing thing.

You know, Venezuela used to be a really great country 20 years ago. Then it went—it went the wrong way. It went the way they'd like to take this country. Some lunatics would like to take this country way, way left and destroy it, but we're not going to let that happen. We're not letting that happen.

This service has also been at the absolutes—at, really, the center of the battle to restore sovereign borders for the United States and keep drugs and criminals out of our country. And we're keeping them out.

Since I took office, the Coast Guard has seized over 206 million lethal doses of illicit narcotics, the most in the history of our country. Enough to kill a country—a large country many, many times over. And you've seized it, and you seized it constantly. And you don't play games.

Last August, the Coast Guard Cutter *Hamilton* interdicted 76,000 pounds of illegal drugs—the largest Coast Guard drug bust of all time—largest ever. And I'm telling you, the Coast Guard has always been good, but you've stepped it up even beyond that.

Five cadets graduating today were part of that historic action. And I'll mention their name: Elliot Cowles. Stand up, Elliot. Jenna Lewandowski. Piper Stephens. Hannah Warnke. And J.J. Banek-Gabelle. Thank you. Great job. Thank you very much.

The Coast Guard has also played an important role in Operation Epic Fury to ensure that the Iranian regime never obtains a nuclear weapon. Just 2 months ago, off the Coast Guard—at Malaysia, a highly trained U.S. Coast Guard tactical team helped seize a sanctioned Iranian oil tanker that had been used to transport over a million barrels of oil from Kharg Island into the coffers of Iran. We don't want that to happen.

This is the third sanctioned Iranian vessel the Coast Guard has helped capture since we began the fighting—the real fighting with Iran—and many more to come, I suspect, unless they get smart.

Everywhere you go, you say "never forget." You represent the most righteous, successful, and exceptional nation in all of history. And you were really put in a position where you wear the uniform, the most powerful military ever to sail the seas. You are right now at the pinnacle of this Nation. You are at the pinnacle.

Four years ago, 3 years ago, I couldn't have said that. I wouldn't have been up here, but I couldn't have said that. You were not at the pinnacle at all. Right now you're at the pinnacle of the Coast Guard, at the pinnacle of the military. And that military includes the Coast Guard. It will soon be stronger and more powerful than ever before with all of the things we've done.

Last year, I signed a record-setting \$25 billion investment in the Coast Guard, including funding for 22 new cutters, 40 new search-and-rescue helicopters, 25 state-of-the-art icebreakers. And we're also providing \$380 million for renovations and improvements right here at the Academy. The Academy is going to be so beautiful. It's already beautiful, frankly, but it's going to be—it's going to be tippy-top, as I say. It's going to be perfect.

Under our leadership, this service is seeing more action than at any time in many decades. I would say at any time, period. You've never seen what is happening. And the Coast Guard, as good as it has been, has never seen what's happening to it right now.

And the spirit has never been higher. And I think we can say that it starts with the leadership, but I think its spirit with the Coast Guard has never been higher than it's been right now.

And I got to know a couple of people over the last 2 weeks from the Coast Guard, and I can see why. These are incredibly brilliant people. Good people. I have to say, I don't want to give them any ideas, but in the private sector, they'd be making a lot of money. And you know what? They wouldn't trade what they're doing. Would you guys trade for a lot—for millions a year? Maybe? *[Laughter]* This is a maybe. No, you wouldn't. I don't think you would. And a lot of people would like to be in your position that are doing very well. Believe me.

In the 4 years before I took office, the Coast Guard recruitment missed targets by 20 and 25 and 30 percent—the targets—the recruitment targets. And not only you, the Marines, the Army, Navy, Air Force, Space Force—that's my baby. I started Space Force. I was very happy. It's going to turn out to be one of the most important of all.

But you missed your recruitment numbers, and it was an embarrassing time. Not only the military. The police, firemen—anybody with a uniform. They didn't want to be associated with our country, frankly.

And last year, the Coast Guard beat its recruitment goals by 120 percent, and we have so many people wanting to get into the Coast Guard and all levels of the military now that weren't even thinking about it. To me, it's one of the most exciting things.

When I first came—we had the election on November 5, and it really started from the day of the election. But we had the election on November 5. But I will tell you, before that, you couldn't—you couldn't recruit people to go into the military. Nobody wanted to be there. They were trying to reduce standards.

Now the standards—I hate to say—are through the roof. But now we have lines of people wanting to get into every group of—whether it's the Navy, the Coast Guard. And I will tell you, I looked at the numbers—the Coast Guard, in particular. You are—you have exceeded your numbers. You have a waiting list that's a mile long of people that want to get in. So I think I have to say congratulations on that. You know, it's a really—it's a really big deal. And by the end of my term, we are adding 15,000 new coastguardsmen, and we're going to have them added to the list—because of all the new equipment that we've ordered.

And it's a true honor to be your Commander in Chief. I mean, I'm looking at you. I'm glad to get to shake hands of a few of your outstanding people. But every one of you are outstanding. You're in a category that's really very unique. Very hard to be. Very hard to get there. Now you know, even by the recruitment numbers, you know it is. But beyond that, it's just a very special group of people. And you are a very special group of people.

As you begin your important new missions and your mission in life, today let me leave you with a few words of advice to maybe help you a little bit on your way.

First—most important—never ever give up. Never give up. They ask me: "How do you be successful, sir?" Starts with never give up. I've learned a lot about life, but the one thing I've really learned is that perseverance—never quitting, never giving up—is a big deal.

You'll be right there, right at the gate. And you've seen it. You've seen it in sports. You've seen it. They're right there at the gate, and they give up. Never give up.

And whatever happens, no matter where you are in life or what situation you find yourself in on the seas or anywhere else that you may be, keep pushing forward. Always push forward. Never stop pushing forward.

No matter how terrible the storm, no matter how difficult the mission, never surrender, keep going, keep fighting, and make the adversary quit first. Let them quit. They're going to quit if you keep going.

Second, at this pivotal time of transformation for our Armed Forces, you have to think big. It's much better thinking big. Small solutions yield small results. Only big ideas will yield to tremendous change and greatness.

Americans do not want to live in a world ruled by someone else's big ideas. Live in a future, and shape your future. And you want to dominate your future, and you want to dominate it for your great military and for your country. Think big.

During the course of your Coast Guard careers, it will be time for incredible change, and change is going to happen, change that we can't even think of right now. The things will happen, and, I believe, for the best—hopefully, for the best but, I believe, for the best. But things will happen that you can't even imagine, and it's going to be very exciting. But the way that's going to happen is through thinking big.

Nothing great was ever built—think of that. Nothing great was ever built without the word "momentum" at your side. In times of your life, you'll have momentum. That's the time you go for it.

I tell stories about people that lost their momentum, and they went, and it didn't work out well. You know when you're doing well. You know when you have that positive momentum. So take that momentum, and go for it. So many people, they wait. They wait—the wrong time. You know when it's right. Go with the momentum.

The towering men and women of history have always been people of action. You answered the call to serve, and now you need to make sure that most of your time is spent on very important roles in life.

You've done a lot, and you've had a lot of relaxation. Frankly, if you enjoy what you're doing, there's no such thing as work. It's not work. What you're doing—I would say, with most of you, it's not work. What you've done is a lot of work, but it's not work. It really isn't. It's a great pleasure.

I find myself—I work a lot. They say, "He's a workaholic." I'm not a workaholic. It would be tough if I didn't do things. If I didn't do things, I don't know what I'd be doing. *[Laughter]* It probably wouldn't be good. But you've got to love it, and if you love it, it's never considered work.

There will always be time for taking the easy path, and there'll be times when you want to do that or to settle for, maybe, a short-term fix. But for the best results, it will always be a product of unbelievably hard work.

That's why I always sign something—they say: "Oh, could you put something on?" I say, "Work hard." To a young person: "Work hard," because you have to work hard. It's so competitive. Life is so competitive. You have to work hard. It's never going to come easy. You have to work hard.

A lot of great athletes, they say the harder at work—I remember Gary Player, great golfer—he was somewhat smaller than other great athletes. And he said: "The harder I work, the luckier I get." That was the first time I heard it. I've heard that expression a lot, but the first time was from

the great Gary Player, one of the top three golfers of all time. And he said: "The harder I work, the luckier I get." It's a great expression.

Fourth is, you go and go into life and right here at the Coast Guard, you want to keep your eyes in the boat. You want to have your eyes in the boat. You know what that expression means better than anybody.

Do not be distracted by what's outside. You just want to look back, and you want to just see what's happening, but keep your eyes in the boat—a Coast Guard expression. Focus on the task before you, and move forward. Always, always move forward. Never move back. Remember what actually matters in pursuit of success is had—it really has to be relentless. You've got to be relentless.

And many of you are relentless. You wouldn't be here if you weren't, because there are 10 people for every seat that I'm looking at—10 people, and I think even more than that—that wanted that seat. And you made it.

So, finally, you have to be strong. You have to be really strong. And I don't mean just with muscle strength. I mean with mental strength. And you have to be brave. In your profession, you have a level of bravery that has to supersede a normal person's bravery, but that's why you're here.

America was not founded by weak and timid men or women who cowered in the face of evil or sat by as danger loomed. As President Theodore Roosevelt said: "Freedom is not a gift that lasts long in the hands of cowards" and weak people. Today, our country faces the—threats that are very strong, but we have a much stronger country today than we had 2 years ago. Today, the threats that looked really bad—2 years ago, 3 years ago, we had a country that was rudderless, just like that ship that had its rudder shot off. We have a country now with very strong, powerful rudders. But every one of you has your soul, the strength, and courage to face whatever comes before you. You're going to do unbelievably well. I mean—just have no idea. I'm looking at—I look at audiences all the time, but I'm looking at this audience. It's just an incredible group of people. A beautiful, beautiful, brilliant group of people.

So you're brave, and you're bold, and you're always ready to go, and you inherit the legacy of some of the most daring and intrepid Americans ever to live. You are inheriting the mantle of some of the bravest people, some of the most incredible warriors ever right here—a tradition of pride and glory and greatness passed down from one generation to the Coast Guard heroes to the next. You had great heroes.

In World War II, the Coast Guard was the first branch of the military to seize a Nazi vessel and take enemy prisoners. The first one to do it was the Coast Guard. The first branch to traverse the Northwest Passage, and the first to sail a ship right up the middle of the frigid seas to the North Pole—you were the first. You were the first to do so much, and that's not going to change.

And now you have equipment. I think we can say definitely when that—all that new equipment comes in—Admiral, you have equipment the likes of which the Coast Guard has never had before. So you'll have many ships sailing up instead of one. You're going to be doing things that nobody even thought possible.

You have the—you are—you have on order—some of it's already delivered—but you have on order the best equipment anywhere in the world. There's no other coast guard, there's no other, frankly, navy that has anything like what's coming your way.

On September 11, 2001, amid the rubble, dust, and debris, it was the Coast Guard that organized the largest boat lift in all of history, evacuating half a million people from Lower

Manhattan. That was a terrible day. The gleaming white hulls and the blazing red stripes of your cutters have sliced through the horizon of nearly every major waterway on Earth.

Every day, Coast Guard members plunge into pitch-black oceans, rush onto roaring surfs, and do battle with Mother Nature at her absolute worst—Mother Nature like few can imagine it even exists. And I've seen it. I've seen things that I said: "Nobody's going into that storm." And you guys go into it like it's just another day of work.

You fly into gale-force winds, smash into 50-foot waves, storm into floods of fire and shrapnel, and swarm [swim; White House correction] through water so cold that it will snap a ship in half with just the wrong hit of a wave. But you're fellow Americans and, above all, you're from the Coast Guard. There's nothing, absolutely nothing, that a coastguardsman cannot do. There really isn't.

I've seen so much. I mean, as President, I've just seen so much. I've seen people that were going to be decimated, that were going to be destroyed in sea. I told you about some of the hurricanes. They were out at sea—they were boating, and they got caught. They wanted to go a little closer, a little closer, a little closer, and then they got gobbled up by nature.

And the only way they could have survived: with what you people were able to do. You went in there, and you got them. It wasn't easy. It was very dangerous. No matter how perilous the task, you're unafraid, and you're just an unstoppable force. And you want to stay that way.

The U.S. Coast Guard has never ever let us down. And with men and women like the great class of 2026, I know that will never happen. You're going to go on to greatness the likes of which even the Coast Guard has not seen. So wherever the duty calls, whatever danger comes our way, you will fight, fight, fight, and you will win, win, win.

I want to just say a very strong God bless the Coast Guard Academy, the class of 2026. God bless the United States military. And God bless the United States of America.

Thank you very much. Have a great, great and stellar career. Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you.

U.S. Coast Guard Academy Command Master Chief Evan C. Burch, USCG. At this time, I invite the class president, Cadet Savannah Riera, to come to the stage to present the class gift.

Cadet Riera. Mr. President, on behalf of the class of 2026, I present you with this token of appreciation.

[At this point, Cadet Riera gave the President a football helmet.]

The President. Thank you, Savannah. Wow. Thank you. Wow,

Cadet Riera. You're so welcome.

The President. Thank you, Savannah. Oh, I have something for you.

Cadet Riera. That's—oh. I can go put it back down there for you.

The President. I don't know if this is a good trade. This is for Savannah. *[Laughter]*

[The President gave Cadet Riera a hat.]

Cadet Riera. Oh, thank you. *[Laughter]*

The President. Thank you, darling.

Cadet Riera. Thank you so much.

The President. Thank you, darling.

Cadet Riera. Thank you so much. Would you like me to put that back down there for you?

The President. Sure.

Cadet Riera. Okay. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:50 a.m. at Cadet Memorial Field. In his remarks, he referred to President Alexander Stubb of Finland; Andrew, Jayce, and Jim Mullin, sons of Secretary Mullin; and former President Nicolás Maduro Moros of Venezuela, who was captured, along with his wife Cilia Flores, in a U.S. military operation in Caracas, Venezuela, on January 3 and exfiltrated to the U.S. for criminal processing in New York City.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Connecticut, commencement address at U.S. Coast Guard Academy in New London.

Locations: New London, CT.

Names: Banek-Gabelle, J.J.; Burch, Evan C.; Casavant, Aaron; Cowles, Elliot; Dest, Broock; Granahan, Evan; Kettish, Dhiren Michael; Lanzilotta, Matthew; Lewandowski, Jenna; Lunday, Kevin E.; Maduro Moros, Nicolas; McAllister, Abby; Mullin, Andrew; Mullin, Jayce; Mullin, Jim; Mullin, Markwayne; Player, Gary J.; Rhodes, Thomas; Riera, Savannah; Rose, Christy; Rostkowski, Aidan; Rothrock, Gregory C.; Rozzi-Ochs, Jessica; Stephens, Piper; Stubb, Alexander; Summer, Mason; Warnke, Hannah; Wheaton, Freddie; Whipps, Surangel, Jr.; Xi Jinping.

Subjects: 2024 Presidential election; Arctic security, international cooperation; Armed Forces, U.S., recruitment efforts; Automobile industry, strengthening efforts; Border security; China, President; China, relations with U.S.; Connecticut, President's visit; Connecticut, U.S. Coast Guard Academy in New London; Crime rates; Finland, President; Illegal drugs, interdiction efforts; Illegal immigration; Iran, commercial transit through Strait of Hormuz; Iran, U.S. airstrikes on nuclear facilities; Iran, U.S. military operations; Palau, President; Secretary of Homeland Security; Semiconductor manufacturing; Tariffs; U.S. Armed Forces, funding and equipment, improvement efforts; U.S. Coast Guard; U.S. military readiness, improvement efforts; U.S. servicemembers, service and dedication; Venezuela, U.S. military capture and exfiltration of President Maduro.

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