

Joe Biden. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on Decem-

ber 21, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on December 22.

Remarks at Marine Corps Base Hawaii in Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii December 25, 2012

The President. Hello, everybody! Well, it is wonderful to see all of you. First of all, we want to say merry Christmas to everybody.

Audience members. Merry Christmas!

The President. This looks like it was a nice rather than naughty crowd—[laughter]—so I'm sure Santa treated you well.

On behalf of Michelle and myself and our whole family, we do this every year. This is where I was born, and so we come back for the holidays. But one of our favorite things is always coming to the base on Christmas Day and having a chance just to meet you, those of you who have families here, and to say thank you for the extraordinary work and service that you guys do each and every day.

Obviously, the greatest honor I have as President is being Commander in Chief. And the reason it's an honor is because not only do we have the finest military in the world, but we also have the finest fighting men and women in the world. And so many of you make sacrifices day in, day out on behalf of our freedom, on behalf of our security.

And not only do those in uniform make sacrifices, but I think everybody here understands the sacrifices that families make each and every day as well. And Michelle, working with Dr. Jill Biden, has done a lot of work to focus attention on our military families to make sure that you get the support that you have earned and that you deserve.

So I'm not going to make a long speech. Obviously, we're still in a wartime footing. There are still folks, as we speak, who are overseas, especially in Afghanistan, risking their lives each and every day. Some of you may have loved ones who are deployed there. Some of

you may be about to be deployed there. And so we know that it's not easy. But what we also want you to know is that you have the entire country behind you and that all of us understand that we would be nowhere without the extraordinary service that you guys provide.

And so we want to say thank you, we love you. And with that, what we're going to do is we're going to slip back here. Last couple of years, we went from table to table, but we kept on missing tables, and some folks didn't get pictures. So this time, we're going to do it in a slightly more organized fashion. So the people who want to take a picture, we're going to be standing right here next to a tree. You guys will be able to come up. You can take your time, those of you who are still finishing your meals.

The only thing we'd ask, I think, is when we're taking the photos—people will get copies of this stuff, so I know everybody these days has a phone all the time. But we have a White House photographer who's pretty good. [Laughter] He knows what he's doing. And we'll make sure that the photographs come back through the General—through your commanding officer, so that everybody who is here today will be able to get a copy.

All right, thank you very much, everybody. And have a great New Year as well. Happy New Year!

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:17 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Jill T. Biden, wife of Vice President Joe Biden; Chief Official White House Photographer Peter Souza; and Col. Brian P. Annichiarico, USMC, commanding officer, Marine Corps Base Hawaii.