

deployed to Afghanistan and Iraq. In more than a decade of war, this 9/11 generation has worked with the Afghan people to help them reclaim their communities and prevent terrorist attacks against our own country.

Now, many of our troops are returning from Afghanistan, and on Monday, I'll be proud to help welcome them home. That's because, this month, our combat mission in Afghanistan will be over. Our war in Afghanistan is coming to a responsible end.

Of course, the end of our combat mission in Afghanistan doesn't mean the end of challenges to our security. We'll continue to work with Afghans to make sure their country is stable and secure and is never again used to launch attacks against America. The troops I'll visit on Monday have been part of our mission to degrade and ultimately destroy ISIL in Iraq and Syria. They've been supporting our efforts in West Africa to fight the Ebola epidemic and save lives. Because in time of crisis and challenge, the world turns to America for leadership. And when the world calls on America, we call on the brave men and women of our armed forces to do what no one else can.

Remarks at "Christmas in Washington" *December 14, 2014*

Thank you! Thank you so much. Everybody, have a seat. Merry Christmas, everybody. Give it up for Santa's biggest, baddest elf: our host, The Rock. Dwayne is tough as nails on the outside, but as you heard earlier, he is a big softie on the inside. Even played me once on "Saturday Night Live." [*Laughter*] You can see the resemblance. I have a little more hair. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank all the incredible performers for dazzling us with their talents tonight. Give them a big round of applause. And we want to thank all the people behind the scenes who've helped make this wonderful event possible every single year.

For 33 years, "Christmas in Washington" has benefited a remarkable institution, Children's National Medical Center. That's where dedicated medical professionals provide world-class care to our most precious resource—our

So this holiday season, as we give thanks for the blessings in our own lives, let's also give thanks to our men and women in uniform who make those blessings possible. Even as some are coming home for the holidays, many more will be far from their families, who sacrifice along with them.

There are so many ways we can express our gratitude to our troops, their families and our veterans. Everyone can do something. To find out what you can do, just go to joiningforces.gov. As a nation, as Americans, let's always keep striving to serve them as well as they have always served us.

Thank you, have a great weekend, and God bless our troops and their families.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 4:40 p.m. on December 12 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast on December 13. In the address, the President referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 12, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on December 13.

children—every single day of the year. Of course, this holiday is all about the birth of a child more than 2,000 years ago. A young soon-to-be mother and her husband of modest means traveled to Bethlehem and sought shelter for the night, and they found it in a manger. And in the lowliest of surroundings, a Savior was born who would change the world.

Jesus Christ lived a life of peace, of love and kindness and forgiveness. He ministered to the poor and to the sick, to the stranger and the outcast on society's margins. His life of service teaches us that our individual salvation is wrapped up in the salvation of others. And two millennia later, it lifts the hearts of billions around the world, Christians and non-Christians alike.

In the hustle and bustle of Christmas season, may we all do our best to follow his exam-

ple, to reach out to someone whose Christmas isn't so jolly, to turn our blessings into kindness and compassion, to treat one another the way we would like to be treated. That's the real Christmas spirit.

To all our men and women in uniform serving far from home and to the families who miss them, we thank you for your service and sacrifice, and we're thinking of you this holiday sea-

son. And to every American, from the Obama family to yours, merry Christmas. God bless you, and God bless America.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:32 p.m. at the National Building Museum. In his remarks, he referred to actor Dwayne D. "The Rock" Johnson.

Remarks to United States Troops and Department of Defense Personnel at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey December 15, 2014

The President. Hello, McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst! Thank you, General Martin, for the introduction and for your great leadership of the Air Force Expeditionary Center. I want to thank all the outstanding leaders for coming to welcome me here today, including General Maggie Boor and Colonel James Hodges. I want to thank the folks who are the backbone of our military: Give a big round of applause for your incredible senior NCOs.

Now, this is one of our Nation's premier joint military bases. Everybody's here. We've got Army.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. We've got Navy.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. We've got Air Force.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. We've got Marines.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. And we've got some Coast Guard.

Audience members. Hooah! [*Laughter*]

The President. Who's that one Coast Guard? There you go. That was loud, right there. [*Laughter*]

All of you come together as one great American team. And I know that we also have some spouses and families here today. Your wives, your husbands, your partners, your sons, your daughters—they serve as well. They make their own sacrifices, especially when you're deployed. So our military families are the heroes here in New Jersey. That's what we do all

on the homefront. Give it up for our remarkable military families.

We've got some outstanding elected officials who support the mission of this facility each and every day. I want to thank Governor Christie for joining us here today. We've got some outstanding Members of Congress who are here: Bob Menendez, Cory Booker, Congressmen Jon Runyan, Congressman Donald Norcross, and incoming Congressman Tom MacArthur. And they were already lobbying me about the base on the way in, so they're doing a good job. [*Laughter*]

It is great to be back. I was here last year and visited with some of you on my way to the Jersey Shore. Christie and I went down to Asbury Park, spent some time on the boardwalk. We played a little Frog Bog. Chris's kids taught me how to hit the hammer to get those little frogs into the buckets. It was hard. And then, Christie beat me at football toss, which really aggravated me. [*Laughter*] And he bragged about it afterwards, which is okay, but I will get a rematch at some point.

But we weren't there just to have fun. We came because, after Hurricane Sandy, people across this State—including those of you here at this base—you had to pick yourselves up, pull together, rebuild, show that here in New Jersey, here in America, we are stronger than any storm. Like a friend of mine from New Jersey likes to say, "Wherever this flag's flown, we take care of our own." And that's what we do across America.