

workers and parents, all of us taking care of each other; because of our incredible men and women in uniform, serving to protect us all; because when we're united as Americans, there's nothing that we cannot do.

That's why it's has been a good year. And it's why I'm confident we'll keep achieving big things in the new year. So happy holidays, everybody.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 4:25 p.m. on December 17 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast on December 19. In the address,

the President referred to David M. Letterman, former host, CBS's "Late Show With David Letterman." He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization; H.R. 2029, the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2016, which was approved December 18 and assigned Public Law No. 114–113; and S. 1177, the Every Student Succeeds Act, which was approved December 10 and assigned Public Law No. 114–95. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 18, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on December 19.

## Statement on the Persecution of Christians

*December 23, 2015*

During this season of Advent, Christians in the United States and around the world are preparing to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. At this time, those of us fortunate enough to live in countries that honor the birthright of all people to practice their faith freely give thanks for that blessing. Michelle and I are also ever-mindful that many of our fellow Christians do not enjoy that right and hold especially close to our hearts and minds those who have been driven from their ancient homelands by unspeakable violence and persecution.

In some areas of the Middle East where church bells have rung for centuries on Christmas Day, this year they will be silent; this silence bears tragic witness to the brutal atrocities

committed against these communities by ISIL.

We join with people around the world in praying for God's protection for persecuted Christians and those of other faiths, as well as for those brave men and women engaged in our military, diplomatic, and humanitarian efforts to alleviate their suffering and restore stability, security, and hope to their nations. As the old Christmas carol reminds us:

The Wrong shall fail,  
The Right prevail,  
With peace on earth, good-will to men.

NOTE: The statement referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

## The President's Weekly Address

*December 25, 2015*

*The President.* Merry Christmas, everybody! This is one of our favorite times of year in the Obama household, filled with family and friends, warmth and good cheer. That's even true when I spend all night chasing Bo and Sunny away from the cookies we leave for Santa.

It's also my favorite weekly address of the year, because I'm joined by a special holiday guest star: Mrs. Obama.

*The First Lady.* Merry Christmas, everyone. Here at the White House, we've spent the past month helping everyone get into the holiday spirit.

Our theme this year is “A Timeless Tradition,” and the decorations in each room reflect some of our country’s most cherished pastimes, from saluting our troops and their families to helping children dream big dreams for their future. And we’ve invited thousands of families here to the White House to enjoy the festivities, because there’s no holiday tradition more timeless than opening our doors to others.

*The President.* Today, like millions of Americans and Christians around the world, our family celebrates the birth of Jesus and the values He lived in his own life: treating one another with love and compassion; caring for those on society’s margins—the sick and the hungry, the poor and the persecuted, the stranger in need of shelter or simply an act of kindness. That’s the spirit that binds us together, not just as Christians, but as Americans of all faiths. It’s what the holidays are about: coming together as one American family to celebrate our blessings and the values we hold dear.

During this season, we also honor all those who defend those values in our country’s uniform. Every day, the brave men and women of

our military serve to keep us safe, and so do their families.

*The First Lady.* So, as we sing carols and open presents, as we win snowball fights—

*The President.* Or lose snowball fights—

*The First Lady.* —let’s also take time to pay tribute to those who’ve given our country so much. Go to [joiningforces.gov](http://joiningforces.gov) to see how you can serve the troops, veterans, and military families in your community. And together, we can show them just how grateful we are for their sacrifice. That’s a tradition that we all can embrace, today and every day.

*The President.* So, on behalf of Malia, Sasha, Bo, Sunny, Grandma, and everyone here at the White House, merry Christmas. May God bless our troops and their families, and may God bless you all with peace and joy in the year ahead.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 4:30 p.m. on December 17 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast on December 25. In the address, the President referred to his mother-in-law Marian Robinson. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 24, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on December 25.

## Remarks at Marine Corps Base Hawaii in Kaneohe, Hawaii December 25, 2015

*The President.* Hello, everybody! Merry Christmas! *Mele Kalikimaka!* Happy New Year! Happy Hanukkah! We just want to—hope you guys are having a great holiday. And it is wonderful to see all of you.

This is one of our favorite things to do every single year, because not only are we in Hawaii for Christmas—

*Audience members.* Yes!

*The President.* —but we’re also able to say thank you on behalf of the American people. So many families here are serving tirelessly. And it’s not just those in uniform who serve, it’s also the spouses, the kids. There are times where you’re missing birthdays, missing soccer games, making sacrifices.

As we know, when you’re deployed overseas, it’s tough. And even though we’ve been able to reduce the number of folks who are deployed in places like Iraq and Afghanistan, there are still folks over there every single day. And it’s still dangerous, as we saw this past week; we had some outstanding, brave men and women who were killed.

And so we never take for granted what all of you do for the American people. You help keep us free. You help keep us strong. And whatever service you’re in, whatever branch, we are extraordinarily grateful for everything that you do every single day. And we hope you guys had a wonderful Christmas.